THE LANGUAGE OF PHILOSOPHY

A CRITICAL LOOK INTO THE LANGUAGE OF EARLY ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

by

ROSSEN VENTZISLAVOV

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Prof. Noel Carroll_________________________________

_______________________ ____
Date Chair of Examining Committee

Prof. Iakovos Vasiliou______________________________

_______________________ ____
Date Executive Officer

Prof. Nickolas Pappas_________________________

Prof. Frank Kirkland__________________________

Prof. Christa Acampora________________________
Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

ABSTRACT

THE LANGUAGE OF PHILOSOPHY
A CRITICAL LOOK INTO THE LANGUAGE OF EARLY ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

by
Rossen Ventzislavov

Adviser: Prof. Nickolas Pappas

In my dissertation I offer a topical critique of the language of early analytic philosophy. My critique focuses on the factors that shaped the tradition's linguistic inventory. Among these factors, I pay special attention to the direct influence the new analytic arguments and methodologies had on the formation of the specialized language of analysis. In this, I argue that early analytic philosophy is not only distinguished by a tendency of economizing language, as early analytic thinkers readily admitted, but also by the heretofore unstudied effort to ostracize words and expressions that could in any way challenge their new philosophical programs. I attempt to prove that, in result of the latter, early analytic philosophers isolated themselves from alternative ways of doing philosophy and, more importantly, sacrificed some of the understandability of their arguments. My method consists of the analysis of specific arguments by particular philosophers with a view on both the formation of their language choices and the way these choices in turn influence the arguments themselves. My primary examples of the tendencies discussed come from the writings of Moore, Neurath, and Wittgenstein. I also look into the importance of professional conformism for the way the language of early analytic philosophy has been inherited by subsequent generations of analysts. My example here is Searle and, more specifically, his compromised treatment of Derrida's reading of Austin. In conclusion, I explore the issues of language choice,

understandability of arguments, modes of inheritance, and philosophical motivation as discussed by Wisdom and Cavell. In the latter two philosophers, I find both eloquent proof for the relevance of the problems that concern my study and, also, fresh suggestions as to how these problems are to be dealt with philosophically.

For the three rivers along which this project ran,

the East River, Struma and the Thames

За сестра ми и родителите ми,

вятърът в моите платна

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In the unlikely event that I should ever write a book describing my life during the preparation of this dissertation, it will be of a very specific nature—a book of gratitude. My gratitude messily addresses the following categories of influence—inspiration, collaboration, assistance and resistance. In philosophy, I have drawn inspiration from the works of Austin, Bergson, Deleuze, Derrida, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein. In the arts, I have sought solace in aesthetic experiences too numerous to list. In life, I have been inspired by my parents and my sister whose patience with the path I have chosen is an invaluable gift, my two late uncles—Malin and Botio—whose intrepid spirit humbles me at every step, my godson Sebastian, who is twice as old as this project and at least twice as wise, and my friends—Lubomira who helps me test the therapeutic limits of laughter, Stanislav who pulls me back to the ground, Maria whose belief in me as a philosopher and friend keeps me on my toes, Desmond whose generous blessings propel me forward, Kimberlee who shares my love of language, and Nikolay whose parallel universe offers a welcome respite from the self-seriousness of my scholarly endeavors. Throughout the years leading up to the completion of this project, I have learned and unlearned a lot from the fecund conversations of Victor Crome, Keota Fields, James Snyder and Elly Vintiadis, all fellow philosophers and seekers. An instrumental factor in my academic growth has been the consistent mentorship of Edward Casey, a philosopher of formidable subtlety and a gracious champion of my work. I largely owe my survival of graduate school realities to Rosemarie Iannuzzi, an imperturbable center of gravity in the face of all kinds of salient institutional weightlessness. I am also grateful to the members of my dissertation committee, professors Christa Acampora, Linda Alcoff, Noel Carroll, and Frank Kirkland for their generous feedback and guidance. The person I owe the most to with respect to my academic career and specifically the preparation of my dissertation is Nick Pappas. As an adviser he combined a wealth of knowledge with a collaborative spirit and an intellectual patience with my meanderings. As a friend he is a paragon of unconditional kindness and support.

In the unlikely event that I should ever write a book describing my life during the preparation of this dissertation, it will begin with the recounting of a dinner conversation with Elly, Desmond and Maria at a restaurant in the East Village. This is how the idea for my project was born.

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Introduction

> "I must confess that often, when I have tried to read the most popularly effective of German philosophical writers, Nietzsche, I have felt like throwing the book across the room. He is a boiling pot of enthusiasms and animosities, which he pours out volubly, skillfully, and eloquently. If he were content to label these outpourings "Prejudices"… one could accept them in the spirit in which they were offered; there is no more interesting reading than the aired prejudices of a brilliant writer. But he obviously takes them for something more and something better; he takes them as philosophy instead of what they largely are, pseudo-Isaian prophesyings, incoherent and unreasoned Sibylline oracles. Does it follow from all this that philosophers and their readers are doomed to roam a stylistic desert, and munch cactus as the sole article of their diet?"
>
> Brand Blanshard, *On Philosophical Style*[1]

The main argument I will make in my dissertation is that the history of analytic philosophy is replete with instances of a particular normative attitude to the language of philosophy, which, though rarely analyzed itself, is integral to some of the major successes and failures of analysis. The attitude I refer to is what I see as an unstudied tendency to repurpose the way philosophy is written so that it better serves analysts' research programs. Historically, the originating assumption of analysis is that philosophical problems are to be dealt with, or very often dealt away with, through the reevaluation of philosophical language. This assumption accounts for the attention among analytic thinkers to the rules, variations, and implications of *what* we say in philosophy. It very rarely, however, involves explicit and careful attention to the way we say what we say in philosophy. I will focus on the importance of the latter and the extent to which its

[1] Lang, Berel, Ed. *Philosophical Style. An Anthology about the Writing and Reading of Philosophy*. Nelson-Hall, Chicago 1980. P. 131

presence or absence can be brought to bear on the accessibility and the success of particular philosophical arguments.

What I will subsequently refer to as "the language of philosophy" is best explained through what I choose to call an "inventory of words." The concept of inventory is generally defined as both a purposeful account of the set of materials, tools, characteristics on hand, but also as the crude totality of these same tokens. It is thus that an inventory is always there as a set of objects even if these same objects are not *inventoried*. In philosophy, too, *having* an inventory of tools is not the same as *keeping* an inventory of one's toolbox; in fact, the former is very rarely accompanied by the latter. This is especially the case in analytic philosophy where matters of how we phrase have traditionally taken the backseat to concerns of what we say.

In the expression "inventory of words" the term in greater need of explication is "words." By this I mean all tools at the philosopher's disposal that are used for the construction of arguments, but that do not carry explicit argumentative power in and of themselves. Among these tools are, indeed, words but also the particular literary style of a given philosopher with its attendant expressions, literary devices, tone etc. In the history of analytic philosophy there are numerous examples of reluctant stylists, i.e. philosophers who put forward new ways of writing philosophy without attending to the stylistic shifts their works occasion. The repurposing of language they thus put in effect has two distinct dimensions—the intentional and the inadvertent. Attuning one's language to one's project can either be an integral part of the project itself or an unchecked consequence of the same project. It is my contention that it is a failure of many analytic philosophers that the normative attitude towards the language of

philosophy which they initiate or perpetuate is inadvertent and largely left unstudied. The works that exhibit this attitude are affected by it in the way they are read, understood and inherited by most subsequent philosophers. I believe that however focused and productive an analyst is in what she does, not reckoning with the readings and understanding her work affords is detrimental to the work itself. Any substantive argument about language is inevitably cast in language and thus can only benefit from the explication of its own linguistic resources. Such explication occurs rarely in the history of linguistic analysis and I will try to demonstrate its benefits for some of the works to be discussed. Conversely, the absence of a proper awareness of one's inventory of words can easily turn against the entire philosophical enterprise. The difficulty, for example, that many philosophers experience in using the same term in different senses can be at least partially alleviated by a fully developed notion of context, style and audience. In the absence of any conscious effort of inventorying, one's inventory of words often ends up doing other things than it might have been selected to do in the first place.

My critique of the language of early analytic philosophy will focus on the factors that have contributed to the shaping of the tradition's predominant linguistic inventories. Among these factors, I will pay special attention to the direct influence the new analytic methodologies and the endemic disregard for historical continuity have had on the formation of the specialized language of analysis. As to the latter, I will try to show that the lack of acknowledgment of its history prevents analytic philosophy from taking stock of its own language and, thereby, from knowing itself. This is the reason why the seemingly productive initiative to economize language, one which early analytic thinkers readily embrace, often leads to the far less productive and largely unstudied effort to

ostracize words and expressions the use of which could in any way challenge the new philosophical investigations. I will attempt to prove that, in result of such inner discrepancies, early analytic philosophy leaves an ambiguous legacy and, more immediately, sacrifices some of the understandability of its core arguments. As to the linguistic legacy specifically, I find it impossible to discuss the language of philosophy without paying close attention to how this language is inherited. After all, if there is anything like an analytic inventory of words it will only be recognizable if it in some way or other persists through time. This very persistence that makes the language of analysis recognizable at the same time indicates an endemic lack of revision, updating and, indeed, scrutiny of any substantial kind. For the inheritors of early analytic philosophy it becomes a matter of survival to cling to a language that they, and possibly their predecessors, often have not fully mastered.

In the last couple of decades the history of analytic philosophy has recovered its datebook and has recruited enough book-keepers. What I claim to be able to add to the resulting explosion of respectable scholarship is an additional angle, a vantage point from which the study of philosophy's language might elucidate the projects of a number of philosophers whose primary concern has been language itself. I realize that there could be a temptation in philosophers to dismiss my project as non-philosophical—the vantage point I propose might seem dangerously close to the concerns and methods of literary criticism. My preliminary reply to this is that, indeed, some of the issues I raise can be cross-purposed with forms of literary analysis, but that such an overlap will only be worthy of the name if these issues belong to philosophy in equal measure. As proof of this my study will be positioned so that it remains as interested in the substantive

arguments of philosophers as it will be in their respective vocabularies, styles etc. Only so can the question of understandability be brought to bear on the language of analytic philosophy or, for that matter, of any philosophy whatever. As part of my attempt to stake out this new ground I will compare different thinkers, I will recreate fragments of philosophical edifices, and I will reenact some relevant philosophical debates.

In this introduction I will firstly propose an overview of the analytic philosopher's self-image. Secondly, I will discuss the metaphilosophical burdens of choosing one's language in philosophy and, as a corollary, of having our language chosen for us. In this, I will raise two issues that pertain to accessibility and success—how philosophical language affects the understandability of what we say and how philosophical language is inherited across generations of analysts. Thirdly, I will examine the validity, or the lack thereof, of referring to analytic philosophy as a homogenous school of thought. Lastly, I will offer a brief overview of the method, structure and research aspirations of my study.

…

The problem of the language of philosophy is intimately connected with another, more general problem—that of the self-image of philosophy. Rorty, in his essay "Texts and Lumps," suggests one dimension of this connection when he writes: "Philosophy too swings back and forth between a self-image modeled on that of Kuhnian "normal science," in which small-scale problems get definitively solved one at a time, and a self-image modeled on that of Kuhnian "revolutionary science," in which all the old philosophical problems are swept away as pseudoproblems and philosophers busy

themselves redescribing the phenomena in a new vocabulary."[2] A self-image with its concomitants—a sense of historical purpose, a methodology and an inventory of words—must necessarily accompany any philosophical effort. But how fleshed out this image is depends on the place a particular philosopher at a particular time occupies in the swinging back and forth Rorty describes. The reluctance to self-assess and explicitly question one's own intellectual enterprise is at the "normal philosophy" extreme of Rorty's swing. What this extreme represents is the philosopher's desire to implement certain programmatic decisions. The willingness to self-assess, on the other hand, has more to do with the actual decision making typical of the "revolutionary philosophy" extreme. I believe that the history of analytic philosophy provides many examples where one extreme is consistently preferred over the other and enough cases where the two extremes converge into one confusing mess. As I explore the reasons for this, I would like to keep sight of the implications this swinging back and forth has for the creation of new vocabularies. Clearly, the insular problem-solving that is typical of analytic philosophy is where these new vocabularies are put to work, but it is also clear that these vocabularies are decided upon elsewhere, i.e. in the ever-elusive emergence of the analyst's self-image.

The first and most important clue to the positioning of analytic philosophy with reference to its own image is the practice, endemic in the linguistic turn, of sanctioning what can be said in philosophy and, from there, about philosophy. John McCumber reminds us of Russell's solution of the paradox of self-reference as a case of such sanctioning. In order to deal away with the logical tangle of statements such as "This

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[2] Rorty, Richard. "Texts and Lumps." *New Literary History*, Vol. 17, No. 1, Philosophy of Science and Literary Theory (Autumn, 1985), P. 1.

sentence is false," Russell proposes "a general principle that any logically correct language has a specific domain of objects it can talk about and that its own sentences cannot be part of that domain."[3] Philosophy is thus assigned a clarifying role as to the sentences of other domains but is bereft of the possibility for self-examination. This new role Russell proposes for philosophy is echoed in Ramsey's dictum that "in philosophy we take propositions we make in science and everyday life, and try to exhibit them in a logical system with primitive terms and definitions."[4] Ramsey's dictum is in turn echoed in Schlick's statement: "It is easy to see that the task of philosophy does not consist in asserting statements—that bestowing meaning upon statements cannot be done by statements. For if, say, I give the meaning of my words through explanatory statements and definitions, that is by help of other words, one must ask further for the meaning of these words, and so on."[5] Finally, Wittgenstein's belief in the Tractatus that philosophy cannot claim an autonomous field of its own can be read as a ratification of, or in some cases constitutes the main inspiration for, the above attitudes. The negative implications of such attitudes are clear—philosophy does not have a proper subject, its role is not to assert anything, and its self-scrutiny is logically incorrect. But besides these, there are enough positive implications to build a self-image on—philosophy is thus called upon to clarify all and sundry non-philosophical statements, to provide definitions, to assume a mainly corrective function as to language and the world. This contradiction does not escape Rorty who criticizes the demotion of philosophy to the secondary function of servicing other fields of inquiry. At the same time Rorty is ready to concede that the

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[3] McCumber, John. *Time in the Ditch, American Philosophy and the McCarthy Era*. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois 2001. P. 11.
[4] Ayer, A.J., Ed. *Logical Positivism*. The Free Press, New York 1959. P. 321.
[5] Ibid. P. 57.

customary focus on “normal philosophy” justifies a certain claim to purity on the part of analytic thought. It is probably on account of this perceived purity that some analytic philosophers express unprecedented hope for the possible applications of their work.[6]

The self-image of analytic philosophy is present but is not often attended to. This self-image is not properly theorized but is instead emergent as to the other theories the relevant thinkers propose— self-analysis, wherever available in analytic philosophy, lacks its own inventory and methodology. In our everyday we often refer to things that are there but are left unattended as “taken for granted.” The danger of taking our parents for granted is as great as it is for, say, Searle to inherit Russell’s projected self-image together with Russell’s substantive arguments. And yet we do and he does. When Searle tries to counter Derrida’s arguments with the contention that Derrida knows nothing of the giants upon whose shoulders Searle stands (Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein etc.), Searle inadvertently appropriates a philosophical past as if it is fixed, granted and fully understood. The echoes of Russell’s postulate I have provided in the previous paragraph are also, but to a lesser extent, such acts of appropriation. The problem with these appropriations is that things taken for granted are guaranteed to assume their own existence and to slowly develop into obstacles along the way to what we really care about.

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[6] The following statement from Schlick, with its sweeping hope of changing lives through logical clarity, would not have been to the taste of all thinkers cited but is indicative of a generally unspoken assumption of linguistic philosophy: “Frequently also the name of philosophy is bestowed on mental activities which have as their concern not pure knowledge but the conduct of life. This is readily understandable. For the wise man rises above the uncomprehending mass just by virtue of the fact that he can point out more clearly than they the meaning of statements and questions concerning life relationships, facts and desires.” (Ayer, A.J., Ed. *Logical Positivism*. The Free Press, New York 1959. P. 58) An even more sweeping statement of hope is expressed in Carnap’s slogan: “Let us devote ourselves entirely to the practical tasks which confront active men every day of their lives!” (Ibid. P. 60)

Among the thinkers I discuss, Moore, the early Wittgenstein and Searle are all culpable of neglecting analytic philosophy's self-image. Moore stands in a peculiar relation with analysis such that he practices it while firmly convinced that it cannot be properly practiced (see my Chapter I, p. 4). In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein offers a book of philosophy while convinced that philosophy has nothing to say. The case with Searle is different in that he is twice removed from the self-image the other two thinkers are directly neglecting. Searle's position, somewhat akin to his own brilliant Chinese room thought experiment, is thus of someone who has been handed a black box by a revered progenitor and holds it dearly without ever wondering what it contains.[7]

In light of the above difference between Searle and Moore and the difference between the early and the later Wittgenstein, the question of choice becomes more pressing. Do philosophers choose a self-image and, if yes, how does it happen? Do they also choose their inventories of words? These questions do not attempt a probe into the nature of intentionality, or they do not only attempt this. It is for now safer and more productive to assume that philosophers know what they are doing and that they do it intentionally. What the questions are driving at is also the possibility that some attitudes and some ways of expression are not directly chosen but are mandated by the constraints of the particular philosophical enterprise. For example, a philosopher's decision to write like, say, Carnap might very well be prompted by another decision—i.e. to continue

[7] In his discussion of the politics of academic life McCumber gives Searle as an example of someone who "locates some of the "irresponsibility" of the faculty in a particular mindset whose origins he does not question." When Searle states of the faculty member that "in each case he seeks to impart the truth or as nearly what is the truth as he can get according to professional standards of evidence and reason," he again applies a readymade standard of formidable historical provenance but of little utility for contemporary academics. As McCumber points out, this standard is blind to other defining functions of teaching such as the production of educated citizens and moral individuals or the facilitation of a better appreciation of art etc. (McCumber, John. *Time in the Ditch, American Philosophy and the McCarthy Era*. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois 2001. P. 99)

Carnap's work. Within the walls of Carnap's lab the meaning of a word is its method of verification, the meaning of a sentence is given in its truth conditions, and all means of verification are backed by physicalist hard science. Carnap is quick to admit that what philosophy becomes under such conditions is a method of analyzing sentences rather than a collection of such. In line with Wittgenstein's popularized contention that philosophy has nothing to say but only has a certain function, Carnap's work views itself simply as a practice. In his explication of the reduction of a word's meaning to its method of verification Carnap gives an important indication of the role choice plays in the construction of his proposed view—he refers to the reduction as "postulated." This word implies a decision process, something Cavell will pay close attention to in developing his distinction between invention and discovery. The philosopher, and Carnap in particular, does not *discover* the inapplicability of metaphysics to nature in nature. He, rather, wills it into existence according to a conceptual frame. It is, then, no wonder that for Carnap "the alleged statements of metaphysics… have no sense, assert nothing, are mere pseudo-statements."[8] By our choice, any and every statement can stop being considered meaningful.

It is important to notice that Carnap's choice to discard all metaphysical terminology is of a different order from the choice by any of Carnap's successors to adopt his attitude. The latter adoption is always a riskier endeavor than the original historical effort. One reason for this is that on many core issues Carnap may very well have known better than he spoke.[9] Another reason is that Carnap's decisions are tied to

[8] Ayer, A.J., Ed. *Logical Positivism*. The Free Press, New York 1959. P. 67

[9] One example of the incautious reading of Carnap is suggested by recent scholarship which reconsiders Carnap's famous mockery of Heidegger's metaphysics (as presented in the now infamous statement "the Nothing nothings"). Like other commentators (see Witherspoon, Edward. "Much Ado About the Nothing:

his purported philosophical inventions, to which no inheritor can lay claim by fear of inauthenticity and also of inheriting Carnap's mistakes. Yet another reason is the inherent ambiguity of looking at philosophy merely as a method. To borrow one of Wittgenstein's recurring examples, when looking for things we presuppose where they are and apply ourselves methodically to the activity of searching. We might find something without a method but we will not feel like we were searching at all. The method Carnap reduces philosophy to is similarly bound by the presupposition of where the findings of philosophy are located, what constitutes a clear statement, and where, in another Wittgensteinian phrase, verification is supposed to end. The danger of inheriting a method, then, is that with it we are already inheriting the expected results of its various applications.

Similar, if not graver, are the specific dangers of exercising one's choice in adopting a philosophical language. For early analytic philosophers, I believe the choice consists of three decisions—one about what words are no longer to be used, another about what words are to remain active even if their meaning needed elucidation, and a third decision about what new terms can be introduced in hope of furthering the better understanding of language. Again, some of these decisions are preempted by the constraints of the specific philosophical program they serve and, often, the respective philosopher fails to realize, announce or justify their choice. Of those whose decision procedure remains, so to speak, palpably clandestine Moore stands out as the most

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Carnap and Heidegger on Logic and Metaphysics." In C.G. Prado, Ed. *A House Divided*. Humanity Books, New York 2003, Pp. 291-323), McCumber contends that contrary to popular belief, Carnap's critique of Heidegger, far from being a mean ideological diversion, is informed and at its core much more congenial to Heidegger than has been thought. The danger here of mistaking the belligerent tone of Carnap's for a purely derogatory treatment of Heidegger remains for every scholar not willing or able to break from Carnap's historical silhouette of a fervent anti-metaphysician. What this silhouette hides, these recent studies suggest, is at least as much as it shows. (McCumber, John. *Time in the Ditch, American Philosophy and the McCarthy Era*. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois 2001. Pp. 77-81)

stubborn. As I will try to show in Chapter I, this accounts for the ambiguities Moore scholars have to deal with in deciphering his conceptions of ordinary language, common sense, logical terminology etc. On account of the purported self-evidence of common wisdom and the transparency of everyday language Moore speaks as if it is philosophically clear what choices he makes and why. But it remains a puzzle how Moore failed to realize that there could be as many common senses and everydays as there are philosophical systems. In Wisdom's essay "Moore's Technique," to which I will devote greater attention in Chapter V, certain forms of expression Moore uses such as "I can't see clearly" or words like "plausible" are noticed to owe more to the vocabularies of logic and science than to that of the everyday. The complication, as Malcolm and other commentators see it, is presented by the legitimate question—"Whose everyday are we referring to?" As Moore soldiers on without addressing any of these ambiguities we are left in no better a critical predicament than his own epistemological one is. We feel like we know that Moore discards a certain part of the traditional philosophical vocabulary, that Moore pools a select cluster of words to use and clarify, and that he introduces a technical terminology—examples of each abound in how Moore writes—but most often we cannot buttress our findings on what Moore is trying to say.

Moore is a paragon but he is in no way an exception. The trend I am here outlining is one that concerns to different extents Russell, the early Wittgenstein, most members of the Vienna Circle, Ayer and sometimes even Austin.[10] The trend itself—to sanction linguistic inventories in favor of a philosophical program—is nothing new in

[10] In the opening paragraphs of his *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin refers to the ascendancy of linguistic analysis as a "revolution in philosophy." Obviously Austin is claiming allegiance to the analytic school, but he does so fleetingly, after an extremely short and uninformative overview of what analysis is about. The traces of current attitudes and language that one on a closer look finds in Austin are thus themselves unanalyzed.

philosophy and what earns it the status of a self-contained historical practice is something else. The exception, I believe, is due to the choice, made by the pioneers of analysis, not to treat of philosophy as a text. Ostensibly, the reason for this is that looking at philosophy as a text is to a great extent what got pre-analytic philosophy in its speculative tangle in the first place. And, yet, analytic philosophy is a text so much so that its practitioners fondly rely on each other's works as textual landmarks (Searle is a case in point) and they often judge each other's writings on the basis of aesthetic or critical-theoretical stances (Wittgenstein's gradual conversion towards a more overtly literary style being the most controversial change the linguistic turn ever suffered).

Looking at philosophy as a text is not all there is to philosophical inquiry at all, but should be and is inescapable in writing and especially reading philosophy. I hope to show how Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* continues Moore's work on a different plane. Wittgenstein's language flirts with Moore's and his arguments connect with Moore's in what amounts to a fast historical chain. Reading Moore for Wittgenstein comes instructively close to writing Moore. I believe that without Wittgenstein's newfound and over-indulgent sensitivity to Moore's text, *On Certainty* would have remained the detached edifice that the *Tractatus* always was. But the finer point here is not that one book is in any way better or easier to understand than the other. The point, specifically relevant to the customary procedures of analytic philosophy, is that the difference between the two is hardly analyzable without reference to the linguistic inventories on display in the respective texts. The same holds for the difference between the works of Derrida and Searle, which I will treat of in Chapter IV. [11] Ultimately, lack of awareness of

[11] The dialogue that never happens between Searle and Derrida, of which I treat in my Chapter IV, is an example of different philosophical attitudes to text and textuality. It is relevant to the history of analytic

such things is what historically has made inheriting analytic philosophy and its language a messy affair.

…

Richard Rorty and Aaron Preston provide valuable insight about the conformist tendencies in the shaping and passing on of analytic philosophy's heritage. In his "Analytic and Conversational Philosophy," Rorty suggests that apart from the reverence for the programmatic statements of early analytic thinkers, the glue tying the tradition together is of a conspicuously non-philosophical kind: "The majority of philosophy professors, in every country, never move far beyond the horizons that were set for them by their teachers."[12] Rorty concedes that such unproductive conformity is a universal ailment, but recognizes its higher acuity in the analytic tradition. According to him, the passing on of the analytic torch from one generation to the next is not the result of anything like philosophical consensus.[13] It is, rather, the outcome of social forces of conformity and professional habit.

The same sentiment is developed, and amplified by numerous references to contemporary historians of philosophy, in Preston's "Conformism in Analytic Philosophy: On Shaping Philosophical Boundaries and Prejudices." At the start of his essay Preston reminds us of Kant's definition of enlightenment as "the use of one's own

philosophy because it tests the extent and the knowingness of these attitudes in one of its illustrious figures. The contrast between Searle and Derrida on these issues, however and understandably, is of a different kind than that between any two philosophers in the analytic tradition.

[12] C.G. Prado, Ed. *A House Divided*. Humanity Books, New York 2003, P. 2

[13] "Analytic philosophy as a whole is not, and has never been, an expert culture characterized by such long-term, near universal consensus. What consensus has existed has been local and transitory. The problems about which the full professors in analytic philosophy departments wrote their dissertations often look merely quaint to their newly-hired junior colleagues." (Ibid. P. 7)

intelligence without being guided by another."[14] If the revolution Austin talks about (see my fn. 9) is indeed a revolution, by Kant's standards it has to carry a spirit of intellectual independence with it. And yet, in the words of so many commentators, historical figures and witnesses the linguistic revolution was in contrast an often chanceful convergence of what Preston calls "interactional memes." One of the reasons for this brings us back to Rorty and his picture of swinging back and forth between two self-images. As I have pointed out with reference to Rorty's argument, while swinging back and forth between the piecemeal treatment of insular problems and the sweeping enterprise of renewing the field altogether, the early analytic philosophers often lose sight of the normative and meta-philosophical implications of their activities. Preston finds a causal connection between this tendency and the endemic conformism that has plagued the history of linguistic analysis: "One contributing factor, I think, was the analysts' willingness to disregard traditional meta-philosophical principles governing the formation of philosophical schools, thus turning philosophy over to social forces more subtle but no less powerful…"[15] The implication of this conclusion for my study is that what I have hitherto been referring to as analytic philosophy is actually only identifiable as a philosophical school by those who inherit it blindly, i.e. without even a serviceable awareness of its history. My project here will constitute an attempt to heighten this awareness, and especially our understanding of the self-image and language of analytic philosophy.

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[14] Preston, Aaron. "Conformism in Analytic Philosophy: On Shaping Philosophical Boundaries and Prejudices." *The Monist*, Vol. 88, No. 2, (April, 2005). P. 297
[15] Ibid. P. 315

The first four chapters of this dissertation will be devoted to a chronological selection of case studies or, as I prefer to call them, exhibits. These exhibits will be used to illustrate the tendencies of conscious and inadvertent language selection in early analytic philosophy and the modes of understanding and inheritance these tendencies afford. Here is the place to get two possible objections out of the way. The first objection might be that dissimilarities between the languages of *any* two philosophers could constitute occasions for surprising discoveries and, hence, for tendentious analysis. My retort to this is that the trends in language formation, understandability and inheritance that I will identify pertain distinctively to the history of analytic thought. In support of this I will rely not only on my own observations but also on the ever-growing scholarship on the history of analysis. A second objection might question the choice of particular exhibits from the history of analytic philosophy I provide in support of my main contentions. My answer to this is that my study cannot possibly hope to provide an exhaustive historical picture of the trends it proposes to discuss. At the same time, I firmly believe that the exhibits I single out are all paradigmatic to a degree where their omission would compromise any attempt at a fuller picture. As to the necessity of these exhibits to my project some preliminary justification is to be found in the following summary of my project's contents. I would like to believe that this justification will be further substantiated by the respective contents themselves.

My first exhibit will concern some peculiar discontinuities between G.E. Moore and F.H. Bradley. My interest here will be in the extent to which the perceived differences in the philosophical projects of the two philosophers can be explained by the differences in their linguistic inventories. Moore's place in the history of analytic thought

is, on a par with Russell's, that of an uncontested pioneer. His presence in my project is justified by a number of considerations. Firstly, Moore stands out as a master of the conceptual inventory, i.e. he is acutely aware of what his concepts and arguments can and cannot do. Still, paradoxically, Moore is also a stark example of someone who pays no attention to his, by all counts revolutionary, linguistic inventory. In light of this, I will attempt an analysis of Moore's work that will give him as much credit for changing the language of philosophy as it will for sweeping the inherent challenges of maintaining an inventory of words under the philosophical rug.

Secondly, Moore exemplifies the threshold characteristics of philosophical conversion that mark the proper beginnings of analytic philosophy—his early philosophical career was spent under the spell of Bradley's idealism only to give way to a strong anti-idealist program in his subsequent works. In this he is different from Russell and his other contemporaries because none of them pursued the perceived philosophical discrepancies as persistently and for as long as Moore. Thirdly, Moore's refusal to look back at the tradition he turned against in any clear or comprehensive manner, while identifiable simply as a personal gesture of disengagement, initiates a pattern of general disregard for the history of philosophy that would later become a commonplace in analytic thought. Lastly, Moore's way of writing, long recognized for both its uniqueness and its powerful influence, represents a veritable departure from the ways of writing of pre-analytic philosophers. A study of the relevant differences, in their conscious and unexamined dimensions, promises to further inform our knowledge of what Rorty has called "the linguistic turn." In my opinion, these differences are nowhere more evident than in a comparison between Moore and Bradley.

My second exhibit will propose a surface analysis of Otto Neurath's way of writing against the backdrop of his unified science efforts. Neurath's presence in my project is justified by the uniquely explicit stance he takes with reference to the issue of language formation. Throughout the entire history of analytic thought it is only in Neurath's writings that we are faced with the blunt imperative of overhauling our philosophical vocabulary in service of analysis. Against the backdrop of Neurath's efforts to subject the findings and the language of philosophy to the demands of science, Neurath's own weakness for figurative and literary expression constitutes a spectacular failure. As alert as Neurath is to his normative attitude towards philosophy's inventory of words, he remains spellbound by the kinds of language that his theory explicitly refuses a place in the temple. The lesson to be learned from this particular exhibit is that the refusal of certain terminology (in Neurath's case any word that has even the slightest metaphysical ring) is only one insignificant step towards mastering one's philosophical language.

My third exhibit will reconsider some of the arguments of Moore's common sense essays through the lens of Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*. In this a special emphasis will be placed on Wittgenstein's sensitivity to and subversion of Moore's language. Even though Wittgenstein is not prone to make his attitude towards Moore's language explicit, *On Certainty* presents a paradigm case for the intentional reckoning with an inventory of words that analytic philosophy sorely lacks. This exhibit will be built on the foundations of my previous discussion of Moore but will also attempt to conceptualize the changes in Wittgenstein's language between his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and *On Certainty*. The comparison between Moore and Wittgenstein will trade on the rigidity of Moore's

language choices on the one hand and the dynamic transformation of Wittgenstein's on the other. The case of Wittgenstein remains a matter of confusion and scandal in the history of analytic philosophy. The change in Wittgenstein's substantive arguments between his first book and his subsequent output has been found hard to domesticate by the tradition that has adopted Wittgenstein as one of its patron saints. I believe that this difficulty is partly due to the concomitant shift in Wittgenstein's language—a shift whose nature does not lend itself to the exacting instruments of analysis. I find it important to try and make this latter shift more obvious and easier to analyze and I hope that, if not exhaustively, my intended comparison between Moore and Wittgenstein will at least partially throw light on it.

My fourth exhibit will concern the Jacques Derrida / John Searle debate and its relevance to issues of philosophical inheritance, philosophical language and understandability. Again, my choice is driven by the fecund promise the specific case offers as to elucidating some endemic trends in the history of analysis. With reference to the passing on of the analytic heritage, Searle is an extreme example of two typical and incongruent tendencies—the wholesale acceptance of previous analytic efforts and the failure to understand these efforts. In his debate with Derrida Searle eagerly adopts the history of analysis, aggressively guards it from what he perceives as unwelcome intrusions, and misreads it all at the same time. In terms of language, Searle is caught between the stock expressions of his unexamined heritage and Derrida's wily turns of phrase. The fact that the latter turn out to be largely incomprehensible to Searle is only a part of the problem. Another, and equally important, part is Searle's failure, relative to Derrida, to comprehend Austin. Ultimately, the misunderstandings that Searle falls prey

to are instructive of the dangers of blindly inheriting a language and, also, of the obstacles such inheriting poses to philosophical understanding.

My last chapter will be an attempt to solidify the implications of my thesis. In it these implications will be rehearsed through the engagement of two singular perspectives on the history and language of analytic philosophy—those of John Wisdom and Stanley Cavell. In these two philosophers I will look both for eloquent proof for the importance of the problems that concern my study and, also, for insightful suggestions as to how these problems are to be dealt with philosophically. The normative attitude of analytic philosophers towards the language of philosophy is put in perspective in Wisdom and Cavell. Wisdom delves into the psychological reality of philosophizing and shows how analysts inadvertently build obstacles to potential self-presence and, by extension, to understanding their own inventories of words. In Cavell, the normative implications of analysis are criticized from the perspective of what he deems to be the unavoidable but welcome textuality, or literary dimension, of any philosophical effort. It is Cavell's unique discovery that only by surveying the outskirts of philosophy we can make it possible for philosophy to talk about itself.

What Wisdom and Cavell share in terms of their positions in the history of analysis is a productive sense of distance from the tradition's proceedings and findings. Even though Wisdom is much more inclined to practice analysis than Cavell, they both distinguish themselves by their interest in discussing the nature of analytic philosophy. In such discussions, a way of reckoning with the history of analysis emerges that is different from both the historiography and the history of ideas that have dominated the enterprise. In Wisdom and Cavell I find an inclusive approach to the subject that takes account of

issues such as philosophical choice, philosophical motivation, the normative implications of identifying oneself with a school of thought, and, last but not least, philosophical language. My study is very much indebted to these innovations and thus hopes to perpetuate them with a view on possible future research on the relevant topics. More specifically, I will elaborate on Wisdom's and Cavell's theories as they pertain to and support my contention that the conscious and conscientious examination of one's inventory of words has an important place in philosophy, a place that is yet to be claimed.

Chapter I

The Common Senses of Bradley and Moore

Ideally Speaking

In this chapter I will focus on the loose lineage that connects F.H. Bradley's project in *Appearance and Reality* with two of G.E. Moore's common sense essays—"The Refutation of Idealism" and "Defence of Common Sense." My primary interest will be in the interplay of philosophical styles between Bradley's legacy and Moore's backhanded ways of inheriting it. In the process I will provide short exposés on the projects Bradley and Moore take up, their vocabularies, and their ways of positioning themselves in and apart from their respective philosophical traditions. The fruit this chapter hopes to bear is a deeper awareness on how philosophical language affects the understandabililty of philosophical arguments. Through this, I will also attempt to throw light on why Moore remains unaware of certain notions and intuitions that he shares with Bradley. Among these are some problems with the notion of common sense that account as much for the differences between the two philosophers as they do for the unintended similarities thereof.

In the common sense essays it is G.E. Moore's primary goal to prove the existence of a material world. His philosophy explores the expected objections to the latter, viz. that there are experiences that are independent from anything outside of us, that there is the possibility that what we call 'external material world' could be a mirror image itself dependent (as a reflection is dependent on what is reflected) on our inner perceptions, that we cannot possibly know of the existence of material things etc. Objections such as these have been advanced (and had been advanced before Moore) by

different schools and strands of philosophy. Apart from all manner of skeptics, a school of thought Moore addresses is that of idealism and, specifically, the idealism of the late nineteenth century whose main proponent and theorist was Bradley.

Before looking at Bradley's and Moore's arguments I have to point out that it is not only the arguments I am interested in, but also the language choices the two philosophers make. It is my belief that through these choices Bradley and Moore stand far apart enough that their respective arguments could hardly be read together as parts of a shared discourse even though, topically, they do seem to establish one. It should be kept in mind that Moore's seminal essays cannot even be properly identified as answers to Bradley. For one thing, Bradley is barely even mentioned in them. It is also important that if there are any signs of open debate over some philosophical issue of common concern, we will get little, if any, mileage out of regarding such signs as indicative of real dialogue. There is barely anything dialogical about two people writing about the same issues at different times with no direct reference to each other's statements. It is thus of primary interest to me how the two philosophers (and especially Moore) leave the impression of conversing while at the same time retaining their uncommunicative insularity. And, while it is safe to accept that the impression of conversation is in a large part due to the common topic and the history (Moore having been at one time Bradley's follower and subsequently striking apart), the ways in which each philosopher retains their own ground need further exploration.

The pressure of establishing communication can only fall on Moore who engages Bradley after Bradley has finished saying what he had to say. In this, Moore is both on his own and accompanied by, so to speak, the ghost of Bradley's doctrine. Moore's essay

titles include the words ‘refutation’ and ‘defence,’ which is clear indication of the presence of that ghost (and, as it turns out, other ghosts, too)—the absentee opposing theory. I hold that it is through Moore’s choice of language that he keeps his interlocutor at a distance, a ghost rather than an opponent. This is a choice indicative of a new program, altogether different from that of Bradley himself, a program of proposition analysis that calls for a linguistic economy quite foreign not only to Bradley’s arguments but also to his way of advancing an argument. It is my belief that Moore could not have said what he did in his essays if he had stayed within the language of Bradley’s tradition. At the same time, I suspect that if Moore had engaged Bradley not only topically but also linguistically, his would have been a greater contribution to the materialist-idealist debate. A further complication in this is Moore’s refusal to account for his own language choices—he offers a new inventory of words but does not *keep* an inventory of it.

Since Moore does not at any point refer directly to Bradley’s writings, it is up to us to decide where in Bradley we are to locate the kernel of what Moore finds objectionable. Two other essays by Moore (“The Conception of Reality” and “External and Internal Relations”) give sufficient reason to think that if there were a book of Bradley’s which Moore was willing to discuss that book must have been *Appearance and Reality*. The latter is also our safest guess because in it Bradley develops almost all of the arguments Moore defends the postulates of common sense from. Bradley’s agenda in this book is to lay out an idealist picture of the world down to the smallest detail. This is

important as I will later try to show how much less Moore is setting out to accomplish in his “Refutation of Idealism” and his “Defence of Common Sense.”[16]

A comparison between Bradley and Moore carries a historical burden—the two philosophers stand on either side of an important rift. While the English philosophy of the nineteenth century, of which Bradley is taken as an exemplary representative, is to be credited with significant developments in Hegelian, utilitarian and idealistic thought, the turn of the century period, throughout which Moore’s views were being formed, marks a shift towards materialism and analytic thought with a special focus on language. Still, neither philosopher associates himself happily with a concrete school of thought. Bradley, for example, retains a respectful distance from Hegel and the English Hegelians[17] and a notoriously critical stance towards Mill. Bradley’s idealism is confluent with that of Carlyle, Caird and Green but is also different enough to have single-handedly rebooted English metaphysical enquiry. And Moore, although often lumped together with Russell, Ramsey and other contemporaries, makes every effort to carve a space of his own through the development of a singular style partially defined by its insularity as to the supposed philosophical zeitgeist.

Moore is also unique amongst early analytic philosophers for having believed that philosophy amounted to something different from analysis.[18] A glimpse into what

[16] Another common sense essay, Moore’s “Proof of an External World,” was admitted by Moore to have been a direct retort particularly to McTaggart’s species of idealism. (see: Baldwin, Thomas. “Cambridge Philosophers V: G.E. Moore.” *Philosophy*, Vol. 71, No. 276 (Apr., 1996), pp. 275-285) This however should not and does not mean that Moore does not manage to also step on Bradley’s toes in the same essay.
[17] In his “The Metaphysical Systems of F.H. Bradley and James Ward,” G. Dawes Hicks notes that in the succession of significant books Bradley wrote, from *Ethical Studies* to *Principles of Logic* to *Appearance and Reality*, the presence and influence of Hegelian ideas gradually declined. (Hicks, G. Dawes. “The Metaphysical Systems of F.H. Bradley and James Ward.” *Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Jan., 1926), p. 21)
[18] Wisdom, John. “G.E. Moore.” *Analysis*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Jan., 1959), P. 50.

philosophy's true calling might be is given by Moore in his *Defence* when he says that the truths of common sense are easy to understand but their analysis is out of reach. This can be read to mean that philosophy, in the very least, is to provide understanding. A corollary of this is Moore's belief, evident all throughout his work, that understanding is best achieved through the clarification and simplification of language. In this, analysis is outlined as *a* method of doing philosophy, more or less successfully, but is not equated with philosophy. As R.E. Tully notes, Moore even harbors "the skeptical view that philosophical analysis engenders uncertainty."[19] What this might be understood to mean is that the efforts of analysis are self-defeating. But this should not be so. The analysis of a proposition, as Wisdom points out, can be done without any regard for the proposition's truth or falsity—something Moore frequently does. But Moore as frequently *does* care about things like truth and falsity, which, in turn, forces him to recognize, so to speak, the limits of analysis.[20]

One article where Moore directly faces Bradley is "The Conception of Reality." The reasons I have chosen not to dwell on it are three. My first reason is that, even though the article sees Moore discussing Bradley and engaging him, its project is far removed from the ambition and scope of Moore's earlier "The Refutation of Idealism." "The Conception of Reality" attacks Bradley's way of expressing his beliefs about the (un)reality of space and time in Chapter IV of his *Appearance and Reality*. Moore's

[19] Tully, R.E. "Moore's Defence of Common Sense: A Reappraisal after Fifty Years." *Philosophy*, Vol. 51, No. 197 (Jul., 1976), P. 297

[20] "I believe that Moore's passionate desire to reach a correct analysis and to make clear the incorrectness of an incorrect analysis came in no small part from a feeling that an incorrect analysis of statements of a given type will, if one accepts it, tend to distort one's apprehension of what is being done when such a statement is in fact made, and may even hinder, at least temporarily, one's recognition of the truth and falsehood of what is being asserted." (Wisdom, John. "G.E. Moore." *Analysis*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Jan., 1959), P. 50.)

study, and its proposed satisfaction, is thus to find proof that Bradley's incorrect use of language leads to self-contradiction. The article remains a good example of Moore's method of piecemeal reconstruction of one expression for the purpose of laying bare its purported hidden implications. The trouble is that the article amounts to little more than that. When Moore, at the end of it, suggests that Bradley might simply not realize what his words *mean*, the suggestion takes the form of a minor intuition, an "imagination" by Moore's own admission, rather than a matter of conclusive evidence on Moore's part.[21] Bradley's language is recognized by Moore as puzzling, but the corrective scheme that Moore proposes in defense of a proper way of speaking and meaning what one says is less than satisfactory. Moore's defense of *the* proper way of speaking is based on his even more problematic idea of the transparency of meaning.[22]

My second reason for not considering the article at length is that it does not significantly state or modify Moore's main arguments against idealism. Considering that Moore wrote it a good fourteen years after his programmatic "The Refutation of Idealism," this article offers too little and much too late. With its relatively modest focus and supposed payoff, it barely relates to Moore's more thorough attempts at refuting idealism in the essay of that name and in his later "Defence of Common Sense." As far as Moore's language in "The Conception of Reality" goes, it is of no special interest to me because, when faced with Bradley's language, word-to-word, Moore's expression devolves mostly into pure technicalities and offers very little of the interesting tendencies

[21] "The kind of thing which I imagine may be happening to him when he insists so strongly that Time *does* exist, *is a fact*, and *is*, is that, properly speaking, he is not attaching to these phrases any meaning whatever—*not*, therefore, that which they properly bear." (Moore, G.E. "The Conception of Reality." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series, Vol. 18, (1917 - 1918), P. 120.)

[22] On Moore's idea of the transparency of meaning, see Soames, Scott. *Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2005.

that the other two essays do. In this article Bradley's presence is conveyed by obsessive citation rather than through the far more subversive (and typical of Moore) uncredited paraphrase in the common sense essays.

The Bradleyan Wreck

In the first pages of the seventh edition of F.H. Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*, under the rubric of "some opinions of the press" there appear three review clips from the time the book was originally published. One of them, from the *International Journal of Ethics*, offers that Bradley's style "often paradoxical, is singularly bright and attractive."[23] J.H. Muirhead, in an essay written almost thirty years later, on the opposite end of Bradley's career, refers to the perils of "incautious phrase" as one of the main reasons Bradley has often been misunderstood.[24] Such charges as to Bradley's writing style are curious because they speak to a general attitude to Bradley at the time Moore's most important works were being written.[25] But the two examples I have given of this attitude are also curious in a different way. In philosophy, paradox is usually associated with a challenge to logic, grammar or, more generally, reason. To say that someone's *style* is paradoxical has to imply that at least one of these challenges is salient in the language of that philosopher. The second charge, that Bradley's phrase is incautious, is

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[23] Bradley, F.H. *Appearance and Reality*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London 1920.

[24] Muirhead, J.H. "Bradley's Place in Philosophy." *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 34, No. 134 (Apr., 1925), P. 182.

[25] In their discussion of Bradley's falling out of favor with early 20th Century British philosophers Candlish and Basile offer the following defense: "Bradley's highly wrought prose and his confidence in the metaphysician's right to adjudicate on the ultimate truth began to seem alien to a later generation of philosophers reared on a mixture of plain talk and formalization and encouraged to defer to mathematics and empirical science. But stylistic choices are not philosophically neutral; no one engaged in producing a system of revisionary metaphysics is likely to accept limitations imposed by ordinary language." (Candlish, Stewart, Basile, Pierfrancesco, "Francis Herbert Bradley." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2009 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2009/entries/bradley/>.)

equally startling. If the commentators were referring to Bradley's arguments, the charges of paradoxicality and incaution would be unproblematic. But their reference to Bradley's *style* signals a different critical focus. It is only through a system of censorship or an idea of decorum that such charges can materialize. And since Bradley is equally distant from the language of Victorian philosophy and the language of early twentieth century analysis he is vulnerable to numerous normative sanctions. I see Moore's oblique references to Bradley as instructive in the elucidation of the acceptance and, more often, denial of both Bradley's philosophy and his language.

In tackling Bradley's project in *Appearance and Reality* with the intention to compare it to Moore's common sense program, I find a look at Bradley's method to be of chief priority. In Bradley's own words from the Preface, his work is meant "to be a critical discussion of first principles, and its object is to stimulate enquiry and doubt."[26] What Bradley claims he is *not* setting out to do is provide a metaphysical system or, significantly, a philosophical "Credo." Still, this does not mean that he relinquishes any claim to philosophical rigor. The very structure of the work, in spite of the author's programmatic admissions, betrays Bradley's conviction that he is, indeed, in command of a rigorous metaphysical worldview. The structure itself is fairly simple. The book is divided into two main parts (books), the first subtitled "Appearance" and the second "Reality." Bradley devotes the first part of Book I to the piecemeal dismantling of several traditionally problematic dichotomies—primary/secondary qualities, substantive/adjectival forms, quality/relation, space/time, motion/change. Bradley attempts to resolve the inadequacies in how these dichotomies have been previously

[26] Bradley, F.H. *Appearance and Reality*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London 1920. P. xi.

treated by subjecting them to his singular viewpoint. The viewpoint itself is gradually revealed with each small victory achieved. By the time Bradley reaches the more speculative Book II, his main contention has already begun to take a more concrete shape. In terms of methodology, Bradley's project is thus one that grows through the accretion of ideas around a slowly advancing main thesis. The amount of traction this thesis gets is partially dependent on the success of each consecutive step. In fact, when discussing the dichotomies mentioned above Bradley invariably bases each new consideration on the perceived results from his treatment of the previous one. How compelling his overall project will turn out to be is thus contingent on every word spoken and every stone turned.

In his introduction to *Appearance and Reality*, Bradley imagines an intractable audience, that of orthodox theologians on one side and of 'commonplace materialists' on the other.[27] The philosopher sees himself as occupying some middle ground between the two—a place from which metaphysics could be done equally unbothered by the danger of assuming the spiritual superiority so typical of theology or, on the other side of the spectrum, by the danger of castrating thought by subjecting it to a material world.[28] Still, whoever Bradley's addressees turn out to be, it is of the utmost importance that they are severally named and also a desire is expressed by him to, as he puts it, "strengthen the reader."[29] Apart from the didactic presumption of this latter intention, it proves very instructive to know whom the philosopher addresses and to what ultimate purpose. In the

[27] Phenomenologists and skeptics are later in the book added to Bradley's list for the sake of completeness.
[28] Of the materialist Bradley says: "He permits, that is to say, the exercise of thought so long as it is entangled with other functions of our being; but as soon as it attempts a pure development of its own, guided by the principles of its own distinctive working, he prohibits it forthwith." (Bradley, F.H. *Appearance and Reality*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London 1920. P.4.)
[29] Ibid. P.44.

case of Moore, as I will try to show, Bradley's work reaches a reader that is even more intractable than the above mentioned ones, one that by his choice of words undermines his predecessor's discourse. If Moore fit into any of the groups of philosophers Bradley was dealing with, he would probably have been categorized as something like a *nouveau materialist*. In an important sense, however, Moore could also be put in a category the emergence of which Bradley could not have anticipated at the time he was writing his book.

Bradley's central thesis, in a nutshell, is that since there are many phenomena in the observable world that contradict each other, it is the case that what we call reality is in actuality only appearance, or as he puts it "the world, as so understood, contradicts itself; and is therefore appearance and not reality."[30] This argument, though not advertised as commonsensical, appeals to common sense in that it seeks a broader metaphysical basis to step on—a metaphysics of interwoven assumptions provoked by an ever-growing and universal puzzlement. For example, it is, according to Bradley, a limitation for us to accept a materialist view of the world even if it is sufficient for the practice of science. There are simply many everyday and many philosophical puzzles the solutions of which lie outside the scope of science. Bradley makes two programmatic appeals to common sense in the early pages of his book—firstly, he urges his readers to acknowledge the world of appearances as such, i.e. to recognize the fact that almost always our experiences of the world thrive on fragmentary information and this information very often is found to contradict different other experiences we have. The second appeal to common sense is that he asks of the readers to recognize the process of metaphysical

[30] Ibid. P. 11

wonderment that accompanies most of human cognition and which, if followed through with, leads us to curiosity about the Absolute.[31] In its classical form, metaphysics treats of realities the evidence for which we lack. For Bradley the wonderment comes not only from the lack of evidence but also, and more importantly, from our lack of understanding of our own metaphysical language.[32] These statements (that the world we experience is full of contradictions and that we are in constant search for words to express our metaphysical concerns) are of an axiomatic nature—they are considered self-evident by Bradley. This, however, does not mean that Bradley sees himself unequipped to find justification for them.

"Ultimate reality is such that it does not contradict itself."[33] This is Bradley's offering for an absolute criterion of reality. Now, of course, this definition is as general as it gets and, consequently, does not give us a clear meaning of any of the terms used. Is it logical contradiction Bradley is talking about? Not very likely, as most of Bradley's analysis is not at the level of propositions but at the level of experience. This is the key to everything Bradley says—he recognizes both the material reality of science and the propositional reality of logic as troublesome offshoots of the experiential. More accurately, the material and the propositional are inherently inconsistent pseudo-realities that feed off of the only true reality—that of immediate experience. For Bradley, there is nothing that guarantees the subsistence of a material thing over time (for one thing, he

[31] "I mean that, by various causes, even the average man is compelled to wonder and to reflect. To him the world, and his share in it, is a natural object of thought, and seems likely to remain one. And so, when poetry, art, and religion have ceased wholly to interest, or when they show no longer any tendency to struggle with ultimate problems and to come to an understanding with them; when the sense of mystery and enchantment no longer draws the mind to wander aimlessly and to love it knows not what; when, in short, twilight has no charm—then metaphysics will be worthless." Ibid. Pp.3-4.

[32] As to the infamous 'Thing in itself' Bradley contends: "Surely, the moment we understand what we mean by our words, the Thing in itself becomes utterly worthless and devoid of all interest." Ibid. P.113.

[33] Ibid. P.120.

does not grant the idea of temporal extension any merit). Similarly, there is nothing that secures the validity of a logical rule across all and sundry propositions.[34]

What remains solid is *the immediate*; that instance in a world of appearances where the momentary appearance stands alone ("whether in thought, volition or feeling"),[35] but fully integrated with what it is considered to be an appearance of. In fact, what appears to us through sentience, modified by cognition as it may be, and the appearance itself are considered by Bradley to be not merely coincidental, but fully identical. In other words, there is no object proper, but only an appearance and though we are used to thinking of appearances as *of something*, this way of thinking is for Bradley only an example of our mind trying to come to terms with pure appearance as such. Now, even though temporal slang such as 'immediate,' 'momentary,' and 'instance' creeps into the discussion, Bradley is not suggesting that it is a 'now' he is referring to. If there is any reality at all, it is in the experiential instance understood *absolutely* and not *temporally*.

If one should speak of the Absolute writ large or even use the term 'absolute' in its adjectival form, they are to be expected to offer some sort of metaphysical proof for the legitimacy of the use of their terms. Bradley, aware of this responsibility, puts forward the aforementioned argument that in one way or another all of us think of, encounter, or imagine the Absolute. Even skeptics, by their mere effort to attack the

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[34] Bradley dismisses any chance of material or logical agreement among experiences by attacking both material causality and the principle of identity: "The Law of Causation is the principle of Identity applied to the successive." (Ibid. P.290) Of identity over time, he says that it is largely illusory because it often depends on the view we take of the object whose identity we're trying to preserve. Thus, in his example, once Sir John Cutler's silk stockings had been fully darned with worsted, it was only a matter of arbitration if they were still the same stockings (Ibid. P.63). Since, Bradley later contends, the concept of causation hinges on that of identity over time (the latter being essential to the understanding of succession), causation cannot be any more reliable a principle than identity itself.

[35] Ibid. P.264.

possibility and relevance of the Absolute, remain spellbound by it. What is the Absolute for Bradley? It appears to be a distillation of all and every experience.[36] Unlike any given single experience, though, the Absolute is the union of content and existence. In order to explain this last point, Bradley introduces a procedure of gradation from crude experience (the 'what') to appearance (the 'that') to the perfect unity of both in true reality.[37] This gradation is just a model for how things *may* work and not a definitive statement of how they actually *do*. Bradley concedes that the unity of content and being in the Absolute is not to be viewed as knowable, but rather as something our minds should (and, in the case of philosophers, most often do) aspire to know.

It is by virtue of such arguments that Bradley earns his place of honor in British philosophy but, also, that he attracts massive criticism. Bertrand Russell, who is much more forward in his attacks than Moore, offers the following direct rejoinder to Bradley's metaphysics: "The progress of philosophy seems to demand that, like science, it should learn to practice induction, to test its premises by the conclusions to which they lead, and not merely by their apparent self-evidence. To reject such a test is to assume—what none but a philosopher would assume—that metaphysical theories have a greater degree of certainty than the facts of science and of daily life."[38] This attack on Bradley introduces three distinctions that are central to materialism—the distinction between certainty and conjecture, between daily life and science on one side and philosophy on the other, and between inductive materialism and metaphysics. Russell makes it clear that he and

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[36] "The Absolute has no seasons, but all at once bears its leaves, fruit, and blossoms." Ibid. P.442.
[37] "Let us then take the indefinite plurality of the 'this-nows,' or immediate experiences, as the basis and starting point, and, on the other side, let us take the Absolute as the end, and let us view the region between as a process from the first to the second. It will be a field of struggle in which content is divorced from, and strives once more towards, unity with being." Ibid. P.270.
[38] Russell, Bertrand. "Some Explanations in Reply to Mr. Bradley." *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 19, No. 75 (Jul., 1910), P. 378.

Bradley fall on the opposite sides of each distinction. It is also implied that Bradley's preferences are a hindrance to the "progress of philosophy."

On the first distinction, Bradley would answer that there is at least as much conjecture in abstracting from material occurrences to general rules as there is in anticipating our knowledge of the Absolute.[39] On the second, Bradley's answer is that philosophy is indeed foreign to science and life in that it offers a path away from the unintelligibility of particular experience. This involves the sacrifice of what Bradley calls "the certainty of feeling" that ordinary experience provides. To Bradley, this certainty is valuable for what it is, but is inadequate as compared to what he calls "the truth of ideas."[40] On the third distinction, between Russell's inductive method borrowed from science and metaphysics as Bradley practices it, Bradley's answer might very well be in the following often quoted statement: "The man who is ready to prove that metaphysical knowledge is wholly impossible has no right here to any answer…He is a brother metaphysician with a rival theory of first principles."[41] What emerges from this squabble I have staged between Russell and Bradley, something Bradley makes explicit in his essay "Coherence and Contradiction" (see my fn. 33), is that one's philosophical

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[39] "We have seen, so far, that mere Nature is not real. Nature is but an appearance within the reality; it is a partial and imperfect manifestation of the Absolute. The physical world is an abstraction, which, for certain purposes is properly considered by itself, but which, if taken as standing in its own right, becomes at once self-contradictory." (Bradley, F.H. *Appearance and Reality*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London 1920. P. 267)

[40] "At the entrance of philosophy there appears to be a point where the roads divide. By the one way you set out to seek truth in ideas, to find such an ideal expression of reality as satisfies in itself… This I take to be the way of philosophy. It is not the way of life or of common knowledge, and to commit oneself to such a principle may be said to depend upon choice. The way of life starts from and in the end rests on dependence upon feeling, upon that which in the end cannot be stated intelligibly… Outside of philosophy there is no consistent course but to accept the unintelligible, and to use in its service whatever ideas seem, however inconsistently, to work best." (Bradley, F.H. "Coherence and Contradiction." *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 18, No. 72 (Oct., 1909), Pp. 500-501.)

[41] Bradley, F.H. *Appearance and Reality*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London 1920. Pp. 1-2.

convictions come down to a decision, a choice. This, however, does not guarantee that any of the two divergent paths comes ready with a compelling *decision procedure*.

What makes the decision even more difficult to make on what the two philosophers give us is that in choosing their separate paths both of them rely on some notion of common sense. In Russell, quite as in Moore, common sense attaches to notions of daily life, robust materialism and the descriptive powers of science.[42] In Bradley, common sense is associated with what is cognitively undeniable. The currency of Bradley's remark that every philosopher is a "brother metaphysician" in the literature is owed mainly to its elegant undeniability. When Rorty, for example, reminds us that all philosophy is a futile search for a presuppositionless stance, he in effect endorses Bradley's notion of the philosophical predicament. This is, then, an observation of common sense but of a different order than the observation that, to use Moore's example, the earth has existed for many years. Bradley's answer to the latter example would be that the conclusion Moore draws from his material evidence is a conceptual abstraction from that evidence and is, as such, confused and far removed from the evidence itself. William James sums up Bradley's position on material evidence in the following way: "When we handle felt realities by our intellect they grow, according to him, less and less comprehensible; activity becomes inconstruable, relation contradictory, change inadmissible—nothing survives the Bradleyan wreck."[43] The point of separation that accounts for Russell's distinctions as discussed above (certainty/conjecture, daily life and science/philosophy, materialism/metaphysics) is in how we choose to treat of "felt

[42] On other conspicuous continuities between Russell's and Moore's treatments of Bradley, see Candlish, Stewart. "The Truth about F.H. Bradley." *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 98, No. 391 (Jul., 1989), pp. 331-348.
[43] James, William. "Bradley or Bergson?" *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Jan. 20, 1910), P. 30.

realities." It is as commonsensical for Russell and Moore to embrace the certainties of daily life and scientific materialism on such realities as it is for Bradley to embrace idealist metaphysics. What suffers the Bradleyan wreck, however, is not reality writ large but only the conceptual consequences (activities, relations, changes) that we draw from its *felt* facets.[44] Herein originates Bradley's demand that feeling be regarded as separate and prior to cognition. This separation, which Bradley contends is as necessary for him as it is to his "brother" materialist, is nevertheless undermined by Moore in his common sense essays.

The Most Readable

Before I start my discussion of Moore I will attempt a critical look at Bradley's style and language. The elements of paradox and incaution that the critics I have cited attribute to Bradley's style present a useful point of departure for a comparative study like mine. After all, Russell's explicit and Moore's implicit attacks on Bradley are based on the paradox and threat that the propositions of idealism present to the knowledge we derive from our everyday and from our science. The counter-intuitiveness of Bradley's claims is what earns them these charges. It is interesting, though, to study if and how Bradley's language amplifies the *impression* of paradox and incaution in his readers and critics.

In his article "Victorian Philosophical Prose: J.S. Mill and F.H. Bradley," Alan Donagan offers a lucid critique of Bradley's style and language. Throughout his analysis,

[44] James says of Bradley that "in his "Logic" as well as in his "Appearance" he insisted that in the flux of feeling we directly encounter reality, and that its form, as thus encountered, is the continuity and wholeness of a transparent much-at-once." (Ibid. P. 29) What seems to be at stake here is the prevalence of feeling over thought in the formation of an idea of reality. Thought is in fact left out of our encounter with reality.

Donagan operates on the principle that form and content cannot be looked upon as separate or, as he puts it, "finding better words is the same thing as refining a thought."[45] As a result Bradley's *façon de parler* is here viewed as an integral part of his philosophical project. Donagan does well to pool different authoritative opinions on the subject before he presents his own thesis. He thus agrees with T.S. Eliot's view of Bradley's style as "urbane and ironical."[46] He also agrees with Richard Wollheim's observation that Bradley's prose is marked by a "heavy, luxuriant growth of rhetoric and dialectic that is usually allowed to swell and sprawl across the pages often enough obscuring the true lines of the discussion."[47] What Donagan adds to the discussion is that Bradley is never shy to use ornate constructions, black humor and what Bradley himself admitted was a "heated" style of expression.

From the wealth of observations Donagan offers there are two that I find very important for my study. The first is Eliot's opinion, quoted by Donagan, that Bradley's style is "for his purposes—and his purposes are more varied than is usually supposed—a perfect style." [48] It is true that Bradley's philosophy, especially in *Appearance and Reality*, is extremely variegated in its goals and arguments. After all, Bradley himself concedes that an interest in the subject of metaphysics presupposes such variety.[49] This concession, as I will try to show later in this chapter, stands in sharp contrast with the narrow focus of Moore's common sense essays. The second observation Donagan makes concerns Moore more directly. In discussing Bradley's influence on subsequent

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[45] Lang, Berel, Ed. *Philosophical Style. An Anthology about the Writing and Reading of Philosophy*. Nelson-Hall, Chicago 1980. P. 389.
[46] Ibid. P. 403.
[47] Ibid. Pp. 403-404.
[48] Ibid. P. 387.
[49] "And that is why, so long as we alter, we shall always want, and shall always have, new metaphysics." (Bradley, F.H. *Appearance and Reality*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London 1920. P. 6.)

philosophers, and a specific favorable reference to Bradley Moore makes in an early essay, Donagan states that "not even Moore would criticize Bradley except on Bradley's own terms."[50] This is relevant to my project because it suggests that if Moore, in his later works, had indeed engaged Bradley on his own terms the outcome might have been very different from what it actually is.

Bradley's other commentators, even though they do not offer anything like Donagan's informative study of Bradley's style, rarely go without opining about it. Bradley is thus charged with "slips of expression"[51] by Alfred Sidgwick, one of his books is cited as "the most readable work on serious philosophy in English"[52] by Muirhead, and he is celebrated for his sincerity and candor by James. Some minor contradictions aside, all critics seem to agree that Bradley's writing is linguistically rich, stylistically challenging,[53] but ultimately, and always, *rewarding*. The reward is nowhere implied to be merely aesthetic; Bradley's philosophy simply works better in the language it is cast in. The difficulties and triumphs the philosopher encounters on his quest for the Absolute are always aptly *mirrored* in his expression. One of many examples of this occurs in Chapter XXIII of *Appearance and Reality*, where Bradley reaches an impasse and conveys it in the words: "But this failure to comprehend gives no ground for an objection against our Absolute. It is no disproof of a theory (I must repeat this) that, before some

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[50] Lang, Berel, Ed. *Philosophical Style. An Anthology about the Writing and Reading of Philosophy*. Nelson-Hall, Chicago 1980. P. 409.
[51] Sidgwick, Alfred. "Mr. Bradley and the Sceptics." *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 3, No. 11 (Jul., 1894), P. 336.
[52] Muirhead, J.H. "Bradley's Place in Philosophy." *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 34, No. 134 (Apr., 1925), P. 175.
[53] On the possible beginnings of Bradley's literary sensibility, Blanshard offers the following insight: "But his style was the expression, not of any conviction about himself, but partly of temperament, partly of deliberate literary pains. In youth he was a devoted lover of poetry, and by a long and thorough study first of English, then of German, and finally of French literary models, he acquired a feeling and perception in matters of form that among philosophers is very much too rare." (Blanshard, Brand. "Francis Herbert Bradley." *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Jan. 1, 1925), P. 9.)

questions as to "How," it is forced to remain dumb."[54] Similarly, the ambition and verve of Bradley's quest is reflected in his often wild turns of phrase. The following footnote from Chapter XII is as good an example as any: "I do not wish to be irreverent, but Mr. Spencer's attitude towards his Unknowable strikes me as a pleasantry, the point of which lies in its unconsciousness. It seems a proposal to take something for God simply and solely because we do not know what the devil it can be."[55]

I could go on extracting Bradley's brilliant expressions of which there are a lot in *Appearance and Reality*. My purpose here, however, is to look into Moore's treatment of Bradley with a focus on the language shift that separates the two thinkers. What I hope to have done so far is simply recreate enough of Bradley's playing field to allow for the intended comparison. I have singled out two of Bradley's tenets as appeals to common sense for just this same reason. If the legitimacy of common sense is at stake with Moore, it must be informative to look into his predecessor's understanding of common sense. As I mentioned before, Bradley's appeals to common sense are not advertised as such and are only meant to secure a broader epistemological frame so as to make the use of certain metaphysical notions (such as the Absolute) justifiable. The meeting point between this and Moore's way of using the term is in the implied understanding in both that what common sense gives us is some undeniable knowledge best conveyed by the rhetorical question 'Isn't it obvious that…?' Thus, there are a number of truths about certain things that each philosopher takes for granted. The trouble, of course, is that each one's truths are diametrically opposed to the other's.

[54] Bradley, F.H. *Appearance and Reality*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London 1920. P. 295.
[55] Ibid. P. 128.

Moore's defense is as much of common sense as it is of the truth of statements like 'the material world exists,' 'personal identity holds over time,' and 'Space and Time are real.' Actually, for Moore the mere subscription to some broad platform of knowledge like common sense entails, with certainty, the truth of the latter three statements. If we compare this last view to Bradley we cannot fail but make the observation that questions of the form 'Isn't it obvious that…?' could be meaningfully completed (in place of the ellipsis) with wildly contradictory statements. The truth of the latter could only be refuted if we established with certainty that either Bradley or Moore is *thoroughly wrong* in their 'commonsensical' assumptions.

I have to digress here in order to share my personal opinion about the credibility of the two philosophers' assumptions. The reason I allow myself to do that is because I firmly believe that whenever it comes down to choosing one of two compelling arguments, as I hold both Bradley's and Moore's to be, the best the reader is left with is some manner of personal arbitration. This is especially so when the opposed arguments are based on notions most of which the reader can relate to. What does it mean for a reader *to relate* to an argument? Since I do not find myself capable of answering the question directly I will do it through illustration. With Bradley, I hold that in what is immediately apparent of the observable world there is enough contradiction to warrant suspicion towards many things that are ordinarily thought of as real. I also accept Bradley's argument that there is a state of wonderment typical of thinking beings that reveals their concern with metaphysical questions as to first principles, absolutes, and the language of metaphysics itself. At the same time, I subscribe to Moore's intuitions of the existence of a material world, the legitimacy of the 'self' (the one I have been referring to as 'I,' 'me,' etc.), and the reality of Time and Space. If the two philosophers I am discussing were fishermen, the fact that they seem to have caught the same fish—me, their reader—is clear indication that they were not only both fishing in the right place, but also that it was the very *same* place.

The Importance of Being Blue

Of the two essays of Moore's I have chosen to look into, the first—"The Refutation of Idealism"—is the one that explicitly addresses idealism. This essay was also written earlier in Moore's career, possibly to present Moore's programmatic disengagement from what is identified as "modern idealism" and its proponents like Bradley and Taylor. The idealist view of the world is contrasted early on in the essay with what Moore identifies as "the ordinary view of the world." On Moore's broad introductory reading, the former is the view that reality is spiritual while the latter is the view that reality is material. Moore is quick to note that neither view fully stands or falls on the arguments advanced in support of it.[56] It is only some of the arguments in favor of the former, and more specifically the argument that "to be is to be perceived," that Moore proposes to dispute. Moore consequently devotes the better part of his essay to showing why the idealist principle "*Esse* is *percipi*" is untenable.[57] As is customary with him, he announces that he is doing something much less significant than he actually is—in this case he claims that his goal is to, at least, refute the following pronouncement by A.E. Taylor: "I will undertake to show that what makes [any piece of fact] real can be nothing

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[56] "But when we begin to argue about it, I think we are apt to forget what a vast number of arguments this interesting question must involve: we are apt to assume, that if one or two points be made on either side, the whole case is won… Reality may be spiritual, for all I know; and I devoutly hope it is. But I take "Idealism" to be a wide term and to include not only this interesting conclusion but a number of arguments which are supposed to be, if not sufficient, at least *necessary*, to prove it." Ibid. P. 24.

[57] Berkeley's dictum is taken by Moore to exemplify the thinking of most idealists and, consequently, Moore is willing to claim that if he disproves this dictum he will have in effect refuted idealism *as such*. Apart from mentioning Berkeley once, Moore's essay is thus not specifically addressed to Berkeley or his particular brand of idealism. In fact, Moore explicitly says that it is "modern idealism," a term he does not care to qualify, he is trying to refute. In light of these difficulties and the continuities between the position Moore goes against and Bradley's own position all my subsequent uses of "idealism" and "idealist" should be understood as referring to Bradley. This is in line with current scholarship that identifies Moore's anti-idealist stance largely as a retort to Bradley's philosophy (see Baldwin, Tom, "George Edward Moore", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2008 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2008/entries/moore/>.).

but its presence as an inseparable aspect of a *sentient experience*."[58] Refuting this will not, according to Moore, silence idealism completely but will be damaging enough to it as to demand a better line of argument from its supporters.

Even though Moore purports to be specifically attacking Taylor's definitive statement reproduced above, the project of the essay goes well beyond Taylor and pertains much more strongly to Bradley's program. It is important to note that even though the burden of explicating which brand of idealism Moore goes against falls on Moore himself, he does not offer such clarification. In the essay Moore mentions Bradley only once, with reference to Bradley's notion of the "what." Still, Bradley's presence is felt all throughout Moore's reconstruction and critique of "modern idealism." Firstly, Moore adopts Bradley's distinction of the teachings of theology from those of idealism proper: "That reality is spiritual has, I believe, been the tenet of many theologians; and yet, for believing that alone, they should hardly be called idealists."[59] In Bradley the same distinction is offered in the Introduction to *Appearance and Reality*.[60] Secondly, Moore draws as much of his critique of idealism from an "ordinary view of the world"[61] as Bradley does in his support of the same doctrine.[62] Thirdly, Moore's discussion of how we perceive color is a direct, albeit undeclared, answer to Bradley's treatment of the same problem in Chapter II of *Appearance and Reality*. When Moore attributes the saying that "the object of experience is inconceivable apart from the subject" to idealists, he is again

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[58] Moore, G.E. *G.E. Moore: Selected Writings*. Ed. Thomas Baldwin. Routledge, New York 1993. P. 28.
[59] Ibid. P. 24
[60] "Our orthodox theology on the one side, and our common-place materialism on the other side… vanish like ghosts before the daylight of free skeptical enquiry. I do not mean, of course, to condemn wholly either of these beliefs; but I am sure that either, when taken seriously, is the mutilation of our nature." (Bradley, F.H. *Appearance and Reality*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London 1920. P. 5)
[61] Moore, G.E. *G.E. Moore: Selected Writings*. Ed. Thomas Baldwin. Routledge, New York 1993. P. 24
[62] See my fn. 30

alluding to a central concept of Bradley's. Ultimately, these and other continuities reveal Moore's implicit engagement with Bradley specifically rather than "modern idealism" generally.

Moore's refutation of idealism hinges on a logical mistake he alleges the idealist is making. In his subsuming the object of experience under the experience itself, the idealist, according to Moore, makes an illegitimate step. In asserting that to be is to be perceived, the idealist commits to one of three possible readings of the copula. The first reading is that "is" denotes a definitional relation between the two terms in the statement, i.e. "that they are merely different names for the same thing."[63] Of course, as Moore admits, the idealist knows better than to subscribe to this reading. The second reading is that existence, considered as a whole, *includes* what is perceived as a part of it. This, again, runs contrary to the idealist's main contention. The third option, and the only one the idealist will give any currency, is that "whatever is experienced is *necessarily* so." This is, according to Moore, self-contradictory and it is what he sets out to correct.

The logical mistake is revealed by means of one of Bradley's own examples from Chapter II of *Appearance and Reality*—that of our way of experiencing color. It is important to note here that Moore, having started out with the more general "*Esse* is *percipi*," now squares in on Bradley's "being is experience."[64] What is at stake in the color example with both philosophers is the question if we can identify and legitimize the difference between the experiencing subject and the object that is experienced. Moore, in contrast to Bradley, claims that they are indeed distinct even though ordinary experience

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[63] Moore, G.E. *G.E. Moore: Selected Writings*. Ed. Thomas Baldwin. Routledge, New York 1993. P. 28
[64] Bradley, F.H. *Appearance and Reality*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London 1920. P. 243

suggests they are not. He insists that the way facts present themselves to us is contradictory because it demands the acceptance of two propositions which cannot both be true—"Experience *is* something unique and different from anything else," and "Experience of green is entirely indistinguishable from green."[65] He further insists that in advancing their thesis of the unity of experience, i.e. the subsuming of an object under the experiencing subject, idealists inadvertently accept the two contradictory propositions simultaneously.

As to the unity of experience, Moore cautions that it is a notion borne out of the idealist's aversion from unnecessary abstraction. By this, yet again backhandedly, Moore enters into Bradley's territory. Bradley's contention as to abstraction is that it subjects the immediacy and unity of experience to the incompleteness of rational cognition. The unity contested by Moore is--in Bradley's view-- that between cognition *and* sensation *and* whatever object they attend to. Earlier in his essay Moore recognizes the idealist's reliance on the distinction between thought and sensation, but claims that the distinction is not important for the purposes of Moore's own argument. What is at stake in the idealist's dictum for Moore is *experience*, no matter if it involves either sensation or thought or both. It is thus that when faced by the charge of making an illegitimate abstraction (and one which from the idealist standpoint allows for a misrepresentation of how things might be) Moore argues that the operation of distinguishing two things (experience from its object) and then fully identifying one with the other necessitates the abstraction and the proper separation of the two entities thereof for fear of contradiction.

[65] Ibid. 32.

When Moore applies these notions to the experience of color, he puts a great emphasis on the consciousness of blue. He argues that this consciousness is different from blue itself, because if they were the same entirely then our experience of green would not in any way be comparable to that of blue, which in reality it is exactly by virtue of the shared element of consciousness. As a result, "to identify either 'blue' or any other of what I have called '*objects*' of sensation, with the corresponding sensation is in every case, a self-contradictory error. It is to identify a part either with the whole of which it is a part or else with the other part of the same whole."[66] Moore finds the roots of this mistake in two places. The first is our language, which according to Moore does not properly differentiate between things and sensations of things. Blue is, he notes, most often referred to as a sensation, which partially accounts for the idealist's conflation of the two. The second source for the error is the peculiarity of introspection that when we attend to our consciousness it most readily assumes the qualities of the object of which it is a consciousness.[67]

The crux of the idealist argument, in the light of Moore's specific objections, is that blue is the *content* of the experience of blue. This is the last notion Moore attacks in his refutation. Moore's main contention is that, unlike the idealist, he believes that the color is a separate thing from our knowledge or awareness of it. Here is also where he makes his fleeting reference to Bradley. In his attempt to decipher the content thesis, Moore borrows Bradley's notion of the 'what.' Moore suggests that in Bradley's system the 'what' is equated with the content of an experience. This, however, is a plainly

[66] Ibid. 36.
[67] "And, in general, that which makes the sensation of blue a mental fact seems to escape us: it seems, if I may use a metaphor, to be transparent – we look through it and see nothing but the blue; we may be convinced that there *is something* but *what* it is no philosopher, I think, has yet clearly recognized." (Ibid. P. 37)

inaccurate reading of Bradley. In Chapter XV of *Appearance and Reality* Bradley introduces the concepts of the 'what' and the 'that' in the following way: "There is a "what" and a "that," an existence and a content, and the two are inseparable."[68] Unaware of this violation, Moore proceeds to offer "the true analysis of a sensation or idea."[69] This, he claims, is that "a sensation is, in reality, a case of 'knowing' or 'being aware of' or 'experiencing' something." Here it becomes clear that Moore's refutation of the idealist's content thesis is meant to rest on a notion of experience that Bradley, and most "modern idealists," simply do not share.

On one level, as seen earlier, Moore insists on conflating thought with sensation. In fact, Moore demonstrates a marked preference for the terms 'awareness' and 'experience.' The argumentative pay-off is that the less qualified this notion of experience is the harder it would be to pin the object of experience as inherent in it. Thus, on the second level of the argument, Moore claims that the experience (sensation, thought, awareness all used interchangeably) is different from the object experienced. Instead of being an inherent part of an experience as its content, 'blue' emerges as a thing, numerically and qualitatively distinct from our experience of it. On the first level, Moore fails to establish how the conflating of sensation, thought, awareness, knowledge etc. is any more legitimate than the idealist's insistence on distinguishing between these terms. And as to the second, all Moore has to offer, in the end, is the suggestion that if we look very carefully, we should be able to make the experience of blue out from the color blue itself. About how satisfactory this last suggestion is, even Moore himself seems to

[68] Bradley, F.H. *Appearance and Reality*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London 1920. P. 162.
[69] Moore, G.E. *G.E. Moore: Selected Writings*. Ed. Thomas Baldwin. Routledge, New York 1993. P. 40.

have serious doubts.[70] Some of his critics resolve these doubts to Moore's disadvantage by noticing the inconsistencies that lead Moore's argument to this double impasse.

As to Moore's failure on the first level, A.K. Rogers argues that the conflation of thinking and knowledge on the one hand with sensation on the other is unwarranted for what he sees as obvious reasons. Rogers contends that an act makes sense to him only "in terms of content, or agency, or both."[71] According to Rogers, when Moore suggests that we can be aware of the color blue (think of it as blue, know *that* it is blue), he postulates "an *actus purus*, performed (if such an act needs to be 'performed') by an entirely undefined entity or self."[72] What this means is that according to Moore we somehow can simply *know blue when we see it*. Except knowledge, as Rogers reminds us, presupposes a system of qualifications, pre-conceptions and, most importantly, other knowledge. In this, knowledge of blue is very different from sensation upon *mere* encounter with blue. If we go back to Bradley, we find multiple reiterations of this same argument. The level of abstraction (and thus danger of contradiction) that thought, awareness, and ultimately knowledge involve is much higher than that of sensation. Idealism would indeed suffer a heavy blow if through valid reasoning these notions are proved interchangeable, but Moore's reason for conflating them is self-serving rather than strongly persuasive.

As to Moore's mistake on the second level—in denying the idealist's contention that the object of experience exists only as far as it is the content of that experience—C.A. Strong offers an interesting observation. What the idealist's content thesis is meant

[70] "My main object in this paragraph has been to try to make the reader *see* it; but I fear I shall have succeeded very ill." Ibid. P. 41.
[71] Rogers, A.K. "Mr. Moore's Refutation of Idealism." *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Jan., 1919), P. 82.
[72] Ibid. P. 82.

to prove is, most essentially, that we have little guarantee outside our particular experience of an object that the object exists on its own, apart from our experience, at different other times. The transitoriness and immediacy of a given experience are important factors, which figure prominently in Bradley's defense of idealism. Moore, however, fails to notice that the separateness of consciousness and its object he invites his readers to *see*, even if seen, does not in any way guarantee the survival of the separate object over time.[73] The separateness, in other words, might turn out to be as confused and momentary as the experience and thus too weak to ground any ontological claim on.

Ordinarily Speaking

Having laid out the main contentions of Moore's *Refutation* and some valid objections thereof, I will now look into the way Moore positions himself apart from Bradley by means of language. It is important here to remember that Moore, just like Bradley, is working his way out of the historical, conceptual and stylistic burden of a philosophical tradition. In Bradley's case, the enemy closest to home is represented by the utilitarians and the Hegelian idealists of the nineteenth century. In Moore's case, it is thinkers like Bradley that occasion the desire for a substantive and linguistic shift. The way Moore does this with language is threefold—by actively discarding and criticizing the language of previous philosophy, by a newfound reliance on ordinary expression and, somewhat paradoxically in light of the latter, by adopting new technical terminology. Moore fares differently in the three distinct enterprises but all of them remain

[73] "Even on Mr. Moore's theory, then, our certitude of the existence of objects is limited to the moments at which we perceive them. They still retain the irregular outlines—the rough edges, so to speak—and the 'momentary and fleeting' character that are peculiar to our perceptions." (Strong, C.A. "Has Mr. Moore Refuted Idealism?" *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 14, No. 54 (Apr., 1905), P. 188.)

instrumental for the understanding of his *Refutation* and, historically, for their influence on subsequent philosophers.

As to Moore's departure from the language of previous philosophy and Bradleyan idealism in particular, it is executed in two distinct ways. The first is in what Moore refuses to say. When, for instance, Moore analyzes the notion of 'illegitimate abstraction,' which is so pivotal to Bradley's argument, Moore never discounts the notion wholesale and explicitly but rather offers a reading of it which opens the possibility for looking at some of its uses as problematic. [74] What this treatment does, in effect, is try to weaken idealism by analyzing one of its central notions away. On the other hand, Moore refuses to condemn or fully discard the notion in question. He *cautiously* advances by manner of undermining rather than attacking the idealist. This caution, so typical of Moore and so contrary to Bradley's fiery prose, adds to the strong impression that the battle in Moore's philosophy is not between different philosophers but between different ways of speaking. In Moore, who may be considered the first philosopher of caution, humor is replaced by irony, attack is replaced by distanced analysis and, what has been noticed by his critics, metaphysics is replaced by a cheerfully concrete step-by-step reconstruction of reality.[75]

Moore's irony is present at many junctions in his *Refutation*. He calls the spiritual qualities of reality alleged by idealists "excellent." This constitutes a careful pun on the

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[74] "The principle is used to assert that certain abstractions are *in all cases* illegitimate; that whenever you try to assert *anything whatever* of that which is *part* of an organic whole, what you assert can only be true of the whole. And this principle, so far from being a useful truth, is necessarily false." (Moore, G.E. *G.E. Moore: Selected Writings*. Ed. Thomas Baldwin. Routledge, New York 1993. P. 33.)

[75] In a discussion of Urmson's *The History of Analysis*, Urmson says: "To take the example of Moore, whom we were just discussing, I should place him among the practitioners of classical analysis, but I am quite certain that he had no intention whatever of establishing a metaphysical system." (Rorty, Richard. *The Linguistic Turn*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1992. P. 303.)

notions of classical rationalism and slyly establishes a continuity between it and idealism. Less than a paragraph later Moore announces: "Reality may be spiritual, for all I know; and I devoutly hope it is."[76] Needless to say, however little of his metaphysical system Moore reveals, it does not have much place for hope, spirituality and devotion. The currency of these terms in the philosophy he positions himself against is not even mentioned by him directly. Instead, it is suggested by Moore's reenacting of an attitude as foreign to him as the tenets of the philosophy it originates from. Another ironic stab at his adversaries is Moore's suggestion that "pleasant and plausible suppositions may be the proper function of philosophy."[77] We do not need to be aware of scholarly work on the distinction between irony and humor to identify Moore's subversions of idealism as examples of the former. It is enough to look back to Bradley, where humor, with all its implications of bite and cheer, is the prevalent mode of subversion: "To hold that one's mistress is charming, ever and in herself, is an article of faith, and beyond reach of question."[78] However simplistic my reading of this contrast may be, the two philosophers' humor is different in that Bradley seems to be enjoying the occasional joke he affords himself, while Moore's witty pronouncements are executed with caution and are, a favorite word of Bradley's, generally bloodless. And even though neither philosopher was exactly celebrated for their sense of humor, Bradley is the only one of the two who occasionally receives praise for it.[79]

[76] Moore, G.E. *G.E. Moore: Selected Writings*. Ed. Thomas Baldwin. Routledge, New York 1993. P. 24.
[77] Ibid. P. 25.
[78] Bradley, F.H. *Appearance and Reality*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London 1920. P. 14.
[79] Brand Blanshard recognizes Bradley's wit in the following statement: "He was always a most formidable opponent, not merely for his great gifts as a dialectician, but also for a power of satire which he used at times with merciless effect. But this was not used undiscriminatingly." (Blanshard, Brand. "Francis Herbert Bradley." *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Jan. 1, 1925), P. 7)

The second function of Moore's cautious language is his refusal to attack other philosophers directly. This is manifest firstly in the fact that in his essay Moore never dwells on any particular philosopher for more than a quick reference. It is most peculiar that in an essay full of implicit jabs at Bradley, Moore *mentions* the other philosopher only once and fleetingly. Apart from this, Moore's refusal to engage in an attack is shown in his endless disclaimers as to the insignificance of his goal.[80] Be it out of false modesty or sheer caution Moore's disclaimers attempt to render his "The Refutation of Idealism" of a decidedly lesser ambition than what its title announces it to have. If we juxtapose this attitude of polite modesty to Bradley's in *Appearance and Reality*, we again are faced with a great contrast: "Yet the materialist, from defect of nature or of education, or probably both, worships without justification this thin product of his untutored fancy."[81]

The third function of Moore's language that marks his cautious distancing himself from idealism is his refusal to offer a metaphysical system of his own. Much has been made in the literature of Moore's way of departmentalizing philosophical problems.[82] As seen earlier (my fn. 50), while holding back any manner of "big picture" Moore builds his arguments around relatively minor issues in service of minor goals. In her essay "Three Aspects of Moore's Philosophy" Alice Ambrose makes the following interesting claim: "Moore conceived philosophy as having a positive task, namely, "to give a general

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[80] "The subject of this paper is, therefore, quite uninteresting. Even if I prove my point, I shall have proved nothing about the Universe in general. Upon the important question whether Reality is or is not spiritual my argument will not have the remotest bearing. I shall only attempt to arrive at the truth about a matter, which is in itself quite trivial and insignificant, and from which, so far as I can see and certainly so far as I shall say, no conclusions can be drawn about any of the subjects about which we most want to know." (Moore, G.E. *G.E. Moore: Selected Writings*. Ed. Thomas Baldwin. Routledge, New York 1993. P. 25)

[81] Bradley, F.H. *Appearance and Reality*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London 1920. P. 17.

[82] Malcolm's authoritative opinion about the matter of Moore's refusal to offer a complete positive theory is expressed as follows: "His most important constructive theory, the theory that good is a simple indefinable quality like yellow, was itself a natural outcome of his own destructive treatment of innumerable attempts to define "good." (Rorty, Richard. *The Linguistic Turn*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1992. P. 122.)

description of the *whole* of the Universe, mentioning all the most important kinds of things which we *know* to be in it…””[83] Ambrose is using this quote to contrast it to Moore's general reputation as "the great refuter" with no positive theory if his own. But even Ambrose concedes that whatever positive general view Moore has of the proverbial "*whole* of the Universe," he only allows us glimpses of it while chipping away at every theory that goes *beyond* his own. This again stands in sharp contrast to Bradley's philosophical edifice in *Appearance and Reality*. Every phrase in Bradley is used for the amplification of his main metaphysical thesis while every phrase in Moore remains a reductive exercise in decentralizing the idealist's thesis to analyzable bits.

Moore's tendency of caution—evident in his preference for irony over humor, his holding back from outright attack, and his refusal to offer a metaphysics of his own—be it fully strategic or partly inadvertent, manages to draw language into the spotlight. What remains after Moore has stripped down Bradley's feast of belly laughs, merciless stabs at one's opponents, and metaphysical ivory towers, is language in its most concrete. In fact, Moore is known to have been fond of what he identifies as "translating a theory into the concrete." According to Ambrose, this translation involves the laying bare of the empirical implications of a theory's main propositions.[84] In Moore, then, the primary function of language is to somehow *correspond* to a material reality and our common knowledge of it. Hence, all manners of humor, affectivity and theory building are relinquished by Moore in favor of an interest in the straightforward statement of facts.

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[83] Ambrose, Alice. "Three Aspects of Moore's Philosophy." *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 57, No. 26 (Dec. 22, 1960), P. 817.
[84] Ibid. P. 819.

The backbone of Moore's critique of the idealist is thus the revelation that the latter is not using language in the ordinary way. This claim is the strongest, and only outward, attempt at undoing idealism Moore engages in. The claim is made explicit in the "Refutation" but gains full traction in Moore's "Defence of Common Sense." However, even in the earlier essay it is announced in lieu of Moore's distinction between the idealist program and the ordinary view of the world. It is similarly present in Moore's wholehearted embracing of triviality, the commonly experienced and the shared knowledge of the everyday. The presence and relevance of such concerns inevitably has its share in modifying Moore's own phrasing. The *Refutation* is thus replete with qualifications such as "well-known facts," "it is plain," "the type of argument…is familiar enough," which suggest an inclusive community of people, not necessarily only philosophers, who think and talk plainly enough to understand each other. When by the end of his essay Moore bluntly turns the table on the idealist—"The question requiring to be asked about material things is thus not: What reason have we for supposing that anything exists *corresponding* to our sensations? but: What reason have we for supposing that material things do *not* exist, since *their* existence has precisely the same evidence as that of our sensations?"—he in effect sets the stage for the full-fledged endorsement of common sense and the language it presupposes that finds its formulation some two decades later in the "Defence of Common Sense."

Somewhat paradoxically, Moore's call for greater attention to ordinary ways of speaking runs parallel to another tendency in his language—his introduction of new technical terms to the philosophical vernacular. The discrepancy is not necessarily problematic for Moore because the new tools introduced are ostensibly meant to facilitate

the *analysis* of ordinary ways of speaking and *not* to subvert them. Still, the criterion of clarity and non-contradiction Moore applies to language, on which ostensibly ordinary language is to be preferred over the language of Bradley's idealism, is never properly applied to Moore's own technical terminology. In other words, analysis, in Moore's version of it, is rarely prone to analyze itself. In his discussion of Moore's *Ethics*, Soames makes the following observation, which I fully agree with:

> "He did not understand the fundamental methodological notions—*analysis, definability, logical implication, entailment, logical consequence, logical consistency, logical truth, analyticity, necessity, possibility, meaning,* and *proof*—that played central roles in his arguments…His theses and arguments—though laced with precise, technical-sounding terms—were anything but clear, precise, or well-understood…Because his confusion and unclarity was so widely shared, this was not appreciated for decades."[85]

The problem with the dubious interplay between the idealist's language, ordinary language and Moore's new technical terminology does not stop here. Its most overt manifestation is that, although Moore presupposes the primacy and importance of the ordinary, he spends no time to elaborate the inner workings of ordinary language. As Wisdom notes, this job was "carried further, much further" by one of Moore's most prominent critics, i.e. Wittgenstein.[86] The mostly unqualified notions of ordinary language Moore offers in his "Defence of Common Sense" only amplify Moore's general intuition but do very little in explicating it.

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[85] Soames, Scott. *Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2005. P. 74.
[86] Wisdom, John. "G.E. Moore." *Analysis*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Jan., 1959), P. 51.

Thinking of Things Imagined

Moore's "Defence of Common Sense" is built upon two crucial statements. The first one--(1)--establishes Moore's beliefs in the existence of a material world (including his body, the Earth, other bodies, both human and not human, with temporal and spatial configurations that, albeit subject to change, are always there) and his personal experiences of it (including sensations, imaginations, expectations, fears, desires, and feelings). Moore's second statement (2), which he regards as dependent on his first, is that everything that holds in the first person singular for him when he pronounces the previous sentence also holds in the first person singular for "*very many*"[87] of the human beings defined as the philosopher has defined himself in his first statement. Since the only way of doing full justice to both statements would be to cite them in their lengthy entirety, I hope that my abridgement of them will be accepted for its utility. But my interest in Moore's language makes it necessary for me to point out that the world picture that is common to both statements is painted painstakingly by use of enumeration, repetition, and (near obsessive) elaboration.

From his initial two statements Moore constructs a view that is most often labeled the "Common Sense view of the world."[88] Moore concedes that in order to follow through with such a view he has to (and does) assume that sentences of existential import such as 'The earth has existed for many years past' have "some meaning which is *the* ordinary or popular meaning of such expressions."[89] What would it, then, mean for someone to not understand such meanings? According to Moore this could only be if the

[87] Moore's italics.
[88] Moore, G.E. *G.E. Moore: Selected Writings*. Ed. Thomas Baldwin. Routledge, New York 1993. P.118.
[89] Moore's italics. Ibid. P.111.

person in question confused the *understanding* of the expression with its much harder to attain *analysis*. Moore concedes that the analysis of most simple propositions he builds his worldview on is largely unavailable to us, himself included. The understanding of them in their *ordinary sense*, however, is for him both unalienable and inescapable. If this is so, and it certainly is so for Moore, his statement (1) holds up as it is a first person singular report conducted in a perfectly understandable manner. Statement (1) binds one person only and, be it opinion or fact, is almost undeniable. From here, Moore decides to address the possible objections to his statement (2), since this statement, if true, will legitimize the existence of other human beings and, from there, the overarching truth of commonsensical propositions. As to the possibilities of disagreeing with (2), Moore singles out two paradigm cases—the first (signified by the letter 'A') is that of "some philosophers" who will claim that all the propositions (2) consists of are either partially or completely false; the second ('B') is that of "other philosophers" who will contend that some class of propositions in (2) consists of propositions that might all be true, but have never been *known* to be true by anyone of us.

The philosophers of both group A and group B, according to Moore, commit the error of self-contradiction. However, it is in two distinct ways that contradiction is played out in each case. With A-philosophers, the consequence of their statement that all propositions in (2) are partially or fully false is that the existence of any human beings other than the speaker are denied (because, as we are reminded repeatedly by Moore, the propositions of (2) only repeat the ones of (1) with the difference that those in (2) widen the scope of (1) by inclusion of other human beings). I choose to identify this as a mistake of ontology, because the contradiction appears to be between the obvious, for

Moore, existence of *many* philosophers and the claim that no people exist at all. In the case of B-philosophers the mistake is epistemological, because their claim of our limited knowledge (and hence the uncertainty) of any class of propositions in (2) contradicts their assumption that there are other human beings besides oneself. Moore's illustration of this mistake is that in a statement like "No human being has ever *known* of the existence of other human beings" there is another statement implied of the form "There have been many other human beings beside myself, and none of them (including myself) has ever known the existence of other human beings."[90]

The rest of "Defence of Common Sense" is devoted to technical points that further elucidate Moore's misgivings with the arguments of philosophers of both groups. The first problem he tackles is the classical anti-materialist argument that physical facts are somehow *logically* and/or *causally* dependent on mental facts. The logical connection (as exemplified by Berkeley's view of material objects as mere 'ideas') he dismisses on the ground that it simply is not reasonable. Moore does a little better with his dismissal of a causal connection: he states that the only way certain physical facts (ex. that the earth has existed for many years) could causally depend on mental ones is if all material things had been created by God, a way out that Moore thinks we have no good reason to think we have. The next and last point Moore makes is that *sense-data*, whatever ambiguities the use of the term brings to the discussion, stand closer to the material things they are synecdochical representations of than to mere ideas.[91]

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[90] Ibid. P.117.

[91] My use of the term 'synecdoche' here is only in the sense of a figure of speech by which a part is put for the whole (as *fifty sail* for *fifty ships*). The sense in which the whole stands for a part of it (as in *society* for *high society*) could, in the same context, be attributed to the idealist argument. (Both my definitions and the examples I give are borrowed from the Merriam Webster Online Dictionary)

When I look at Moore's essay, the most striking difference from Bradley is not the argument advanced but the language it is presented in. Firstly, Moore populates his writing with ambiguous interlocutors announced as 'some philosophers,' 'other philosophers,' 'most philosophers' etc.[92] What makes *some* of these interlocutors recognizable is most often not their arguments (as no such are explicitly addressed) but certain clusters of objections that could potentially be read as typical of respective known theories. Thus, instead of Bradley, in "Defence of Common Sense" I on numerous occasions encounter a philosopher that I cannot help identifying as 'the philosopher who, if he had held what Moore is here trying to object to, could have plausibly been F.H. Bradley.' In fact, Bradley could be associated with most of the arguments Moore attributes to philosophers of group A. Bradley would have also agreed with the idea that what Moore refers to as sense-data are mere ideas. Finally, there is in Bradley enough talk of God and the Absolute to make anyone with Moore's philosophical program specifically averse to Bradley. Is it such natural aversion that keeps Moore from naming his interlocutor?[93] Moore's inventory of words, I think, suggests a very different explanation.

I believe that Moore to some degree realizes how hopeless his project would be if he tagged along with the *style* of previous debates. In order to ground a philosophical thesis on common sense, he makes two important stylistic/methodological choices—one, to stay in his way of writing as close as possible to the language level of his reader (any reader), and two, to stay focused on the issues immediately at hand rather than engage

[92] The only two exceptions where actual philosophers are *named* are that of Berkeley and J.S. Mill, none of whom however is invited into Moore's discussion for anything more than a quick exemplary reference.
[93] Alice Ambrose, in her "Three Aspects of Moore's Philosophy," agrees that, apart from the skeptic, Moore's projected objector in the common sense essays is indeed Bradley. (Ambrose, Alice. "Three Aspects of Moore's Philosophy." *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 57, No. 26 (Dec. 22, 1960), P. 820)

with expert discussions of the past.[94] These choices are clever as they make for a certain clarity of argument. There are, however, some downsides to this clarity. One consequence of Moore's refusal to properly recognize (name) his objectors is that there may be many more things *these philosophers* could have said that are outside the scope of Moore's project but are relevant to it.

A further complication, by way of omission, is Moore's lack of definition of what he supposes a common sense truth to be. Much has been made in the literature of this omission, mostly because the terminology Moore's common sense view is cast in includes many ambiguous terms.[95] Commentators seem to agree that Moore's conceptions of common sense in general and a common sense truth in particular rely on some notion of an epistemological background that is available to all human beings. James Somerville, in his authoritative and even-handed "Moore's Conception of Common Sense," contends that "Moore uses 'common sense' in an all inclusive sense to refer to all of us, even specialists like scientists and philosophers in their plain moments."[96] This does take care of the possible intended connotation of 'common' and, as to 'sense,' after lengthy consideration of the relevant literature, Somerville concludes that it is meant to convey a sort of general principle by which we are all *entitled* to make

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[94] It is not my claim here that Moore drastically overhauled his *own* style of writing especially for "Defence of Common Sense." I only claim that the style this essay exhibits shows a clear break from the tradition Moore comes from and is here rebelling against.

[95] R.E. Tully's view on this issue, which I find congenial, is stated as follows: "What is wholly absent from the 'Defence' is any attempt to define exactly what a common sense truth is. Moore undoubtedly must have realized that some conventional 'truths' are literal falsehoods carrying the license of idiom: Moore could not literally see his body *in* a mirror or say that the sun *rises* each morning." (Tully, R.E. "Moore's Defence of Common Sense: A Reappraisal after Fifty Years." *Philosophy*, Vol. 51, No. 197 (Jul., 1976), P. 294). I part with Tully in his opinion that this omission is not fatal to Moore's argument. It is my intuition that, if Moore will demand clarity from his many opponents and charge them with absurdity for not working up to his criterion of clarity, he must be held responsible for any similar violations of his own.

[96] Somerville, James. "Moore's Conception of Common Sense." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (Dec., 1986), P. 244.

certain claims. These results, of course, are less than satisfactory not because of a failure on Somerville's part, but because of the inherent ambiguity of Moore's terms and his divergent uses of them.

In Bradley, common sense appears in a different light altogether. Even though Bradley allows himself the occasional reference to common beliefs,[97] they do not seem to be accessible to just anyone. On Blanshard's reading, in harmony with Bradley's reclusive life, his philosophy exists in a self-imposed isolation from "the common mind."[98] At the same time, in the Introduction to his *Appearance and Reality*, Bradley renounces any claim to privileged access on account of his philosophical preoccupations. What we do know, for sure, is that Bradley nowhere cares to define common sense. His opinion on the task and prerogative of philosophy, however, throws some light on an implied definition. For Bradley philosophy, and especially his philosophy, is a way to encounter reality in its total unity. In James' reading of Bradley "we can save ourselves only by hoping that the absolute will re-realize unintelligibly and "somehow," the unity, wholeness, certainty, etc., which feeling so immediately and transparently made us acquainted with at first."[99]

One possibility, which I as a reader am unhappy for not seeing played out in Moore's *Defence*, is that for a discussion of Bradley's intuition about the state of wonder human beings often find themselves in. A function of this state, as Bradley has defined

[97] "It is common first to admit that body is mere sensation and idea, and still to treat it as wholly independent of the soul, while the soul remains its non-physical and irrelevant secretion." (Bradley, F.H. *Appearance and Reality*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London 1920. P. 297.)
[98] "His freedom from teaching was not an unmixed blessing. It did give leisure, but it produced a gap between the common mind and his own which it was increasingly hard to bridge…He was never at great pains, as he marched into his far country, to keep up the bridges behind him." (Blanshard, Brand. "Francis Herbert Bradley." *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Jan. 1, 1925), P. 7.)
[99] James, William. "Bradley or Bergson?" *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Jan. 20, 1910), P. 32.

it, is that it introduces “mystery and enchantment” in our worldview. Another function of it is imagination, of which Bradley writes: “There is imagination which is higher, and more true, and most emphatically more real, than any single fact of sense.”[100] The closest Moore gets to recognizing the latter (not its significance but its actuality) is when he says in his statement (1) “I have thought of imaginary things and persons and incidents, in the reality of which I did not believe.”[101] I think that the phrasing of this last statement is important, because it reveals Moore’s agenda at least as clearly as the arguments he follows it up with. The problem here is, I think, that Bradley is on to something and Moore knows it but is unwilling to concede it. On the face of it, Moore’s statement acknowledges the fact that our minds sometimes travel in, so to speak, uncharted territories. But we should notice that instead of saying ‘I have imagined things, persons etc.’ he chooses to say ‘I have thought of imaginary things…” This is most probably a conscious effort on Moore’s part to diminish the significance of imagination. Maybe what he hopes to establish through the use of the artificial construction of *thinking of things imagined* is that imagination is not only always under the auspices of rational thought (“in the reality of which I did not believe”), but also the stronger thesis that imagination could not and should not be taken seriously at all. The most important consequence of offering up this artificial construction, however, is that with it Moore seems to stray away from the main point he is trying to defend in his essay. Whatever idea of common sense we espouse, it is hardly disputable that most humans share a capacity to imagine that is most often unchecked (or remains immune to being checked) by reason. As Moore would have put it, I am here using the word ‘imagine’ in its

[100] Ibid. Pp. 381-382.
[101] Ibid. P.108.

broadest and most ordinary sense. It is obvious for me that if Moore had treated the problem of imagination[102] appropriately, he would have had to revise some of his views. Thus, it is a choice *not to* include some thing *other philosophers* have worried about that renders his account of common sense insular, i.e. not commonsensical enough for *some*.[103]

Another peculiarity of Moore's language is what I have earlier referred to as 'enumeration, repetition, and (near obsessive) elaboration.'[104] What I mean by this is, I hope, evident for anyone who has read Moore's essay—a quilt of itemized propositions that are mentioned and repeated so often that every new argument contains within it all the ones prior to it. This approach is a consequence of Moore's commitment to simplicity and clarity. It also allows Moore to keep as close as possible to ordinary language. The essay is truly remarkable in its use of only a few simple building blocks. I think there are two major consequences of this approach. The first is that the argument remains, so to speak, on ground level, i.e. it is approachable for almost anyone who should decide to study it. The downside of this, however, is that Moore's writing *imagines* an extremely broad audience when in reality his readers are most likely to belong to the ever more specialized field of professional philosophy. If he does, on the other hand, intend to advertise a new, simpler philosophical language to people in the

[102] I have allowed myself the freedom of treating Moore's neglect towards the notion of 'imagination' as indicative of disagreement with Bradley's idea of metaphysical wonderment. By this I am not implying that issues of imagination and wonderment respectively are to be treated as identical, but am instead focusing on one similarity between them, namely, their unyielding to Moore's project. Had Moore given us even a half-hearted mention of 'wonderment,' we would have been able to analyze it against his use of the concept of imagination.

[103] I realize that Moore should have written not an essay but a large tome had he decided to address all of his objectors' views. Still, I think that for its format and size "Defence of Common Sense" packs more ambition than it can possibly fulfill.

[104] Bradley, who is guilty of similar redundancies, is only saved by the fact that it is over the span of an entire book that they occur. It is my view that, stylistically, excessive repetition is a tool much more obtrusive and less effective when used in the essay form.

field, Moore risks ostracizing a sizeable portion of his potential readership. Not everyone in philosophy is guaranteed to respond to the incantation of a few atomic statements, especially when the argument it is used to hammer out claims to offer some undeniable truths.

This latter fact gets us to the second dangerous result of Moore's economic language. I hope it is clear by now that Moore intentionally marginalizes his opponents and, through language, any person (like Bradley) who would use "puzzling expression" in a discussion like his. It is a meta-philosophical point, but an important point still, that by means of argument and language Moore achieves a state not unlike that of Descartes in his famous *Meditations*. His is a state (and discourse) of beguiling simplicity, born of the reliance on *what we have* before our eyes (or, in Descartes' case, before our mind's eye). A closer look at "Defence of Common Sense" reveals that it is all held together by a few very simple gestures—such as looking at one's hand or eyeing up the distance between objects within one's sight. Still, as Descartes' introspection could not yield any positive truth without the assumption of a deity, Moore's robust materialism would not have gotten off the ground without him assuming that what he had before his eyes were evidence enough. It is true that almost any ontological system is based on such assumptions. But, then, why does not Moore see through the inadequacies of the enterprise? Why does he have to sweep most previous discourse under the rug before he offers *his* definitive truth?

Here we should be reminded of Moore's concession that many of the core propositions he builds his argument on are understandable and yet cannot be analyzed with any certainty. Maybe this is Moore's way of recognizing the circularity of his

project or, perhaps, this is how he tries to minimize the scope of his project so as to avoid circularity. Either way, his remains a project that does not directly and properly apply to the discourse it purports to dissolve. R.E. Tully, in the essay "Moore's Defence of Common Sense: A Reappraisal after Fifty Years," offers the thesis that Moore's attempts at analysis are all undermined rather than fortified by his common sense view of the world: "If, unlike the propositions of common sense, no analysis is certainly true, then what reward is to be found through the attempt to analyze them? In making the case for common sense, Moore seems to have lost the case for analysis even before arguing it. The goal of clarity and simplicity, of *knowing their meaning* (as he puts it), lies beyond achievement."[105] On this difficulty hangs not only the validity of Moore's arguments but also their understandability. The clash between analysis and common sense originates in the connection Moore establishes between common sense and ordinary language. In Malcolm's opinion, Moore's project is best understood as reliant on this fast connection.[106] The main virtues of common sense that Moore opposes to the tangle of skeptic and idealist arguments are clarity and simplicity and these two main virtues also account for Moore's preference for ordinary language over "puzzling expression." Except, in order to *understand* the common sense view and the ordinary language that it is best cast in, Moore proposes the new philosophical tangle of analysis. That Moore's analytic efforts lead to unclarity and far from simplicity is evident in the many and often contradictory readings they have occasioned. Ultimately, if Moore had seriously

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[105] Tully, R.E. "Moore's Defence of Common Sense: A Reappraisal after Fifty Years." *Philosophy*, Vol. 51, No. 197 (Jul., 1976), P. 297.
[106] Malcolm, Norman. "Defending Common Sense." *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (May, 1949), P. 219.

committed to the proverbial all-inclusive common sense of the world and the attendant language, he most certainly would not have been able to say much *to* philosophers.[107]

Erring on the Side of Caution

It remains a puzzle why Moore failed to realize that defending anything requires the direct reckoning (physically, linguistically, psychologically etc.) with an adversary to defend it from. One suggestion is that if traditional philosophy, with its reverent concern for prior thought, is ultimately flawed, the new philosophy Moore pioneers can be expected to steer clear of this traditional *modus operandi*. Whatever the answer might be, it is clear that in the two essays of Moore's I have discussed there is an interlocutor unidentified but palpably present. Bradley might turn out to have been associated by Moore with everything Moore disliked about "traditional philosophy." But, again, in light of Bradley's own dissociation from what *he* calls "traditional philosophy," it is hard for the contemporary reader to gain full satisfaction from the ways the two philosophers position themselves. It would be simplistic to accept the notion that every school of philosophy is legitimately traditional in comparison with the subsequent one. If philosophy in general is prone to shed an old skin every once in a while, the reader of philosophy is entitled to at least this—that with every new skin some of the form, concerns, and goals of the enterprise remain the same.

Through the lens of my study, the greatest difference between Bradley and Moore resides in their divergent use of caution. Everything in Bradley—his arguments, his goals and his language—is grandiosely incautious, while everything about Moore is,

[107] This is the gist of Malcolm's argument in the essay I have referred to.

conversely, cautious to a fault. Even if Moore turns out to be Bradley's "brother metaphysician," which I think he is, Moore's metaphysics is implied and never articulated. The same is true of Moore's language, which suffers a self-imposed low budget of words and expressions. Caution in Moore seems to be a function of his self-identification apart from philosophers like Bradley. In this, however, Moore does the opposite of what he intends to do—instead of turning his back on the history of philosophy he *engages* it by burning a well-trodden, visible and often celebrated bridge. As I hope to have shown, not talking *about* Bradley or *like* Bradley does not save one from having to talk *to* him.

Let us for a moment imagine a Moore that lived before Bradley and, even better, before any idealist argument was ever advanced. His "The Refutation of Idealism" and "Defence of Common Sense" would still be possible to write with the exception of the few possible objections discussed. By Moore's understanding, a perfectly commonsensical environment, one where no idealists could ever come about, will make possible the doubt-free perception of a material world, the full submission of imagination to reason, and the persistence in using only language that directly refers to objects of direct perception. Unfortunately for Moore, our sense of history and our common sense at its most inclusive render such a counterfactual situation impossible.

Chapter II

Neurath's Secret Language

The present chapter is unique in my project for two reasons. Firstly, it deals mostly with the work and legacy of Otto Neurath and thus does not follow my chosen pattern of juxtaposing pairs of thinkers. I hope that the rest of my dissertation helps make the case that such juxtapositions are fruitful in analyzing the language of philosophy in a satisfactory way. With Neurath, the engagement with language is different enough from that of all other philosophers that it creates its own space outside any tradition or school of thought. This leads to the second reason for the uniqueness of my chapter—its main subject occupies a place in the history of philosophy that is largely unqualifiable in purely philosophical terms. For these reasons and at the peril of breaking decorum—i.e. the philosophical and methodological parameters set by my own work—I will restrict my treatment of Neurath to an expository note on what otherwise merits an exposition.

Neurath's approach to linguistic philosophy is never limited to philosophy, however broadly the term is understood. His allegiance to parts of the Vienna Circle program—the call for a unified science, the heightened interest in language, and the special interest in symbolic abbreviations of natural languages—locates Neurath historically but barely scratches the surface of his theoretical contribution. Furthermore, and probably most importantly, Neurath's philosophy of language and his own language thereof are shaped by *practical* concerns untypical of the history of analytic thought. The imperatives of how we should write and what words we should use in philosophy and the everyday, which have proved so elusive and covert in a few of the figures I discuss in my

dissertation, are in Neurath laid completely bare. Such imperatives are for Neurath only philosophical in their formulation but, once formulated, are called upon to serve the practical findings of the social and natural sciences. Neurath goes *out there* to find the right approach to language through the application of his rigorous scientific understanding of life. In his search for a universal language and a visual grammar Neurath goes to lengths unknown to philosophy and science alike. His ISOTYPE program, for example, successfully puts to work a system of pictorial symbols to be used as a cross-cultural educational tool. Neurath's victories and failures thus originate in philosophy but belong equally to any other of the several fields of inquiry Neurath works in. I will argue that the sweeping ambition of Neurath's renaissance approach to knowledge unwittingly sacrifices any consideration of the literary elements of language and, more importantly, an awareness in Neurath of the literary dimension of his own writing.

The narrow opening through which Neurath enters my study is best explained by use of the following emblematic quotation from his essay "Protocol Sentences": "What is originally given to us is our *ordinary natural language* with a stock of imprecise, unanalyzed terms. We start by purifying this language of metaphysical elements and so reach the *physicalistic ordinary language*. In accomplishing this we may find it very useful to draw up a list of proscribed words."[108] I think that this pronouncement's relevance to the ambitions and ailments of analytic thought cannot be overestimated. In it Neurath recognizes language as the battlefield of and for philosophy. The criteria on the application of which an eventual victory will depend are those of

[108] Ayer, A.J., Ed. *Logical Positivism*. The Free Press, New York 1959. P. 200

purity and precision. The ostensible enemy remains a metaphysical gene carried through our ordinary natural language into philosophy. The cure suggested, in turn, would be the replacement of this language with a physicalist ordinary language. The part of the statement which seems the least programmatic is also the one that strikes me as the most important—"we may find it very useful to draw up a list of proscribed words." This is easily the most outward and unashamed expression of a notion that defines an undercurrent in the entire history of analysis. Apart from the well documented discontinuities, from Russell's atomism, to Moore's quest for clarity, to Ayer's refusal of all ethics and metaphysics, to Carnap's dream of a perfect language there runs the unspoken assumption that through analysis we can, in fact, propose a lexicon—and inventory of words—for philosophy *done rightly*. But it is only in Neurath that this assumption surfaces as a blunt recommendation. An even more explicit version of this recommendation features in Neurath's "Universal Language and Terminology" where he writes: "I started in my university days rather primitively by making a collection of "dangerous terms." Before I started making this collection (I sometimes called it in joke my "Index Verborum Prohibitorum"), I tried to criticize books and articles."[109]

In what follows I will confine myself to a discussion of Neurath's main notions in the two passages quoted. I will also explore the uneven progress Neurath makes throughout his philosophical career in assessing and applying some of these notions. In this, I will rely heavily on the insight I have drawn from a superb study of Neurath's life

[109] Neurath, Otto. "Universal Jargon and Terminology." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series, Vol. 41 (1940 – 1941), P. 132

and work, *Otto Neurath: Philosophy Between Science and Politics*.[110] What I aim to accomplish with my discussion of Neurath is much less than what I have aspired to in other parts of my project in that it is barely meant to scratch one small region of a multi-faceted surface. If there is any ambition that would honor the grandeur of Neurath's own goals it is that this chapter will further the case that Neurath has so much more to say about and in philosophy than the nautical metaphor he is chiefly associated with.[111]

"Otto Now Joy"

Neurath's insistence on the importance of protocol sentences is a direct result of the unified science program. Unified science ("which includes sociology as well as chemistry, biology as well as mechanics, psychology—more properly termed "behavioristics"—as well as optics"[112]) is not a discipline per se; it is proposed by the Vienna Circle as a practice of looking for and displaying of the "inter-connections of the various sciences which are so often neglected." The tools for finding these connections and making them explicit are analysis and logic. But why, one might ask, are these connections not explicit in the first place and what kind of analysis does it take to reveal them? Neurath's answer to the first part of the question is that our language, be it ordinary or scientific, is plagued by vagueness which prevents us from seeing the natural convergence of disciplines clearly. His answer to the second part of the question is that the kind of analysis to be employed in this process of unveiling should rely on the raw

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[110] Cartwright, Nancy, Jordi Cat, Lola Fleck, Thomas E. Uebel, Eds. *Otto Neurath: Philosophy Between Science and Politics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008.
[111] Most of the recent works on Neurath I will refer to bear testimony to a surge in significant scholarship on Neurath's ideas and his contributions to philosophy. The boat metaphor, which has its special place in Neurath's epistemology and in the study of Neurath, has often in the past been the *only* snippet of Neurath that entered philosophical discussions. It is enough to point out that Quine evokes this metaphor at least three times in three different works without much else to say about its author.
[112] Ibid. P. 207

material of what Neurath considers the least ambiguous form of expression—the protocol sentence. It is the identification of this form and of its agreement with other forms of expression that Carnap's logic is called upon to establish. On the promise of these proposals Neurath and Carnap share into the hope that it is, in fact, possible to *plan* language. [113]

A protocol sentence is one that reports in the first person singular of a sensation a particular person has at a given time. For Neurath protocol sentences are not meant, or able, to replace all other language. Instead, they should become the touchstone against which all other language works or fails. The reason protocol sentences are given such special status is for Neurath obvious—they are easy to control and are applicable across all fields of human inquiry. But what does it mean to control language? Neurath explains the term negatively by offering an example of uncontrollable language—of the word "metaphysics" he says: "I like to use the word whenever I am confronted with a view which is supported by the tendency to formulate uncontrollable [assertions]."[114] To control an assertion then seems to have to do with the concretization of its import, something which metaphysical language traditionally does not lend itself to. Neurath's artificial construct "Otto now joy," for example, lays a very concrete claim on displaying a fact about the world. Its utility, of course, is relative to a system of knowledge. Neurath does not see protocol sentences as inviolable. On the contrary—much like non-protocol sentences they are prone to change in currency and usefulness. At any given moment in

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[113] "Carnap's aim, once again, is to use the new tools of modern mathematical logic (here the new tools of metamathematics) definitively to dissolve all such metaphysical disputes and to replace them, instead, with the much more rigorous, fruitful, and constructive project of language planning, language engineering." (Friedman, Michael and Richard Creath, Eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Carnap*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007. P. 9)

[114] Cartwright, Nancy, Jordi Cat, Lola Fleck, Thomas E. Uebel, Eds. *Otto Neurath: Philosophy Between Science and Politics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008. P. 95

the development of unified science, however, the current protocol sentences remain the stronghold of language—they are the closest we can get to being able to manipulate the world around us.[115]

Much has been made by critics early and late of Neurath's strange position on physicalism.[116] Neurath claims that the truth of a statement is not to be measured by any experience it refers to but is to be established by the statement's relation to other statements. On a cursory look, it seems that this view sacrifices the empirical import of physicalism. And, yet, according to Neurath it does not have to do so—a physicalist statement about the world is only as much *about* the world as it is in agreement with other physicalist statements. What endows protocol sentences with their special touchstone status, as mentioned above, is not their relatedness to reality but their controllability. And if an epistemological ground does not exist out in the world to which our knowledge could ever be fixed, what we at different points in time have our hands on serves as a useful substitute. The boat metaphor, which captures this peculiar epistemological predicament, reads: "We are like sailors who must rebuild their ship on the open sea, never able to dismantle it in dry-dock and to reconstruct it there out of the best materials."[117]

Neurath, true to the spirit of the boat metaphor, allows the metaphor itself to change over time within its own limits. I can only defer here to the authoritative opinions of the writers of *Otto Neurath: Philosophy Between Science and Politics* who trace and

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[115] For a more detailed exposition on Neurath's ideas of protocol sentences, see Cat, Jordi. "The Popper-Neurath Debate and Neurath's Attack on Scientific Method." *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Science*, Vol. 26, No. 2, Pp. 221-222

[116] See Reisch, George A. "Planning Science: Otto Neurath and the International Encyclopedia of Unified Science." *The British Journal for the History of Science*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Jun., 1994), P. 165

[117] Ayer, A.J., Ed. *Logical Positivism*. The Free Press, New York 1959. P. 201

illuminate these changes over the span of Neurath's career. Firstly, it becomes clear that Neurath's modifications of the metaphor are not self-serving—they are necessitated by his new findings at each respective turn.[118] Secondly, the book makes a good case that Neurath's efforts to apply his philosophical notions *in* the natural and social sciences in turn inform the evolution of his philosophical views.[119] Thirdly, in the book's study of his philosophy and his science Neurath emerges as infinitely more tentative and perceptive than his early philosophical rhetoric suggests. It is the issue of Neurath's rhetoric that I would like to pay special attention to next.

A Good Coffee

The following citation appears in the book I have adopted as my guide through Neurath: "Empathy, understanding and the like may help the research worker, but they enter the totality of scientific statements as little as does a good coffee which also furthers a scholar in his work."[120] The context in which Neurath makes this pronouncement is a discussion of the primacy and utility of physicalist language. What is curious is that the decidedly non-physicalist notions of empathy and understanding are compared in their secondary influence to something as mechanistically determined as the body's reaction to caffeine. This reminds me in a roundabout way of a Baudelaire poem where we are advised to get intoxicated on "wine, poetry, or virtue." The parallel I wish to draw is more of an optical reversal—between the poet's intoxication (which on my Nietzschean intuition has very little to gain from virtue) and the unified scientist's sobriety (sequestered from even the scientifically tractable forms of intoxication). Of course, I am

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[118] See Cartwright, Nancy, Jordi Cat, Lola Fleck, Thomas E. Uebel, Eds. *Otto Neurath: Philosophy Between Science and Politics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008. Pp. 136-142

[119] Ibid. P. 252

[120] Ibid. P. 83

reading too much and too far out of center into Neurath's statement, but the juxtaposition makes a small step toward an understanding of Neurath as a stubborn non-poet among philosophers.

An interesting passage of Neurath's where the literary is swept under the philosophical rug comes from his programmatic post-war paper "After Six Years." In it Neurath argues that the problems of science and the problems of the man in the street are indistinguishable from one another. He continues thus: "In the end they are more interlinked than people sometimes realize. Any synthesis of our intellectual life, any orchestration of various attempts to handle life and arguments should never forget these far reaching social implications."[121] Neurath does not mention the literary here because he obviously does not believe it has any place to claim in "the problems of the man in the street" or, even more significantly, in "the orchestration of various attempts to handle life." So where are literary imagination and language to dwell then? A clue to an answer is given by Neurath in his book *Empiricism and Sociology*, where he points out that "there is a wide scope of arbitrary procedure if it has to be decided whether the poetry of a certain people corresponds more to the Edda or the Nibelungen saga, since characteristics of the most varied kind can be used."[122] From these two quotations a portrait of poetry, or literature, emerges in hazy silhouette—the man on the street *might* have poetry as a manner of life orchestration, but this manner involves highly arbitrary decision procedures. One reason that this is a controversial statement for Neurath to make

[121] Neurath, Otto. "After Six Years." *Synthese*, Vol. 5, No. ½ (May – Jun., 1946), P. 79
[122] Neurath, Otto. *Empiricism and Sociology*, edited by Marie Neurath and Robert S. Cohen. Dordrecht-Holland/Boston-USA: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1973. P. 167

is that Neurath's own epistemology, as pointed out earlier, is itself vulnerable to criticisms of inviting arbitrariness.

Another place where Neurath provides a glimpse into his conception of poetry's place in our life and language is his essay "Sociology and Physicalism." The aim of this work is to demonstrate the reducibility of the social sciences and ethics to the purely physicalist methods of analysis and prediction. Without attending to the problems with such a stance and Neurath's arguments for it, it is impossible to miss the conspicuous absence of aesthetics, a theory of value in its own right, from the discussion. Still, two mentions are made of poetry, the first of which reads: "It is possible to speak in the same terms of men's painting, housebuilding, religion, agriculture, poetry."[123] This egalitarian attitude to language rests on Neurath's assumption that language is a tool *for* doing things science can check. It is fairly clear that poetry's inclusion in (and at the end of) the laundry list is to be read as if preceded by a silent "even." The scandal of proposing an informative (analytic, predictive) language that adequately addresses both agriculture and poetry is probably not lost to Neurath. What is lost is, of course, the justification for making such a bizarre proposal.

Any attempt to reconstruct or justify Neurath's attitude to poetry must take account of Neurath's concepts of unity and order. Unified science is advertised as being able to pull the man on the street, the scientist and, conceivably, the poet together on the force of what is common to all of them—i.e. the logically tractable pronouncements of physicalism. The crossroads at which these various actors meet is a place where commonality is by definition favored over individuality—Richard Creath reminds us that,

[123] Ayer, A.J., Ed. *Logical Positivism*. The Free Press, New York 1959. P. 296

as a Marxist, Neurath was prone to "reject any view that emphasized the individual over the collective."[124] This should and does imply some manner of censorship over creative expression with all of its implications of individuality. But, as Barry Allen notices, what is at stake in the unified science program is the even more monstrous possibility of sanctioning *thinking*. Neurath, after Comte, propagates the goal of a single overarching order for all manners of human inquiry.[125] Allen counters this aspiration with the reminder that thinking itself cannot be said to need (or use) any such order at all. For Allen thinking is "different from work, different from action, different from problem solving, and closer to art, especially poetry."[126] If what Allen claims is even remotely true, Neurath's perception of order and his hopes for reflecting that order into a regimented "jargon" stands in need of revision, unless Neurath concedes that our language has nothing to do with expressing thoughts. As becomes evident in "Sociology and Physicalism" he is not willing, or able, to make the concession.[127]

Another drop of poison I feel compelled to add to the well is that Neurath's gesture of denying poetry a place in the temple might be considered as meta-poetic, as is Schlick's lament that there is not enough poetry in philosophy. [128] Neurath's reputation is

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[124] Creath, Richard. "Some Remarks on "Protocol Sentences."" *Nous*, Vol. 21, No. 4, Dedication: To Alberto Coffa (Dec., 1987), p. 473.

[125] "For the Platonist, as for the positivist, there is no order but Order: Comte is aptly described as "a fanatic on the score of searching for a definitive, once and for all order." Neurath insists "it is essential that *one* kind of *order* is the foundation of all laws, whichever science is concerned, geology, chemistry or sociology." (Prado, C.G., Ed. *A House Divided*. Humanity Books, New York 2003. P. 54)

[126] Ibid. P. 54

[127] "In our presentation we confine ourselves always to the sphere of linguistic thought." (Ayer, A.J., Ed. *Logical Positivism*. The Free Press, New York 1959. P. 291)

[128] What follows comprises a sizeable part of Neurath's obituary in *Synthese*: "A broad presence and a broad gesture. Broad in acceptance and broad in refusal. A man, whom the American Journal "Survey Graphic" once compared to an elephant for his patient, persevering, sociable working method, a tower of strength, whose work nevertheless bears the stamp of unity and precision of thought. Schlick, perhaps the most artistic of modern positivists, often regretted that he was "only a philosopher," for, as he was wont to say: "Wir sind alle verhinderte Dichter." Every philosopher has the makings of a poet, but to Neurath such

of someone whose philosophy does not lend itself to literary influences at all. Such a reputation must be a tragedy for a thinker best known for an argument dressed in a literary device, i.e. a simile. The tangent I do not want to pursue here is the possibility that it is *precisely*, a favorite word of Neurath's and one that must have made "the list," because of its literary dressing that this argument has gained such prominence.[129] Instead, I want to focus on Neurath's language through a different angle, one proposed by him on multiple occasions in his writings. The places where Neurath is the most like a poet, i.e. where his theory and his rhetoric loosen up from what he gleefully identifies as the "propaganda" of unified science are ostensibly afforded by what Neurath identifies as *Ballungen*.

The concept of *Ballungen* is variously interpreted by Neurath as 'mixtures of expressions,' 'mixtures of precise and imprecise concepts,' 'congestions of language' etc.[130] This concept is present in all of the later incarnations of Neurath's boat metaphor: "Vague linguistic conglomerations always remain in one way or another as components of the ship. If vagueness is diminished at one point, it may well be increased at another."[131] As we sail under the limitations of our verbal and epistemological instrumetarium we constantly refurbish our vessel but *we are not in the position to throw anything overboard*. Anything except, of course, the elements of metaphysics. But in what remains onboard there is enough that never meets the criteria of precision and

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a word would not easily be applicable. His natural inclinations predispose him to a certain one-sidedness and cause him to make a stand against everything that does not tally with his views." ("Otto Neurath." *Synthese*, Vol. 5, No. ½ (May – Jun., 1946), Pp. 24-25)

[129]The authors of *Otto Neurath: Philosophy Between Science and Politics* suggest that this is a valid tangent to pursue. They locate archetypal versions of the simile in Plutarch, a poet, and in Plato, a philosopher who mined the border between philosophy and poetry and on some accounts slyly transgressed it.

[130] See Cartwright, Nancy, Jordi Cat, Lola Fleck, Thomas E. Uebel, Eds. *Otto Neurath: Philosophy Between Science and Politics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008. P. 190

[131]Ayer, A.J., Ed. *Logical Positivism*. The Free Press, New York 1959. P. 201

controllability. The *Ballungen* gain prominence as Neurath realizes that they are as inescapable in the everyday as they are in the efforts of unified science. Neurath does not consider these intractable linguistic knots detrimental to the scientist's project—the perpetual effort to untie them is a part of the healthy progress of unified science. The scientist, confined to the boat, necessarily "makes" his new language out of the detritus of old languages. [132] The relative precision to which old words are open becomes the measure of their controllability and thus of their efficacy for unified science.

If we follow Neurath's own picture, at any point in time we have at our disposal the following set of linguistic instruments—the sterilized and stylized *Ballungen* that are reduced to protocol sentences of unified science, the more or less precise theoretical sentences of unified science, and the intractable *Ballungen*. The reason Neurath does not worry too much about the latter is that they will, most likely, lend themselves to sterilization and stylization at a later stage when the current protocol sentences will fail to produce results and will in their turn morph back into *Ballungen*. In effect, as the authors of the book on Neurath I have used point out, "protocol sentences are *Ballungen*."[133] The "universal slang" of unified science which Neurath calls for will thus consist not of Carnap's ideal language but of "a purified everyday language."[134]

[132] Reisch, George A. "Planning Science: Otto Neurath and the International Encyclopedia of Unified Science." *The British Journal for the History of Science*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Jun., 1994), P. 157
[133] Cartwright, Nancy, Jordi Cat, Lola Fleck, Thomas E. Uebel, Eds. *Otto Neurath: Philosophy Between Science and Politics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008. P. 159
[134] Neurath, Otto. "Unified Science and Its Encyclopaedia." *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Apr., 1937), P. 275

A Cactus

So where is literature's place on the boat? I think that if it need remain with us, a need Neurath never allows for but also never denies, it must thrive on the fringes of Neurath's *Ballungen*. The reason I allow myself to ask the question above and to answer it as I do is twofold. Firstly, I am of the conviction that literary language indeed exists even though Neurath's purportedly exhaustive study of all types of language in "Universal Jargon and Terminology" does not find a place for it. Neurath does at one junction acknowledge that "words can be employed like whistles, caresses and whiplashes," but is quick to add that "when used in this way, they can neither agree with nor contradict propositions."[135] Neurath's view of literary language or of any language with the power of registering an effect outside the limits of agreement and contradiction is extremely limited. Even though he runs into some trouble with literary forms, I side with Austin in his discovery, about a decade after Neurath's death, that the words we put together *do not necessarily have to* assert anything true or false. Ultimately, if literature should exist at all, the only crevice through which it could enter Neurath's worldview is located exactly in his conception of *Ballungen*. It is also conceivable, in fact recommended, that among the elements of language that cannot be purified or corrected in service of unified science there will be words and constructions that locate *how* we speak together with what we speak of.

My second reason for broaching the question of the literary is Neurath's own language. However secondary it might be to Neurath's substantive arguments, Neurath's approach to writing philosophy has a markedly literary bent. This is evident in his

[135] Ayer, A.J., Ed. *Logical Positivism*. The Free Press, New York 1959. P. 317

fondness for metaphors and similes—the persistent boat parable, the drawer full of instruments,[136] the "miner who at some spot of the mine raises his lamp and spreads light, while the rest lies in total darkness"[137] are only three of many examples. Neurath is also one to embrace the coining of strange new words whose originality subverts the linguistic frugality he elsewhere propounds.[138] A typical literary device that Neurath happily employs is that of hyperbole which is nowhere more emblematic than in his statement that the terms of physics and of the everyday are "sufficient for constructing all sciences."[139] Yet another such device is the cryptic riddle, the best example of which is Neurath's call for a "science of science."[140]

Neurath's self-image reportedly never changed from that of a scientist and an anti-philosopher.[141] I admit that my modest attempt to add the unwelcome qualification of "poet" to this image is largely unwarranted. I only do so in order to bring to the forefront a tendency in early analytic philosophy that Neurath most spectacularly exemplifies—the paradoxical oblivion to one's own language in people whose life is devoted to the study, and in Neurath's case the total repurposing, of language. Each of Neurath's many literary flights is clearly a subversion of his philosophical creed. The

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[136] Neurath, Otto. "Universal Jargon and Terminology." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series, Vol. 41 (1940 – 1941), P. 130

[137] Cartwright, Nancy, Jordi Cat, Lola Fleck, Thomas E. Uebel, Eds. *Otto Neurath: Philosophy Between Science and Politics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008. P. 138

[138] "Imitating an expression, coined by James, we may speak of "pluriverse" instead of "universe," and consequently we could speak of "pluri-moon," "pluri-Newton" and "pluri-table" in cautious empiricist discussions…It is a special problem how to correlate the "pluri-statements" with the "mono-formulae." (Neurath, Otto. "Universal Jargon and Terminology." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series, Vol. 41 (1940 – 1941), P. 129)

[139] Neurath, Otto. "Unified Science and Its Encyclopaedia." *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Apr., 1937), P. 270

[140] Reisch, George A. "Planning Science: Otto Neurath and the International Encyclopedia of Unified Science." *The British Journal for the History of Science*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Jun., 1994), P. 153

[141] Cartwright, Nancy, Jordi Cat, Lola Fleck, Thomas E. Uebel, Eds. *Otto Neurath: Philosophy Between Science and Politics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008. P. 143

spectacle does not end with the philosopher signing a letter with the drawing of an elephant backing into a cactus,[142] with his escape from the Nazis on a boat, or even with his demise in high proximity to a book by Goethe.[143] A spectacle simply does not end if there is no one to see it end.

[142] In his "Postscript: Otto Neurath, 1882-1945." H. M. Kallen ends his remembrance of Neurath with the following: "The letter was signed, as usual, by Otto's isotype of himself—a drawing of a cheerful elephant. But the elephant in this particular drawing has been given a come-on eye; he holds a peacock feather aloft in his trunk, and he is backing up against a cactus almost his own size. The implications involve an irony the most Socratic of Socrateses could not match." (Kallen, H.M. "Postscript: Otto Neurath, 1882-1945." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Jun., 1946), P. 533)

[143] Marie Neurath's account of her husband's final moments reads: "His head lay on the desk before him. His hand had not yet touched the volume of Goethe that lay to his left. There was no more answer, no more pressure from his fingers. The doctor who came had never seen him alive." (Cartwright, Nancy, Jordi Cat, Lola Fleck, Thomas E. Uebel, Eds. *Otto Neurath: Philosophy Between Science and Politics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008. P. 88)

Chapter III

Wittgenstein between Two Languages

Here's One Hand

> Apart from some philosophers, poker players are known to pay extraordinary attention to their hands. This statement trades on the wealth of uses that the word 'hand' is known to have ('lift one's hand,' 'deal a hand,' 'lend a hand,' etc.). This same wealth can be looked upon as opening a door for ambiguity. In what follows, I will explore the difference between looking at language as an inexhaustible treasury and looking at its wealth as opening the possibility for interminable misunderstanding. The hands I intend to deal are not meant to win a game. They all reflect my hope that the study of the game will elucidate the game and, possibly, the study.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the question of Wittgenstein's language and to attempt an analysis of the shifts and influences on it throughout Wittgenstein's uneven philosophical journey. Of the expected primary sources I will for the most part omit the *Philosophical Investigations* and the *Blue and Brown Books*. My justifications for this major omission are two—the natural constitutive limits of a dissertation chapter exclude the possibility of adequately tackling everything all at once and, also, I find that the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and *On Certainty* not only effectively bookend Wittgenstein's published oeuvre but they also present the better evidence for the case about Wittgenstein's language I will try to mount. The case itself is simple enough in that it is confluent with most of the accepted Wittgenstein scholarship. My main argument is that together with the shifts in philosophical concerns, arguments and purported results that have been diagnosed to account for the differences between the early and the late Wittgenstein, there is also the palpable difference in his vocabulary and

phrasing in the two periods that deserves attention and, possibly, its own claim to diagnostic elucidation. The far less simple argument I try to defend is that a great part of why Wittgenstein underwent these changes of vocabulary is that in his later work, and especially in *On Certainty*, he allowed himself to become part of a philosophical community. *On Certainty* remains unique in Wittgenstein's corpus by its engagement in something philosophers most habitually do—it offers an explicit and lengthy rejoinder to another philosopher. This engagement stands in sharp contrast with Wittgenstein's first book. Still, apart from sharing an author (or maybe author*s*), the two works share some of their inspirations (if not aspirations) in their explicit and implicit engagements with G.E. Moore. And, while Moore can be seen to play very different roles in Wittgestein's two works, that of background objector early on and of direct referent later, Moore's robustly unvaried language provides a useful backdrop for studying the change in Wittgenstein's vocabulary in between the bookends.

The major driving intuition behind my project here and in my dissertation as a whole is that philosophical programs, even though they rarely offer explicit analysis of their adopted vocabularies, all have their vocabularies shaped by the programs themselves. In way of practicing what one preaches, the linguistic philosopher squares in on analyzing language but she also and at all times *applies* the philosophical results to and in her own vocabulary. This application is, furthermore, not unidirectional—a specific vocabulary, in its turn, determines where the argument it is utilized in advancing can and cannot go. What makes these observations non-trivial is that even in analytic philosophy, with all its heightened awareness of what we say, the concerns of *what* we say and *how* we say it are often confused or, even worse, conflated. What makes the

observation philosophical, as opposed to literary-theoretical or linguistic, is that it promises to cut through philosophical arguments by the careful study of the phrasing, style, and word—i.e. the linguistic inventories—that are their flesh.

However influential or marginal Moore might have been in the shaping of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, it is important to remember that the latter contains no references to Moore.[144] This is partly why the tracing of continuities between the two thinkers is interesting; it promises to reveal another part of the stubbornly marginalized[145] wider philosophical background that the *Tractatus* was built against. I believe and I will try to show that Moore's philosophy is one such part of the *Tractatus*' background and that if not in their shared topics, this shows in the shared elements of the two philosophers' writing styles. My proof will serve a twofold purpose in the present study—on the one hand it will help substantiate the problematic of philosophical inheritance that is integral to my project and, on the other, it will allow for a fecund comparison between the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* and the Wittgenstein of *On Certainty* and the corresponding attitudes to and applications of language that these two distinct works display.

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[144] While by right and by Wittgenstein's own early admissions Russell is to be thought of as Wittgenstein's proper interlocutor in the *Tractatus*, Moore remains the only philosopher Wittgenstein directly addressed in full detail. Some of my observations of Moore's language could also be referred back to Russell. After all, the conversational and philosophical debt the latter two have to each other cannot be exaggerated. What might account for the later Wittgenstein's choice to expound on Moore's philosophical "results" can be some differences between the way the two thinkers see the world, but, and this is a possibility my chapter will delve into, the reason for this choice might also be a certain congeniality Wittgenstein felt to Moore. If this turns out to be lesser than the congeniality he felt to Russell, *On Certainty* remains as our clue that the acceptance Wittgenstein must have granted Russell was probably not outweighed by the fascination and possibly outrage that Moore's work occasioned for Wittgenstein.

[145] "I will only mention that to the great works of Frege and the writings of my friend Bertrand Russell I owe in large measure the stimulation of my thoughts." (Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Translated by C.K. Ogden. Barnes & Noble Books, New York 2003. P.5.)

I will start with a short introduction of Wittgenstein's method, task and language in the *Tractatus*. As to Moore, I will devote my attention to his so-called "common sense essays," which reportedly intrigued Wittgenstein for the better part of his career. My discussion of these will in turn set the stage for the dialogical interplay of inheritances, ideas, and vocabularies that occupies Wittgenstein's attention in *On Certainty*. A brief sojourn to Avrum Stroll's book *Moore and Wittgenstein on Certainty* will be used to help substantiate some of my main contentions. In addition, I will refer to works by Berel Lang and Timothy Binkley, whose interest in the language of philosophy generally and of Wittgenstein's philosophy in particular this chapter hopes to perpetuate.

Under Construction

In his *Tractatus* Wittgenstein places a logical latticework (scaffolding)[146] over the world and language. Wittgenstein talks of language as *representing* the world. This representative function is sanctioned by logic, the latticework, because the very idea of representation implies the necessity for logical rules. Thought, for Wittgenstein, is a projection of a state of affairs. In order to express in language whatever projections of states of affairs we may have gathered we use *logical prototypes*, i.e. a number of structural constraints. The need for such constraints is a consequence of Wittgenstein's conditions of clarity and truth. Clarity is checked by the adequacy of both projection and expression to what is being thought of or talked about. Clarity is, in short, the mark of what can be said or thought *at all* about a certain object or state of affairs. Truth, in turn, is the criterion for the extent to which linguistic expression conforms to the logical principles that reveal a certain state of affairs *the way* it is. A spatial configuration of

[146] *Tractatus* 6.124. Ibid. P. 133.

objects, for example, possesses its unique internal structure. This structure could only be projected and expressed through the use of a certain representational form. The latter is a combination, an instance, of general logical rules that apply to any fact of the world and any representational effort on our part thereof. The way things are is mirrored in logical forms. Thought and language are the pictorial result of this mirroring, the reflection. Logical form, the mirror itself, cannot in turn be expressed. According to Wittgenstein the form only *shows* through language, it expresses itself.

For Wittgenstein logic assumes a delimiting function for both how things are and how we speak of them. But with language, the limitation is especially sharp. There are many things that we turn out not to be allowed to say. Most importantly, the propositions of traditional metaphysics are recognized as nonsensical on account of the meaninglessness of most of the terms they employ. A classic example in the history of philosophy of this line of thinking is Hume who equated metaphysics to "the absolute rejecting of all profound reasonings."[147] It is clear that Hume was less interested in the language of metaphysics than in the reasoning (or the lack thereof) metaphysicians partake in. As to the specialized language, Moore is a far more immediate and fecund source with reference to Wittgenstein's project.

In way of introducing Moore into my discussion of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, I quote the following recent example of journalistic vernacular with my proposal of how either philosopher might have analyzed it: "If the unthinkable happens on Inauguration Day, Robert Gates, the defense secretary, will be available to assume the reins of

[147] Hume, David. *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, in *Enquiries concerning Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals*, edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd edition revised by P. H. Nidditch, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975. P. 9.

government."[148] The point of interest in this statement is not the possible political appointment it reports about but the condition it sets for the appointment to be effected. Both Moore and the early Wittgenstein would have little patience for the expression "if the unthinkable happens." Both of them, I contend, would find it problematic because, if taken literally, the expression opens an endless gulf between our thinking about the world and the world itself. One objection could be that the expression is not meant to be understood literally, that the problematic term "the unthinkable" refers to something concrete (i.e. the incidental and *unwanted* demise of the president-elect) and its purpose in replacing an equivalent more direct expression is to emphasize the potential horror of the event that both expressions refer to. Except, the two expressions are not synonymous; many events are referred to as "unthinkable" that do not concern the well-being of political figures. In reverse, many events that might prove detrimental to the president's well-being do not warrant the use of the term "unthinkable." Moore and the early Wittgenstein both have a lot to evince about the three issues I have outlined here—the role language plays in relating our thoughts to our surroundings, literality, and synonymy. But, as I will argue, both of them are also in a significant way insensitive to *manners of speaking* that make the above statement possible to understand.

[148] From: Gates To Be Designated Successor On Inauguration Day. *Posted by Brian Montopoli*. http://www.cbsnews.com/blogs/2009/01/19/politics/politicalhotsheet/entry4734750.shtml?CMP=OTC-RSSFeed&source=RSS&attr=PoliticalHotsheet_4734750

Common, Ordinary, Obvious

In his "Defence of Common Sense" Moore makes a strong case for the ordinary meaning of expressions.[149] This case is made explicitly with reference to Moore's main argument but it is also *exhibited* in Moore's vocabulary. The argument itself, which I discuss in better detail in Chapter I, revolves around Moore's claim to know that he exists, the world around him exists and that the same claim of knowledge holds true of many other individuals. Discussion of the ontological and epistemological import of such claims is common in philosophy. In his *Defence*, Moore goes a step further than most prior philosophers and indicates that both types of import guarantee something he defines as the "common sense view of the world." That I exist and that I know this to be a fact, for Moore, are inalienable truths but these truths also *underlie* the knowledge of a large community of individuals who understand my claims and who have their own respective claims *corresponding* to mine. This last relation of correspondence is meant by Moore to capture the equivalence of any individual's claims as to their existence and the existence of the world to any other individual's claims on those two issues.

Much has been made of Moore's appeal to common sense. Still, as James Somerville rightly proposes in his "Moore's Conception of Common Sense," Moore "has no theory of common sense."[150] Instead, Moore offers a plethora of references to common sense *as if* the theory was already there or, perhaps, was simply not needed. Moore's *defense* of the common sense view of the world, in turn, amounts to a string of

[149] "So soon, therefore, as we know that a person who uses such an expression is using it in its ordinary sense, we understand his meaning." Moore, G.E. *G.E. Moore: Selected Writings*. Ed. Thomas Baldwin. Routledge, New York 1993. P. 111
[150] Somerville, James. "Moore's Conception of Common Sense." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. Vol. 47. No. 2 (Dec. 1986), p. 251.

propositions about the world that he claims he cannot prove but all the same insists are true. However (un)satisfactory this defense has turned out to be, my interest here is in the language Moore employs to mount it and in the way his attendant attitude to language resembles that of the early Wittgenstein.

The first resemblance is in the way both philosophers treat the relation between the word and the world. Even though Moore does not subscribe to Tractarian atomism, his notions of how we use and should use language are similar to the ones propounded in the *Tractatus*. Firstly, as to what language does, both philosophers agree on the necessity for a direct procedure of matching up words to reality. In Moore, the picture language paints is, ultimately, of sense data, while in Wittgenstein it is of what he terms "facts," but both of them agree that a direct procedure is there and that its limitations are set by logic.[151] In addition to this, both of them insist that what Wittgenstein terms a logical scaffolding is not to be explained but to be *shown*. In effect, Moore's two main assertions in his *Defence* are *showings* rather than explanations of the common sense view, just as his "Here's one hand, here's another" in "Proof of an External World" is a gesture but not an argument against idealism. When Wittgenstein says in *Tractatus* 3.032 "To present in language anything, which "contradicts logic" is as impossible as in geometry to present by its coordinates a figure which contradicts the laws of space," this is highly reminiscent of Moore's critique in the "The Refutation Of Idealism" of what he sees as Hegel's habit of happily asserting both of two contradictory propositions. In short, for both philosophers our language is logical or not at all.

[151] In his "Ernst Mach at the Crossroads of 20-th Century Philosophy," Jaakko Hintikka claims that "it is impossible to understand Wittgenstein's thought […] without realizing to what extent Wittgenstein shared Moore's idea, elaborated by Russell in his theory of acquaintance, that the basic building blocks of one's world are the objects of different experiences." (*Future Pasts, The Analytic Tradition in Twentieth Century Philosohy*. Ed. Juliet Floyd and Sanford Shieh. Oxford University Press, New York 2001. P. 91.)

Secondly, with reference to how language is to be used, both thinkers profess impatience with the highly specialized vocabularies of previous philosophers. Appeals to clarity and simplicity abound in most of Moore's work and are integral to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*.[152] If philosophers do not normally abide by these two virtues, it is interesting to see how, if at all, Moore and Wittgenstein accomplish the break with tradition.[153] This brings us to my third point, i.e. a look into the two philosophers' phrasing that will hopefully help illustrate their views of language by their particular uses of it.

With Moore, we at every step encounter a builder of sorts. His cadence is tediously repetitive, his process is step-like and slowly advancing, his linguistic inventory is spare—a bare minimum of tools (approaches) applied to a bare minimum of building blocks (words). As to the often endless repetitiveness of Moore's prose the following passage is as good an example as any:

> "They seem to think that the question 'Do you believe that the earth has existed for years past?' is not a plain question, such as should be made either by a plain 'Yes' or 'No', or by a plain 'I can't make up my mind', but is the sort of question which can be properly met by: 'It all depends on what you mean by "the earth"

[152] The following quotation from Max Black's *Philosophical Analysis* testifies to Moore's legacy of clarity and simplicity: "One reason for Moore's great influence upon the younger philosophers may have been the refreshing contrast between his simplicity and clarity and the pretentious technicality of some of his predecessors." (*Philosophical Analysis*. Ed. Max Black, Books for Libraries Press, New York 1971. P.7) As to Wittgenstein's programmatic embracing of the same two virtues, the *Tractatus* offers both direct references to the imperative of clarity ("What can be said at all can be said clearly" in the Preface, "Everything that can be said can be said clearly" in 4.116 etc.) and, in its very structure and method, a paragon of argumentative and linguistic simplicity.

[153] Norman Malcolm's warning as to Moore's reliance on ordinary language as a litmus test for good philosophy is that we can only judge something as a misuse of ordinary language "by *studying* ordinary usage" and that "this study does not consist in asking people what their usage is." (Malcolm, Norman. "Moore's Use of "Know."" *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 62, No. 246 (Apr., 1953), P. 242.) This warning is relevant to both Moore and the early Wittgenstein in that it calls attention to the lack of satisfactory insight into the nature of what we ordinarily say.

and “exists” and “years”: if you mean so and so, and so and so, and so and so, then I do; but if you mean so and so, and so and so, and so and so, or so and so, and so and so, and so and so, or so and so, and so and so, and so and so, then I don’t, or I think it is extremely doubtful.’”[154]

On account of this and many other similar instances of obsessive repetition, Moore’s project undermines one of its own main contentions—that of the importance of how we *ordinarily* speak over the specialized discourse of philosophy. I cannot help but note that an expression like “if you mean so and so, and so and so, and so and so, then I do; but if you mean so and so, and so and so, and so and so, or so and so, and so and so, and so and so, or so and so, and so and so, and so and so, then I don’t, or I think it is extremely doubtful” is at least as far from the way we ordinarily speak as is Gertrude Stein’s “a rose is a rose is a rose.” At the same time, the expression *does* in one important way remain faithful to Moore’s preoccupation with and application of how we ordinarily speak in that it retains the linguistic sparsity characteristic of unspecialized discourse.

The big question about Moore’s ascetic vocabulary is if the purpose it is employed for, i.e. to defend common sense, suffers or benefits from it. Since there have been serious disagreements between philosophers as to Moore’s idea of common sense,[155] it is also difficult to provide a sweepingly satisfactory answer to this question. In way of broaching an answer I will propose that if we look *only* at Moore’s language, it is clear that while very few words leave the ordinary linguistic ground that a broad (and largely unqualified) conception of common sense presupposes, Moore often employs his

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[154] Moore, G.E. *G.E. Moore: Selected Writings*. Ed. Thomas Baldwin. Routledge, New York 1993. P. 111
[155] For a thorough exposition on the relevant disagreements, see Somerville, James. “Moore’s Conception of Common Sense.” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. Vol. 47. No. 2 (Dec. 1986)

limited vocabulary for purposes and in ways of expression that fly high above that same ground.[156] I will take the liberty to quote the entire opening paragraph of Moore's *Defence* in order to illustrate this tendency:

> "In what follows I have merely tried to state, one by one, some of the most important points in which my philosophical position differs from positions which have been taken by *some* other philosophers. It may be that the points which I have had room to mention are not really the most important, and possibly some of them may be points as to which no philosopher has really differed from me. But, to the best of my belief, each is a point as to which many have really differed; although (in most cases, at all events) each is also a point as to which many have agreed with me."[157]

Even though the analytic utility of classic syllogisms is applicable to many of the propositions we ordinarily use, our ordinary expressions are very far from syllogistic in form. Moore's expression, in contrast, almost always is just that. His lengthy and, as I believe, superfluous disclaimer at the beginning of "Defence of Common Sense" reads like and can be reduced to a simple diagram of three classes (in Moore's style they can be identified as beliefs he holds, beliefs some other philosophers hold and beliefs some yet other philosophers hold) that partially overlap. Looking at the diagram offered, one comes away with the knowledge that what Moore is about to say is congenial to certain

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[156] In this, I agree with Malcolm's statement: "Moore's assertions do not belong to "common sense," i.e. to ordinary language, at all. They involve a use of "know" which is a radical departure from ordinary usage." (Malcolm, Norman. "Defending Common Sense." *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 58, No. 3, May 1949, p. 219) Malcolm's contention does two important things—it presses the point that, in Moore's setup, common sense and ordinary language are symbiotically connected and also reminds us that if they are indeed so connected, then Moore's straying from ordinary language cannot fail to undermine his defense of common sense.

[157] Moore, G.E. *G.E. Moore: Selected Writings*. Ed. Thomas Baldwin. Routledge, New York 1993. P. 106

philosophers' beliefs and it runs contrary to other philosophers' beliefs, while at all times it reserves its right to be found agreeable by (almost) everyone in philosophy.

How necessary is this? Not much, considering that the conceit of the disclaimer amounts to the belief on Moore's part that he has *something* interesting to say *to* philosophers (presumably about what he believes is not shared by *some* of them) and that he is convinced it will contribute *something* to philosophy (presumably because it will identify enough points of contact with many *other* philosophers to constitute a contribution). But even though Moore, at the height of his fame when he wrote that introduction, might not have cared for the professional and formal constraints of the academic article, he must have been aware that unless one intended to offer an interesting contribution to the field, one would better not consider committing pen to paper. The mere fact of his committing to it is *already* enough for anyone in philosophy to entertain the *studied* expectation that Moore is about to state his beliefs, attack some philosophers' beliefs and claim agreement with others.' This is unless, of course, Moore has secretly set out to do something wildly out of the ordinary. But if he had, he would not have started his essay by painstakingly defining the commonly accepted idea of a "philosophical paper."

Stating and restating the obvious has often been catalogued as an ailment particular to philosophy.[158] Still, with Moore we encounter an especially intriguing preoccupation with the obvious. It is intriguing firstly because it runs counter to his own agenda of disengaging philosophy from its heavy thematic and terminological vestige.

[158] "I am sitting with a philosopher in the garden; he says again and again "I know that that's a tree," pointing to a tree that's near us. Someone else arrives and hears us, and I tell him: "This fellow isn't insane. We're only doing philosophy."" (*On Certainty*, P.61)

After all, Moore's assertions in favor of common sense address the philosophical skeptic or the idealist etc. Similarly, his syllogistic chains, however economical in their language, are philosophical tropes at their core. Secondly, the purpose they are often put to, to remind other philosophers of how things are and how obvious it is how they are, is not necessarily served well by them. What Moore provides in his disclaimer is essentially the burdensome equivalent of a pedestrian definition of a philosophical essay. Instead of simply getting on with the work at hand, he takes the pain to define the enterprise, something he himself eagerly in other places recognizes as a superfluous indulgence.

This inconsistency in Moore becomes evident if we juxtapose two statements he makes separately in two different works. The first statement is the one I have quoted above from *Defence of Common Sense*, in which he despairs over *some* philosophers' nagging demands for defining one's terms ('It all depends on what you mean by "the earth" and "exists" and "years"'). The second statement, from his *The Refutation of Idealism*, gives full reign to this same problematic tendency, this time with Moore as the perpetrator: "But now: Is *esse percipi*? There are three very ambiguous terms in this proposition, and I must begin by distinguishing the different things that may be meant by some of them."[159] And though I will not claim that the existence of the earth for a number of years is as obvious as the contested fact that *esse* is *percipi*, I will side against Moore or anyone else who contends that the terms involved in one statement are in lesser need of definition than those of the other, especially since the two battling propositions share at least one term. In addition, I believe that where definitions are concerned our ordinary ways of speaking have very little to give us in a way of revealing the obviousness, or the

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[159] Moore, G.E. *G.E. Moore: Selected Writings*. Ed. Thomas Baldwin. Routledge, New York 1993. P. 27

lack thereof, of our meanings. In other words, a non-technical definition will be possible only as long as a non-technical language demands it, which such languages extremely rarely do. The demand for definitions thus falls in the province of philosophy and possibly, depending on how one understands the term, uncomfortably far from the province of common sense.[160]

Thus Spoke the **Tractatus**

Turning to Wittgenstein, while I admit that his project in the *Tractatus* is very different from Moore's in his common sense essays, on the ground level—i.e. in their language—the two philosophers display significant similarities. What is more, some of these similarities bring about similar problems for the two thinkers' respective agendas. In studying the overlaps in language it will be useful to first point to the major differences, which attest to the two philosophers' respective claims to originality. The greatest difference is that Wittgenstein engages some of the technical devices and symbols of logic in his *Tractatus*, an element that is conspicuously missing in Moore. Another difference is that Wittgenstein favors terse and almost enigmatically frugal expression,[161] where Moore, as we have seen, is given to seemingly infinite elaboration. A third difference might be seen in Wittgenstein's organizational method. His book is a pyramid of propositions that are numbered hierarchically in the order of their perceived

[160]With reference to definitions in philosophy I share the following intuition as formulated by Avrum Stroll: "Definitions look for the hidden essence in a multiplicity of surface features and thus always involve the imposition of a conceptual model." (Stroll, Avrum. *Moore and Wittgenstein on Certainty*. Oxford University Press. New York 1994. P. 131.)

[161] See especially *Tractatus* 2.014, 4, 4.05, 5.124, 5.4611, 5.632, 6.42, 6.44 etc.

"logical importance."[162] Moore's assertions, while they are painstakingly systematic, are never as explicitly prioritized.

Against the background of these major differences between Moore and Wittgenstein the similarities are all the more poignant. The *Tractatus* operates on a linguistic plane that is curiously reminiscent of Moore. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, Wittgenstein is as critical of the language of traditional philosophy as Moore.[163] They both purport to offer not only a meaningful critique of the latter, but also new methods of *seeing through* its irregularities. It is useful here to note that one of the shared nemeses for both philosophers, one that also gives a clue to their meaning of the term "traditional philosophy," is the idealist.[164] The language in which both philosophers attack him is purposely devoid of the perceived ambiguities (associated with psychologism, the licentious introduction of dubious ontological entities etc.) of the idealist's own language. Not only is there no place in the *Tractatus* and the common sense essays for the *notion* of, say, the Absolute, but there is also no place in them for the *word*. What one gets instead are with Wittgenstein pictures of *facts* and with Moore assertions of commonly known *facts*. The format of these pictures and assertions is the same and the objective to

[162] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Translated by C.K. Ogden. Barnes & Noble Books, New York 2003. P. 7.

[163] In service of caution, I will quote a passage from Richard H. Schlagel illustrating some of the potential controversy of Wittgenstein's approach to traditional philosophers: "To reduce their philosophies to the surreptitious influence of grammar on their thought as a result of misusing ordinary language is to present a caricature of traditional philosophy, an analysis which could come only from a philosopher whose philosophical orientation derived primarily from the narrow influences of the logical and meta-mathematical problems of Russell and Frege, and the subtle but myopic linguistic analyses of G.E. Moore." (Schlagel, Richard H. "Contra Wittgenstein." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Jun, 1974), Pp. 540-541.)

[164] In most of Moore, apart from the few places where he specifies other figures like Berkeley, references to idealism point squarely at Moore's one-time teacher, and subsequent philosophical enemy, Bradley. More on Moore's relation to Bradley is found in my Chapter I. In Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, his general impatience with idealism is evident in 2.021, 2.0211, 2.022, 2.1, and especially in 4.0412

which it is used is clear—to ratify the utility and significance of ordinary expression and the tools of logic.

The question as to the *Tractatus'* adherence to some preliminary idea of ordinary language is difficult. One explicit clue to the solution is *Tractatus* 5.5563 where Wittgenstein states: "All propositions of our colloquial language are actually, just as they are, logically completely in order."[165] This may mean, among many things, that ordinary language is not only correct, but advisable to use for the purposes of philosophy. Such a reading is corroborated by Wittgenstein's own word use in the non-technical, i.e. the majority of, assertions that the book contains. An illustration of this, which is very reminiscent of Moore, is the expression in 2.063: "The total reality is the world." The expression adheres to how we ordinarily use words. It is unambiguous, unless we are not clear on our definitions of the main terms. But this latter qualification is why Wittgenstein runs into the same corner Moore painted himself in when he attempted to answer the question "Is *esse percipi*?" The problem is that if one should even broach questions of existence or reality, one commits themselves to definitions and the trouble that comes with procuring them, which, in turn, necessitates the engagement of philosophical schemata and thus philosophical language. In the case of *Tractatus* 2.063, it is preceded by a string of statements (2.04 to 2.062) that all engage the notion of "atomic fact." The explication of its meaning drags Wittgenstein, out of argumentative necessity, into technicalities that, after a certain point, ordinary expression cannot accommodate.

[165] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Translated by C.K. Ogden. Barnes & Noble Books, New York 2003. P. 119

Both Wittgenstein and Moore display, however unwillingly, this shift from what we ordinarily say to what only philosophers (and maybe poker players) will ever say. Stripped down to their core statements[166] the two philosophers do adhere to the newly proposed clarity and simplicity of non-philosophical expression but every elaboration in way of definition, justification, and analysis threatens to and often succeeds in subverting this very linguistic imperative.[167] This is why even in the absence of Bradley's 'Absolute' or Berkeley's 'ideas' in Moore and Wittgenstein there is enough for idealists to sink their teeth in. Beyond the scarecrow imperative of how we ordinarily speak lies a whole field of philosophy and philosophical wording for even the most traditional philosopher to overcome the intended scare. Of course, cautioning against philosophical language does not have to automatically mean that philosophers should write in a language that can be understood by just anyone. Especially since, as Wittgenstein points out in 3.323, ordinary language itself is often the source for difficulties of understanding. What Wittgenstein and Moore seem to imply is something else—that their philosophy is uniquely qualified to be clear and simple in ways largely unavailable to other types of inquiry; and definitely unavailable to most of prior philosophy. Still, their dissatisfaction with traditional philosophy and their concomitant proposal to clear up its misunderstandings are undermined by the difficulty they both seem to encounter with disengaging philosophy from all that was ever philosophical about its linguistic inventory.

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[166] The *Tractatus*' core statements are all of the kind of the cited 2.063 except for 5 and 7, which require some technical understanding. The core statements of Moore's common sense essays ("Here's one hand," "The earth has existed for a long time" etc.) are all reminders of the obvious cast in the simplest terminology.

[167]The following claim by Avrum Stroll, which I find congenial and which runs counter to Max Black's picture of the alluring simplicity and clarity of Moore, throws a different light on Moore's prose: "In addition, readers found that Moore's obsessive concern with accuracy of statement led to a complicated style that was torturous to read." (Stroll, Avrum. *Moore and Wittgenstein on Certainty*. Oxford University Press. New York 1994. P. 15)

In the *Phaedrus*, Plato advises "addressing a variegated soul in a variegated style."[168] Moore and Wittgenstein turn this imperative on its head by attempting to address variegated souls (philosophers) in a style much less than variegated. There are two conditions for this to work—one, that philosophers can quickly adapt to the linguistic downgrade, and two, that Moore and Wittgenstein will in fact manage to remain under the threshold of sophistication suggested by prior philosophy. As to this second condition, both philosophers' writing frequently bears testimony to it not being satisfied. Condition one, despite the undisputable influence of Moore and Wittgenstein on subsequent thinkers, is also not satisfied. If nothing else, the two philosophers' often variegated style is guaranteed to have cultivated some manner of variegation in their followers and critics.

The second similarity between Moore's and Wittgenstein's writing styles manifests itself in their use of spatial and visual metaphors. It is most probably the purported transparency or, yet again, obviousness of such metaphors that earns them their places in the arguments the two thinkers advance. Apart from Wittgenstein's pronouncements about "logical space," there are many other places in the *Tractatus* where appeals are made to the way objects are situated in space with reference to one another.[169] In Moore, spatial metaphors pervade his examples of what he identifies as

[168] "You must have a corresponding discernment of the nature of the soul, discover the type of speech appropriate to each nature, and order and arrange your discourse accordingly, addressing a variegated soul in a variegated style that ranges over the whole gamut of tones, and a simple soul in a simple style" (Plato, *Phaedrus*, from Lang, Berel, Ed. *Philosophical Style*. Nelson-Hall, Chicago 1980. P. 14.)

[169] In 3.1431, for example, Wittgenstein writes: "The essential nature of the propositional sign becomes very clear when we imagine it made up of spatial objects (such as tables, chairs, books) instead of written signs. The mutual spatial position of these things then expresses the sense of the proposition." Wittgenstein's explorations of the limits of philosophy (what lies *inside* and what *outside* of it), the limits of our field of vision, and the frames of our pictures of facts are also all instances of spatial modeling. See also 4.063, 4.111, 4.113, 4.463, 5.143, 5.6, and 5.633.

common sense truths (“Here is a hand,” “The earth has existed for many years” etc.). The possible objection that such uses in Moore are literal and not metaphorical is not to be taken too seriously because Moore never presents a concrete theory of space. When he writes of his hand being “here” or about a part of the surface of an observable material object and even when he elaborates on distinguishing “things to be met with in space” from “things presented in space” he *relies* on a potential theory of space but does not offer one. It is also important to remember that the idealist and the skeptic, Moore’s major philosophical adversaries, would most probably not accept the reality of space that Moore relies on to get his arguments off the ground. In Moore space thus becomes a metaphor because it is placed outside the scope of the very controversies Moore sets out to dissolve. Ultimately, the problem is that Moore’s wholesale acceptance of spatial references trades on the purported reliability of common sense and some resultant form of materialism while trying to defend common sense. And if the same charge of circularity does not apply to Wittgenstein, the argument can still be made that Wittgenstein’s own spatial references are similarly influenced by taking a common-sensically material world for granted.

As to visual metaphors, Wittgenstein’s Tractarian preoccupation with showing is matched by Moore’s reliance on gestural demonstration in his common sense essays. Both philosophers’ calls for clarity and clarification can also be connected to a shared preference for visual tropes. In Wittgenstein, the one used most often is the comparison of the bounds of our world with the limits of our visual field (as, most probably, intentionally borrowed from but not credited to Schopenhauer). In Moore, apart from

coloring his extra-linguistic gestures, visual metaphors also creep into his words.[170] In fact, Moore's language is replete with allusions to seeing and light. One example of this is his use of the expression "to make out," whose ordinary meaning has to do primarily with visually discerning one out of many objects, with reference to rational understanding. When Moore writes "Do you see that reddish reflection in the water there? I can't make out what it's a reflection of,"[171] he demonstrates command of the common meaning of the expression "to make out." The same expression, however, becomes a visual *metaphor* for the extent of one's cognitive powers when, in another place, he writes: "Finally some philosophers have, so far as I can make out, held that…"[172] Such inconsistencies, however small against the background of Moore's project, gain an eerie significance in a philosopher whose announced purpose is to clarify our use of language. Apart from the often insufferable repetition of the word "clear" and its derivatives, Moore also indulges in such quaint tropes as "the mind's eye"[173] and he once even refers to a certain element of sensation as "diaphanous."[174]

If there should be a problem with this tendency Moore and Wittgenstein share, it will be its adherence to a traditionally philosophical, in fact Platonic,[175] frame of

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[170] It is important to note here that Moore does his best to avoid employing sweeping metaphors. In his *Refutation of Idealism* (P. 37), he writes: "And, in general, that which makes the sensation of blue a mental fact seems to escape us: it seems, *if I may use a metaphor*, to be transparent" (My italics). Here it becomes obvious that Moore harbors a sense of decorum of expression, which makes it necessary to assume an apologetic attitude to his use of a visual metaphor in a philosophical argument. Still, in an argument like Moore's the use of such metaphors seems, even to Moore, unavoidable.

[171] Moore, G.E. *G.E. Moore: Selected Writings*. Ed. Thomas Baldwin. Routledge, New York 1993. P. 157.

[172] Ibid. P. 123

[173] Ibid. P. 156

[174] Ibid. P. 41

[175] To cite one classical example, in his *VIIth Letter* Plato says that the acquaintance with the subject of knowledge "must come rather after a long period of attendance…like a blaze kindled by a leaping spark, it is generated in the soul and at once becomes self-sustaining." (Lang, Berel Ed. *Philosophical Style*. Nelson Hall, Chicago 1980. P. 4.)

expression. *Seeing* the true nature of things or clarifying that nature for others[176] is a traditional philosophical conceit. What the use of visual metaphors is necessitated by and what it achieves for each philosopher is worth exploring elsewhere. For my purpose, the tendency of such use itself serves as yet another indication of the possible missteps in the dance with/against traditional philosophy the two thinkers engage in.

The problem of literality, or at least some implication of literality, is also common to Moore and Wittgenstein. Literality is a requirement for doing philosophy that neither thinker ever formalizes but both implicitly adhere to. In Moore's common sense essays, the revelation of how things are is said by Malcolm to have assumed the role of a series of *reminders*. Moore is not so much advancing arguments as he is reminding us of what we are all supposed to know. The justificatory crux of this enterprise is Moore's claim that we all *understand* common sense pronouncements like "The Earth has existed for many years." And if we do, then we are not wrong in claiming knowledge of them for want of proof. When in "Defence of Common Sense," Moore writes "So soon, therefore, as we know that a person who uses such an expression is using it its ordinary sense, we understand his meaning," he offers ordinary language as a guarantee for understanding. But this is clearly not a picture of ordinary language that can accommodate metaphor, circumlocution, figurative expression etc. If these aberrations of a more widely understood ordinary language were invited into the common sense picture of the world, the picture would very probably cease to be common-sensical *for Moore*. Moore never explicitly states his literality requirement and yet he assumes it in every programmatic statement he makes. In his phrase, it is also often evident that Moore will favor even the

[176] *Tractatus* 4.112: "A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations."

most convoluted chain of simple literal pronouncements to a terse but less immediate figure of speech. This latter tendency might account for the wildly contradicting accounts of the enjoyment, or the lack thereof, Moore's writing affords to his readers (see my fn. 152 and fn. 165).

Wittgenstein's view of language is also under the spell of an implicit literality requirement. In *Tractatus* 4.016, he offers the following: "In order to understand the essence of the proposition, consider hieroglyphic writing, which pictures the facts it describes." Here, as in Moore, the possibility of understanding hinges on simplification. The pictorial relation, which Wittgenstein claims to stand between language and the world is not devoid of ambiguity and misunderstanding. But there is, in Wittgenstein's opinion, a method of dealing away with such adversities and the method is that of correct application of signs and symbols. The latter, as expressed in *Tractatus* 3.325, amounts to assigning a unique sign to each unique object of experience signified. From here it is but a short step to recognizing literal expression as the only trope of correct language.

I realize that my consideration of the importance of literality for Moore and Wittgenstein is mostly based on extrapolations I have made from the two philosophers' arguments and writing styles. It can also be noticed that all considerations of literality, be they mine or anyone else's, remain somewhat incompatible with the use of metaphor. The burden of the latter falls largely on Moore and the early Wittgenstein who both, despite their possible fondness for literality and their widely recognized interest in philosophical clarity, remain under the spell of metaphorical use. As to my extrapolations, they will be brought to better light in my subsequent discussion of the shift Wittgenstein's language undergoes in *On Certainty*.

The Unthinkable

We are now a little better equipped to approach the question "How does one define 'the unthinkable'?" In the case of Moore and the early Wittgenstein the answer will most probably be that there is no literal definition available to us and thus the term, together with what it purports to refer to, must be discarded. Early on, in the Preface to his *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein disallows the procedure of limiting our thoughts on account of our inability to "think what cannot be thought." Still, in the same breath Wittgenstein allows for the possibility of limiting our language to what can indeed be thought. The result of this possibility, in both Wittgenstein's subsequent arguments and the language they are cast in, is the assigning of linguistic clarification as the primary function of philosophy. When Wittgenstein writes in 4.112 "Philosophy should make clear and delimit sharply the thoughts which otherwise are, as it were, opaque and blurred," he is not as much contradicting himself in the Preface, but is rather outlining an important difference between thought and language. While thought will at most times, no matter our efforts, be intransigently opaque and blurred, our language can be corralled into purposeful clarity. If philosophy "should limit the unthinkable from within through the thinkable," it can only do it by the indirect procedure of manipulating and clarifying language. The latter will, of course, be accomplished by mastering the already available tools of logic.

Admittedly, none of the above considerations are openly present in Moore. This does not, however, mean that on a closer look Moore's stance on the same issues is dissimilar. On the contrary, Moore, quite like Wittgenstein, readily proposes to ostracize 'the unthinkable' by means of retooling language. Moore's answers to all skeptical and

idealist challenges carry the mark of at least two of the above *Tractarian* theses. Firstly, as advertised, common sense delimits philosophical expression to what we ordinarily say, with everything outside of its scope and expression remaining in the province of absurdity. This is highly reminiscent of Wittgenstein's proposed relationship between the thinkable and the speakable. Secondly, Moore is as involved as Wittgenstein in proposing a corrective function for philosophy. On the ontological level, the consequence for both philosophers is that they limit their world, i.e. their "field of vision," to what is experienced. On the level of language, they try, with variable success, to limit their expression to only what can be *straightforwardly* said about what is experienced. An immediate consequence of this, however philosophically insignificant it may turn out to be, is that talking about the "unthinkable" happening to our president is to be understood as absurd.

Before I go into my discussion of *On Certainty*, a book where Wittgenstein and Moore finally *meet*, I digress to bring in some additional considerations of philosophical inheritance. Both Moore in his common sense essays and the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* systematically refuse to engage the historical and conceptual backgrounds of their projects. Moore's refusal is evident everywhere in his dizzying references to "some" philosophers, "other" philosophers, "some other philosophers," etc. Wittgenstein reaches a similar effect, albeit in a far more frugal manner, by his disclaimer in the Preface to the *Tractatus* that he chooses to credit only Frege and Russell with having influenced his thoughts. Still, it is clear that Moore's choice not to mention the multitude of actual philosophers he obliquely refers to and Wittgenstein's choice to artificially delimit the historical breeding ground of his ideas do not as much argue against the importance of inheritance as they sweep it under the rug. Enough work has been done in way of reconstructing the backgrounds Moore and Wittgenstein so nonchalantly dismiss. In the case of Moore, a debt to Thomas Reid, among others, has been found to throw light on Moore's common sense project.[177] With Wittgenstein, some significant similarities with the philosophy of Ernst Mach have offered a fecund way of putting the *Tractatus* in a less myopic historical perspective than its author originally suggested.[178] *On Certainty* obviously breaks with the above tendency by wholeheartedly engaging Moore on his own terms. The later, new, and possibly better Wittgenstein not only attends to his roots—he also applies a new and more variegated language to the enterprise.

[177] On Moore's debt, or at least similarity, to Reid see John Greco's "How to Reid Moore" (Greco, John. "How to Reid Moore" *The Philosophical Quarterly*. Vol. 52, No. 209, Oct. 2002. pp. 544-563) and James Somerville's "Moore's Conception of Common Sense" (Somerville, James. "Moore's Conception of Common Sense" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. Vol. 47. No. 2,Dec. 1986, pp. 233-253).

[178] On the early Wittgenstein's conspicuous similarities with Mach, see Henk Visser's "Wittgenstein's Debt to Mach's Popular Scientific Lectures" (Visser, Henk. "Wittgenstein's Debt to Mach's Popular Scientific Lectures." *Mind,* New Series, Vol. 91, No. 361. Jan. 1982. pp. 102-105) and Jaakko Hintikka's "Ernst Mach at the Crossroads of 20-th Century Philosophy" (From *Future Pasts, The Analytic Tradition in Twentieth Century Philosohy*. Ed. Juliet Floyd and Sanford Shieh. Oxford University Press, New York 2001. pp. 90-98).

Most Certainly

In what follows, I will focus my attention on Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*. After an overview of the book and its curious place in Wittgenstein's oeuvre, I will expound on Moore's notion of certainty and Wittgenstein's critique of it. Wittgenstein's language, in which this critique is performed, will be kept in focus; the issue of the change in Wittgenstein's language and in his attitude to the language of philosophy will also remain a constant undercurrent in what follows. I will refer to Avrum Stroll's *Moore and Wittgenstein on Certainty* and to Timothy Binkley's *Wittgenstein's Language*, two studies some of whose insights I believe bear directly on my project. Finally, I will go back to the worries of philosophical inheritance that Moore and the early Wittgenstein leave unresolved, and which are ingeniously dispelled in Wittgenstein's last book. Even if Moore emerges somewhat different through Wittgenstein's looking glass, I will try to show that it is a case of reverent enhancement rather than one of philosophical rejection.

On Certainty stands out in Wittgenstein's oeuvre. Reportedly, it was inspired by a conversation between Wittgenstein and Malcolm about some issues in Moore's common sense essays. The text retains a conversational tone; in fact, it reads as a dialogue with the lines of one participant left out. That such a dialogue is possible at all bears testimony to a stylistic shift in Wittgenstein's way of writing. It also signals Wittgenstein's unprecedented involvement with his primary source. One of the challenges of reading *On Certainty* is that it demands a similar involvement on the part of its audience. My reconstructive effort in the previous parts of this chapter has been, among other things, an attempt to flesh out enough of Moore's arguments and language so as to be able to approach Wittgenstein's in-depth treatment of Moore in *On Certainty*.

The book presents the only exhaustive engagement on Wittgenstein's part with another philosopher and, perhaps, with the history of philosophy. Its incomplete dialogue is thus relatable to its origins in Moore's thought; Moore is not reduced to a reference point but is granted *presence* by Wittgenstein. As I have pointed out in the previous parts of my chapter, both Moore and the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* minimize, at every turn, the presence and importance of fellow philosophers, objectors and followers alike. A part of this, it should be remembered, plays out in the two thinkers phrasing, purposeful in its attempted exclusion of traditional terminology. Their effort, as much as it aims to reinvent the language of philosophy, very often amounts to an undoing of it. In *On Certainty*, the opposite bookend to the *Tractatus* in Wittgenstein's career, the language of philosophy is reinvented yet again, but this time in a generously inclusive manner.

There are numerous philosophical challenges in Moore's common sense essays. Wittgenstein identifies and tries to unpack the hardest of them. The first challenge is Moore's epistemological stance and, more specifically, his sense of what it means to know some fact about the world. The second challenge, one that is related to the first, is Moore's ambiguous position on the difference between belief and knowledge. The third challenge, in line with the title of Wittgenstein's book, concerns the notion of certainty as applied by Moore. Wittgenstein also occasionally addresses other notable problems in Moore's essays, such as his common sense view of the world and the place of logic in Moore's program. Despite Wittgenstein's fragmentary approach, I believe that under careful scrutiny his treatments of these challenges are identifiable and, also, that they are constructive in their cumulative results.

When Moore claims knowledge in his common sense propositions (he knows that the earth has existed for many years, that he has two hands, that there are other human beings besides him) the emerging concept of what it means to know is suspiciously simple. Moore makes it clear, severally, that his knowing these purported facts is not based on any available proof. The word "proof" itself figures heavily in his common sense work, even appearing in the title of one essay ("Proof of an External World"). And yet, the "facts" Moore urges us to accept in the face of skeptical and idealistic challenges are admitted by him to be unprovable. What does it mean to know something without being able to prove it? Firstly, we must acknowledge, with Moore, that the burden of proof here is of illegitimate provenance. Idealists will regard some of their observations as proofs and will consequently feel entitled to require the same from their objector. In his "The Refutation of Idealism" Moore painstakingly revisits the idealist's 'proofs' in order to demonstrate their illegitimacy, i.e. that they stray significantly from what can be considered conclusive proofs.[179] This is why Moore makes every effort, with variable success, to subvert the enterprise of proof-giving. Moore's second philosophical enemy, the skeptic, is treated similarly for similar reasons. Moore deems the skeptic's doubt groundless and thus devoid of possible proofs. Whenever Moore engages the skeptic with a proof, Moore's proof constitutes a simple physical gesture ("Here's one hand."). The

[179] "I think we are apt to forget what a vast number of arguments this interesting question must involve: we are apt to assume, that if one or two points be made on either side, the whole case is won. I say this lest it should be thought that any of the arguments which will be advanced in this paper will be sufficient to disprove, or any refutation of them sufficient to prove, the truly interesting and important proposition that reality is spiritual." (Moore, G.E. *G.E. Moore: Selected Writings*. Ed. Thomas Baldwin. Routledge, New York 1993. P. 24)

power of the latter is not lost on Wittgenstein. He accepts the gesture's utility for philosophy but also recognizes in it a new kind of groundlessness.[180]

The first potential problem that Wittgenstein finds with Moore's use of 'know' is that the facts he claims to know are all of the type that we all seem to know them.[181] What Wittgenstein notices is that such facts are integral not only to how we reason but also, and more importantly, to how we generally function as human beings. In the common philosophical practice of giving grounds Wittgenstein recognizes a necessary leap from the purely epistemological concern about how we know something to other reasons, external to epistemology, why we accept it as known: "As if giving grounds did not come to an end sometime. But the end is not an ungrounded proposition: it is an ungrounded way of acting."[182] Wittgenstein's refrain that giving grounds must come to an end reappears a number of times in *On Certainty* (see §§164, 192, 204 and 563). The importance of it is that it contradicts what Moore *says* while it remains faithful to what he *does*. Moore's gestures, raising a hand or demonstrating that he is standing up, do in fact help end the problematic enterprise of giving grounds against the groundless contentions of the idealist and the skeptic. Still, Moore's *claim* that they help prove any of the propositions he is making remains suspect-- groundless gestures cannot possibly *ground* a claim to knowledge.

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[180] "If Moore says he knows the earth existed etc., most of us will grant him that it has existed all that time, and also believe him when he says he is convinced of it. But has he also got the right ground for this conviction?" (Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *On Certainty*. Ed. G.E.M. Anscombe, G.H. von Wright. Harper Torchbooks, New York 1972. P.14.)
[181] "But Moore chooses precisely a case in which we all seem to know the same as he, and without being able to say how." (*On Certainty*, § 84)
[182] Ibid. P. 17.

A part of the problem, according to Malcolm, is that Moore is not using "know" in the ordinary way. In his "Moore's Use of "Know,"" Malcolm makes an important distinction between the statements "This is a hand" and "I know that this is a hand." He points out that while the first one can be accepted as a self-contained extra-linguistic ostensive definition, the second remains in need of further *investigating*.[183] The philosophical use of "know" will require the satisfaction of premises that Moore bluntly refuses to provide. What the gesture becomes, in the philosophical task of refuting the idealist and the skeptic, is an illegitimate attempt to ostensively define knowledge. Wittgenstein makes the same distinction in *On Certainty*.[184] He picks up Malcolm's conclusion when he points out, in §§ 137 and 138, that Moore's propositions about what exists are interesting in that we do not "arrive at any of them as a result of investigation." It is perfectly normal in philosophy to ask for substantiation, grounds and proofs for a knowledge claim. At the same time, the bare propositions, without the knowledge claim ("This is a hand," but not "I know that this is a hand") are not to be investigated. Such propositions, according to Wittgenstein, are grounded in "groundless action," i.e. not grounded at all as far as the skeptic and the idealist are concerned.

For Malcolm and Wittgenstein what Moore does—use the conclusive evidence he believes he has for "This is a hand" to support "I know that this is a hand"—inadvertently confuses the places the two expressions have with reference to philosophy.[185] According to Wittgenstein, we do not in fact have any conclusive evidence for the first and, even if

[183] Malcolm, Norman. "Moore's Use of "Know."" *Mind*, New Series. Vol. 62, No. 246 (Apr. 1953). P.244
[184] "But doesn't "I know that that's a tree" say something different from "that is a tree"? (*On Certainty*, § 585)
[185] "For when Moore says "I know that that's…" I want to reply "you don't *know* anything!"—and yet I would not say that to anyone who was speaking without philosophical intention. That is, I feel (rightly?) that these two mean to say something different." (*On Certainty*, § 407)

we did, it will not silence the skeptic and the idealist. “This is a hand,” used in the ordinary way, does not have anything to say to either one of Moore’s enemies. The second claim, in turn, warrants philosophical caution because, as Wittgenstein puts it, “we just do not see how very specialized the use of ‘I know’ is.”[186] This claim is the one the skeptic and the idealist are attacking and asking to be supported by proof.[187] Moore, however, admits to not have any other proof but the conclusive evidence he purports to have for the simpler claim “This is a hand.” In effect, what Moore does is pretend to ground a philosophical claim in need of grounding (“I know that this is a hand”) on a non-philosophical claim that is groundless by default. Wittgenstein notices that the leap from epistemology to groundless action is also, and necessarily, a leap from philosophy to life.

What actions *can* ground is not knowledge but belief. In his critique of Moore, Wittgenstein capitalizes on the distinction between the two. Moore, on his part, often seems to be oblivious to this distinction. When we say “I believe,” Wittgenstein contends, we are expressing the relation between us and the sense of our proposition, while when we say “I know” we are expressing the relation between us and a fact.[188] If we should attach respective propositional attitudes to our, or Moore’s via Malcolm, initial two statements—“Here is a hand” and “I know that this is a hand”—both of them will clearly imply belief but only the second one will claim knowledge of a fact. Through the lens of the belief/knowledge distinction Wittgenstein’s critique of Moore’s “I know” remains the

[186] *On Certainty*, § 11.
[187] “The statement “I know that here is a hand” may then be continued: “for it’s *my* hand that I’m looking at”. Then a reasonable man will not doubt that I know. –Nor will the idealist; rather he will say that he was not dealing with the practical doubt which is being dismissed, but there is a further doubt *behind* that one.” (*On Certainty*, § 19)
[188]*On Certainty*, § 90

same--propositions of belief remain groundless[189] and propositions of knowing remain in need of proof--but the distinction brings another important issue to the forefront.

Apart from the verb "know," the expression "I know" employs a subject—the, so to speak, knowing subject. Wittgenstein has a lot to say about the implication of personhood in claims of belief and claims of knowledge. At many points in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein denies Moore the knowledge he claims to have specifically because Wittgenstein finds it problematic that Moore, or anyone, should try to ground knowledge upon their own, personal experience of the world. Moore's appeal to sight, or the visually obvious, for example, does not find any favor with Wittgenstein: "Under ordinary circumstances I do not satisfy myself that I have two hands by seeing how it looks."[190] The deeper problem with personhood, though, is the semblances of mental states Moore attaches to his core propositions. Moore's use of "I know" is bound to constant references to Moore's own, specific bodily dispositions and mental states. This is so much so that he overlooks the fact, in his "Proof of an External World," that, while writing about others clearly seeing that he is standing up, he is actually most *certainly* not being observed by his readers. As to his mental state, Moore seems to conflate that with the state of knowing, even though the evidence for the two clearly does not overlap.[191] Wittgenstein points out that "the wrong use made by Moore of the proposition "I know…" lies in his regarding it as an utterance as little subject to doubt as "I am in pain."[192] Finally, what

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[189] "The child learns to believe a host of things. I.e. it learns to act according to these beliefs. Bit by bit there forms a system of what is believed, and in that system some things stand unshakeably fast and some are more or less liable to shift. What stands fast does so, not because it is intrinsically obvious or convincing; it is rather held fast by what lies around it." (*On Certainty*, § 144)
[190] *On Certainty*, § 133
[191] "We are asking ourselves: what do we do with a statement "I *know*…"? For it is not a question of mental processes or mental states." (*On Certainty*, § 230)
[192] *On Certainty*, § 178

Dallas M. High identifies as the problem of the knower and of personal assurances in Moore's essays comes down to the realization that "the condition of soundness of proof is not that the person offering the proof *knows* the premises to be true, but rather that it must be the case that they are true."[193] In other words, knowledge does not gain any special and additional currency from being experienced by a concrete subject. It is a completely different question where beliefs are concerned. Wittgenstein lets beliefs have both subjectivity and experiential/mental import.[194] In the case of knowing, on the other hand, if we follow Wittgenstein's critique to its logical extreme we should not allow ourselves to look at any such case as a case of personal experience at all.

Moore's insistence on knowing the truths he propounds *with certainty* adds a further complication to the implied autonomy of the knowing subject. On Wittgenstein's reading, Moore's claim to certainty is justifiable but not adequately justified—Moore is yet again using a concept in a specialized way while appealing to a fuzzier and less determined understanding of the concept. The notion of certainty, in the narrower philosophical sense, attaches strictly to propositions that are verifiable. In this sense certainty has little to do with the particulars of subjective experience. It is as impersonal as the philosophical claim to knowledge should be.[195] In fact, Wittgenstein takes the analogy further by contending that knowing and knowing with certainty are, in the specialized sense of the two terms, functionally identical.[196]

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[193]High, Dallas M. "Wittgenstein on Doubting and Groundless Believing." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. Vol. 49, No. 2 (Jun. 1981). P. 250.
[194] "It would be correct to say: "I believe…" has subjective truth; but "I know…" not." (*On Certainty*, § 179)
[195] "Forget this transcendent certainty, which is connected to your concept of spirit." (*On Certainty*, § 47)
[196] "I know = I am familiar with it as a certainty." (*On Certainty*, § 272)

The other sense of certainty—the non-philosophical, non-specialized one—is something altogether different. Quite like belief, it belongs to the subject uniquely and also, like belief, it is "grounded in groundless action." Wittgenstein goes further to equate this type of certainty to a "form of life," and even identifies it as "something animal." This certainty is also associated with our contentment[197] with being able to handle the world around us. In other words, what gives us certainty (and belief) is our way of life and that, in its turn, remains confusingly groundless as far as the possibility of tracing and verification is concerned. This novel epistemological picture is framed by the statement: "Certainty is *as it were* a tone of voice in which one declares how things are, but one does not infer from the tone of voice that one is justified."[198] Moore's claim to certainty is thus justifiable on a loose non-philosophical reading ("I act with *complete* certainty. But this certainty is my own"[199]) but remains largely unjustified in the narrowly specialized task it is meant to execute. The gestures Moore engages in are in the proper tone of voice but they are incongruously employed in the service of non-gestural, propositional contentions. This, according to Wittgenstein, is where Moore's greatest accomplishment and his greatest mistake collide.

On Certainty's very first sentence, "If you know that *here is one hand*, we'll grant you all the rest,"[200] has often been read as an ironic stab at Moore. Still, however ironic the *ring* of the sentence, the following clarifications I propose might throw a different light on it. Firstly, it is important to appreciate the fact that this statement opens the book but that the book as a whole goes far beyond it and the possible irony one can read into it.

[197] "My *life* consists in my being content with to accept many things." (*On Certainty*, § 344), "We are satisfied that the earth is round." (*On Certainty*, § 299)
[198] *On Certainty*, § 30
[199] *On Certainty*, § 174
[200] *On Certainty*, § 1

Secondly, in Wittgenstein's habit of adopting different *voices* in his later work, the statement is not Wittgenstein's but it accurately represents what Moore's nemeses, the skeptic and the idealist, would have said. Only a few paragraphs in, it becomes clear that the taunt is not meant by Wittgenstein, it is simply exposed by him. Its urgency is not Wittgenstein's: had it been his, he would have had very little else to write.

Moore's accomplishment, according to Wittgenstein, is that he engages the skeptic and the idealist with a simple gesture. This is not what they are asking for but it is a perfectly adequate answer to *their grounds*, or the lack thereof, for asking. What Moore is asked for is *proof* for his knowledge and for the existence of an external world. However, according to Wittgenstein, neither the skeptic's doubt nor the idealist's worldview are based on any proof. Wittgenstein on numerous occasions presses the point that one needs grounds for doubt (*On Certainty*, §§ 115, 122, 147, 160, 323). But what the skeptic offers, as a means of avoiding circularity, is by default groundless. Wittgenstein similarly reminds his readers that the idealist, conceivably a human being that shares into our general ideas of things, is offering a largely untenable picture of the world that sharply contradicts these same ideas. What is Wittgenstein's *proof* for these observations? Simply, the realization that even if the skeptic and the idealist could afford to respectively doubt everything or doubt the existence of an external world in particular, they could not possibly *act* on these doubts. The simplicity of this latter argument is obviously inspired by the simplicity of Moore's gestures. This is not to say that Moore's arguments do not display the beginnings of Wittgenstein's realization. They do indeed, especially in "Defence of Common Sense," where Moore reminds us of one major flaw in skeptic and idealist thinking: "One way in which they have betrayed this inconsistency,

is by alluding to the existence of other philosophers."[201] This reminder is based on the powerful intuition that what is wrong with the skeptical and idealist arguments is that they deny the reality their very advancement presupposes. But even if Wittgenstein agrees with the general intuition, he assesses it as functionally separate, and less developed, than Moore's actual gestures. Ultimately, "Here is a hand" does not *say* much to the skeptic and the idealist but it does *do* a lot to them. The action gives Moore's nemeses not what they asked for but what they deserve. The trouble, according to Wittgenstein, begins when Moore decides to use his gestures as proofs.

As I point out earlier, Wittgenstein believes the skeptic's and the idealist's demands for hard proof illegitimate. Thus, it will be hopeless to even consider addressing these demands.[202] Yet Moore does and does so by gesturing towards them, using the right tool for the wrong purpose. As proofs, Moore's gestures are empty—they appeal to a subjectivity that is both fluid and bottomless.[203] Moore's knowing subject, as an ultimate instance, falls prey to a circularity of its own—none of its perceptions, mental or sensory, are more certain than the purported truths they are used to support.[204] Our believes about the world and the "animal" certainty implied therein, tested over a great number of ordinary and bizarre cases sketched by Wittgenstein, emerge as an ever-shifting sum of time-tested directives on how to maneuver in the world rather than as hard knowledge

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[201] Moore, G.E. *G.E. Moore: Selected Writings*. Ed. Thomas Baldwin. Routledge, New York 1993. P. 115.
[202] "If someone said to me that he doubted he had a body I should take him to be a half-wit. But I shouldn't know what it would mean to try to convince him that he had one. And if I had said something, and that had removed his doubt, I should not know how or why." (*On Certainty*, § 257)
[203] "The mythology might change back into a state of flux, the river-bed of thoughts may shift. But I distinguish between the movement of the waters on the river-bed and the shift of the bed itself; though there is not a sharp division of the one from the other." (*On Certainty*, § 97)
[204] "My having two hands is, in normal circumstances, as certain as anything that I could produce in evidence for it." (*On Certainty*, § 250)

about the world. The light gradually dawning over the whole[205] is not only, as Plato would have had it, a metaphor for epistemological clarity—it is also a simile for the gradual acquisition of ways of reckoning with the world through action.[206] And if there is any irony in Wittgenstein's opening line, it is at everyone's expense—at the skeptic's and the idealist's because they base their demands for proof on prooflessness, and at Moore's because of his failure to rest his case before it has left off to search for proofs where there are none.

Sincerely, George

At a certain point in his "Defence of Common Sense," Moore betrays his exasperation with the stands of the skeptic and the idealist. Here, in contrast to most places in Moore's common sense essays, it is extremely difficult to accept what is said as a part of the philosophical argument. Instead, there is the impression of Moore stepping out of the argumentative enterprise and revealing something about *himself*:

> "The strange thing is that philosophers should have been able to hold sincerely, as part of their philosophical creed, propositions inconsistent with what they themselves *knew* to be true; and yet, so far as I can make out, this has really frequently happened. My position, therefore, on this first point, differs from that of philosophers belonging to this group A, not in that I hold anything which they

[205] *On Certainty*, § 141

[206] "Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end;--but the end is not certain propositions striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our *acting* which lies at the bottom of the language game." (*On Certainty*, § 204)

don't hold, but only in that I don't hold, as part of my philosophical creed, things which they do hold as part of theirs…"[207] (Moore's italics)

The passage does accomplish a philosophical task—it delineates important differences between Moore's position and those of his adversaries. But, more importantly, it offers a rare glimpse into Moore's attitude towards philosophy as such and his own place in it. The passage raises two issues that open our eyes to Moore's perceptions of philosophy and of himself—the issue of sincerity and the issue of philosophical creed. As to the nature of philosophy, a much earlier comment of Moore's, from "The Refutation of Idealism," throws light on the passage under scrutiny: "I do not deny that to suggest pleasant and plausible suppositions may be the proper function of philosophy: but I am assuming that the name Idealism can only be properly applied where there is a certain amount of argument intended to be cogent."[208] Moore *is* in fact suggesting what he says he is not—that the proper function of philosophy is not to advance pleasant and plausible suppositions. A different stroke in the same picture is found in the passage from Moore's "Defence of Common Sense" where the proper function of philosophy emerges as a *sincere* exposition of one's *creed*. One important overall effect of these meta-philosophical meanderings is that we are forewarned about what Moore considers the *wrong* things to do in philosophy. One such thing is to speak without conviction, i.e. insincerely, another is to indulge in what we find merely pleasant and plausible, and yet another to take license in pursuing arguments that obviously go against our convictions, or creed. Apart from these obvious implications, Moore's comments carry a different and less obvious burden—they represent *who* Moore is.

[207] Moore, G.E. *G.E. Moore: Selected Writings*. Ed. Thomas Baldwin. Routledge, New York 1993. P. 115
[208] Ibid. P. 25

On the basis of the above comments by Moore, we are entitled to a peculiar sense of personal acquaintance with him. The rest of the evidence from the common sense corpus completes this personal profile—Moore is indeed everywhere sincere, earnest, ever inclined to prefer painstaking inquiry to pleasant plausibility, and ever devoted to his philosophical creed. At the level of confession, Moore admits of a self-image and invariably delivers on his admission. It is, then, little wonder that Wittgenstein, whose thinking is sometimes occupied by the problematic of confession and has been identified as confessional by Cavell,[209] yields to the urge to expose and redraw Moore's self-portrait.

In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein points out that "the criteria for the truth of the *confession* that I thought such-and-such are not the criteria for a true *description* of a process."[210] It is important to remember that the *Investigations* is where Wittgenstein allows himself to treat of another philosopher, in this case Augustine, for the first time. It has been argued that Wittgenstein's take on Augustine is insensitive to the complexity of the latter's thought.[211] Wittgenstein's involvement with Moore, in contrast, is anything but insensitive. The above quote from the *Investigations* can be considered programmatic of Wittgenstein's approach, in *On Certainty*, to Moore's confession.

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[209] In his "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy," Cavell proposes the view that Wittgenstein's later works present confessional dialogues between two personalities, both of them Wittgenstein's—the person that is tempted and the one that corrects the other one's temptations.

[210] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Tr. G.E.M. Anscombe. Blackwell Publishing, Malden 2001. P. 189

[211] One convincing study of the ways in which Wittgenstein shortchanges Augustine is Patrick Beardsley's "Augustine and Wittgenstein on Language." (Beardsley, Patrick. "Augustine and Wittgenstein on Language." *Philosophy*. Vol. 58, No. 224 (Apr., 1983), pp. 229-236) In it, Beardsley reminds his readers that the only work of Augustine's that Wittgenstein reportedly read was the *Confessions*. Beardsley does not expound on the problem of philosophical confession. Wittgenstein himself only attends to it in the paragraph quoted above. Without further evidence, we cannot be sure if the paragraph in question is an oblique reference to Augustine or it represents Wittgenstein's independent grappling with the problem.

Wittgenstein's distinction between the criteria for the truth of a description and those for the truth of a confession holds up all throughout *On Certainty*. The first implication, in order of importance, of this distinction is Wittgenstein's recognition and critique of a type of personality—that of the reasonable, reliable man. Undoubtedly, when Wittgenstein writes that "an assurance from a reliable man that he *knows* cannot contribute anything"[212] he is referring to Moore's self-image. The reason such an assurance does not contribute anything is because a reasonable (or reliable) person is not defined as such by his/her insight into how things are but by his/her conformity to how we generally believe they are. It is merely *convenient* to regard a person whose judgments conform to our general beliefs as reasonable. In such circumstances, thinking of oneself as reasonable is also nothing more than convenient. When Wittgenstein, faced with the skeptic's doubt, contends: "There cannot be any doubt for me as a reasonable person"[213]—he soon deems it important to qualify that "what men consider reasonable or unreasonable alters."[214] All throughout his treatment of Moore, Wittgenstein looks for ways to rephrase Moore's "I know" in a way that would accommodate these concerns. Two of the alternate versions he dwells on, "I swear" and "I am of the unshakeable conviction," are especially well suited to the confessional mode. Unlike the expression "I know" the latter two report on a personal stance, an attitude.[215] Their weight is in their answering to the criteria for true confession but not necessarily, in fact almost never, to those of true description. They both suggest an inner experience rendered ecstatic at the realization that it conforms to other people's inner experiences. For Wittgenstein,

[212] *On Certainty*, § 21
[213] *On Certainty*, § 219
[214] *On Certainty*, § 336
[215] "I want to say: it's not that on some points men know the truth with perfect certainty. No: perfect certainty is only a matter of their attitude." (*On Certainty*, § 404)

however, neither the inner experience[216] nor the confirmation of that in others can guarantee knowledge.[217]

Another implication of the distinction between the criteria for accepting a confession and those for accepting a description is that it undercuts skeptical doubt. Wittgenstein presses the point in *On Certainty* that the only way to allow oneself to doubt Moore's assertions is if one is disconnected from the ever-shifting but generally accepted foundations of our actions. Acting as if one knew that the earth has existed for a long time must be very different from acting on the belief that it sprung into existence an hour ago.[218] And this is where, on the basis of confession, Moore gains advantage over the skeptic. If we, against Moore's will, strip his argument from the claim of knowledge, what remains is the *sincere conviction* that the earth has existed for a long time. Moore's advantage, which undoubtedly occasions the sense of perpetual glee in his common sense essays, is that he can and does *act* on this conviction. And what of the skeptic's confession? On any reading, his doubts advance a subjective world picture, or a lack thereof, but the resulting picture cannot be possibly acted on, i.e. the skeptic cannot *sincerely* doubt Moore's programmatic propositions. Moore's philosophical accomplishment is in opposing a confessional attitude grounded in action to one that is blatantly groundless from the perspective of action. However, as noted earlier, Moore makes a fatal misstep in his proposal that his confessional attitude be accepted as knowledge. Wittgenstein, as I have tried to show above, is acutely aware of this misstep and remains convinced that Moore's gesture alone would have done enough to silence the

[216] "An inner experience cannot show me that I *know* something." (*On Certainty*, § 569)
[217] *On Certainty*, § § 288-298
[218] *On Certainty*, § § 231-232

skeptic. If we should hold anything as indubitable based on our *life*, it will serve us well to simply counter skeptical doubts about it with an utterance like "O, rubbish!"[219]

Imagining a Language

In order to remain focused on Moore's and Wittgenstein's arguments, I have so far refrained from addressing the issue of Wittgenstein's language in *On Certainty*. But I believe it would be of great disservice to these same arguments if a discussion of them lacks sensitivity to the changes in Wittgenstein's vocabulary and style. There are many things at stake in how Wittgenstein expresses himself—the palpable difference between his language in the *Tractatus* and his final book, the bearing Wittgenstein's language has on his analysis of Moore, and the strange continuity it establishes with Moore while at the same time spilling significantly far from Moore's own restricted style. My earlier analysis of the continuities between the early Wittgenstein's language and that of Moore in his common sense corpus is controversial mainly because it posits an invisible web of influence or at least similarity between the styles of two philosophers advancing wildly different theories. The controversy in what I am about to do is that even though in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein directly addresses and even substantiates some of Moore's arguments, I recognize a marked difference between the language Wittgenstein employs in doing it and his own language in the *Tractatus*, as well as Moore's language all throughout. As it stands, Wittgenstein's treatment of Moore is in its essence a linguistic and argumentative proliferation of Moore's ideas. What I mean by this is that Wittgenstein remains faithful to Moore in terms of following

[219] "One might simply say "O, rubbish!" to someone who wanted to make objections to the propositions that are beyond doubt. That is, not reply him but admonish him." (*On Certainty*, § 495)

through, in a broken dialogue of sorts, with Moore's contentions but, at the same time, he lets Moore's language and arguments loose to a point where their unspoken and un-thought implications are laid bare in a way Moore never intended. As to Moore's arguments, I hope to have shown how Wittgenstein simultaneously honors and subverts them. What remains for me to demonstrate is how Wittgenstein does the same to Moore's language.

In his treatment of Moore, Wittgenstein insists on the crucial importance of a notion, most singular in character, that he formulates as "being bewitched by language." In the context of his study the primary purpose of this notion is to elucidate the peculiar, fuzzy status of the expression "I know" across a multitude of different uses. As pointed out earlier, Malcolm, whose interest in Moore most probably tickled Wittgenstein into writing *On Certainty*, also takes issue with Moore's uneven uses of the expression. It becomes clear in Wittgenstein that being bewitched by language involves a philosopher staying loyal to an expression that is not loyal to him/her. This is how, by virtue of unwittingly using "I know" in a number of different senses, Moore falls victim to such bewitchment.[220] The problem in Moore is that if he once uses "I know" to mean "I believe" and at another time uses the expression to mean "I am of the unshakeable conviction" and in yet another place to mean "I swear," he can only legitimately do so on the assumption of an overarching synonymy. To this, in his *Investigations*, Wittgenstein objects with the following: "We speak of understanding a sentence in the sense in which it can be replaced by another which says the same; but also in the sense in which it cannot

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[220] "The propositions which one comes back to again and again as if bewitched—these I should like to expunge from philosophical language." (*On Certainty*, § 31); "I would like to reserve the expression "I know" for the case in which it is used in normal linguistic exchange." (*On Certainty*, § 260)

be replaced by any other. (Any more than one musical theme can be replaced by another.)"[221]

The notion of synonymy is one that has some currency in the *Tractatus* but is significantly modified by the later Wittgenstein. In the *Tractatus*, as in Moore, the clarifying function of philosophy is purportedly, in part, made tenable by the possibility of *replacing* unclear expression with clear language. But if this is indeed possible, it would mean that most expressions can be *translated* onto other clearer forms of the same without any loss. In Moore's uneven uses of "I know" there clearly is the hope that the assertion of his advertised common sense "truths" can transform fickle empirical observations into general principles. In line with the poignant remark in his earlier *Investigations* quoted above, Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* undertakes the task to demonstrate, through argument and philosophical style, that such perfect translation into general principle is impossible.[222] Instead of becoming bewitched by our language like Moore, Wittgenstein proposes to re-imagine it together with all its intriguing equivalences and inconsistencies. Ostensibly, one cannot succumb to the mystery of a mechanism one has taken apart and reconfigured to one's own purpose.[223]

In his study of the crossroads where Wittgenstein and Moore meet—*Moore and Wittgenstein on Certainty*—Avrum Stroll proposes an interesting way of conceptualizing

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[221] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Tr. G.E.M. Anscombe. Blackwell Publishing, Malden 2001. (Part I, § 531) P. 122

[222] "Isn't what I am saying: any empirical proposition can be transformed into a postulate—and then becomes a norm of description. But I am suspicious even of this. The sentence is too general. One almost wants to say "any empirical proposition can, theoretically, be transformed…", but what does "theoretically" mean here? It sounds all too reminiscent of the *Tractatus*." (*On Certainty*, § 321)

[223] "If we imagine the facts otherwise than as they are, certain language-games lose some of their importance, while others become important. And in this way there is an alteration—a gradual one—in the use of the vocabulary of a language." (*On Certainty*, § 63)

the shift in Wittgenstein's language. The interpretative lens Stroll mounts is that of what he calls the "broken text." As witnessed in *On Certainty* the broken text is "a literary style of writing that is non-systematic, rambling, digressive, discontinuous, interrupted thematically, and marked by rapid transitions from one subject to another."[224] This style is opposed to the "spare, pure, transparent" language of traditional philosophy. On this reading, one that I find congenial, both Moore and the early Wittgenstein remain curiously close to the discursive toolbox of traditional philosophy. It also confirms my earlier notions of the difficulties Moore and the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* encounter in their quest for a new method.[225]

Stroll has many interesting observations as to why the later Wittgenstein embraces the broken text format. Firstly, the broken text accommodates the use of multiple examples and imaginary cases, something which Wittgenstein instated as necessary for his new method from the *Investigations* on.[226] Secondly, it makes it possible to philosophize away from explanatory conceptual models and significantly closer to describing *life*; the broken text is as tentative and loose-ended as the phenomena it attempts to describe. The third important observation Stroll makes is that, since the *Tractatus* and Wittgenstein's later works pursue wildly different philosophical goals, Wittgenstein is left no choice but to re-tool his language in the manner described.[227]

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[224] Stroll, Avrum. *Moore and Wittgenstein on Certainty*. Oxford University Press. New York 1994. P. 88.

[225] "Historically, there have been many documents replete with aphorisms, among them the *Tractatus*, which lack the characteristic features of broken texts." Ibid. 89.

[226] "Instead, we now demonstrate a method, by examples, and the series of examples can be broken off.—Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a *single* problem." (*Philosophical Investigations*. Tr. G.E.M. Anscombe. Blackwell Publishing, Malden 2001. (Part I, § 133) P. 44.)

[227] "As distinct from the use of aphorisms in the later writings, there is a coherent, tightly knit pattern of ratiocination in the *Tractatus*. The aphorism is used there as a summary of lengthy reflections engaged in elsewhere and not recorded in the text. Rather than trying to accommodate all the complexities those reflections uncovered, Wittgenstein's method in the *Tractatus* is to extract an essential point from them and

I accept Stroll's reading of Wittgenstein not only for what it contributes to our understanding of the linguistic shift from the *Tractatus* to *On Certainty*, but also for the insight it provides into Wittgenstein's rephrasing of Moore. It should be noticed that when Wittgenstein cites Moore or uses what Malcolm identifies as "Moore-like expressions," it is always for the purpose of breaking Moore out of his own linguistic confines. This is evident in Wittgenstein's attempt to rephrase Moore's "I know," which I have treated of earlier in this chapter. It is also evident in Wittgenstein's use of heavy repetition, unprecedented in his work and so typical of Moore. When Wittgenstein, for instance, repeats the mantra "testing comes to an end" over and over the result is twofold. The reader, at first perturbed, is gradually familiarized with the special character of the proposition, i.e. its intransigent ambition to mean different things in different contexts. The second impression is that the repetition plays upon Moore's redundant chains of argumentation—it mirrors them in order to expose the illegitimacy of their stagnant insistence on meaning the same in different contexts.

In *On Certainty* § 65, when Wittgenstein says that "when language-games change, then there is a change in concepts, and with the concepts the meanings of words change," he brings home the point that instead of crystallizing into firm principles, Moore's propositions, and anyone's propositions for that matter, are vulnerable to change in import, meaning, and grammatical status over the different language games they are employed in. Of course, Moore's greatest mistake in this respect is to not have seen himself as simultaneously engaged in different language-games. Wittgenstein's efforts in

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to incorporate it into a maxim (e.g., "Roughly speaking, objects are colorless.") As Wittgenstein was to say later (and in a different context), he was condensing a "whole cloud of philosophy into a drop of grammar." The effort to distill philosophical reflection into such a small compass is precisely the opposite technique exhibited by the kaleidoscopic ramification of apothegms in his later work." (Stroll, Avrum. *Moore and Wittgenstein on Certainty*. Oxford University Press. New York 1994. P.90.)

outlining these different games—by embracing Moore's gestures, subverting Moore's arguments, and looking for the extra-linguistic roots of doubt and certainty—are all effective *showings* of this simple fact that Moore never seems to see. This bears also on the problem of rephrasing itself—Wittgenstein shows severally that an expression can be rephrased within the limits of the same language-game and, yet, is hardly translatable into another as far as other language-games are concerned. The skeptic's doubt is thus different from pedestrian doubt, Moore's "I know" is not the opposite of the skeptic's "We cannot know," and certainly different from the pedestrian common-sensical "I know" Moore so often wants it to be.

The language Wittgenstein speaks in *On Certainty* is that of imagination and impatience. The text is replete with questions, meanderings, and italicized inflections. The overall effect is that Wittgenstein emerges eager to break out of the stock terminology previously reserved for the purposes of philosophy by imagining a new way of doing philosophy. Instead of trying to refute Moore by showing him his own inconsistencies Wittgenstein piles up situations in which Moore's propositions are rendered senseless. In this Wittgenstein adopts an array of attitudes and vocabularies—of children, tribesmen, scientists, Catholics, madmen, moon dwellers etc. His italics, which in the *Tractatus* were used exclusively to emphasize important points and terms, become here a way of introducing diction to the written text.[228] This is one of Wittgenstein's attempts, through literary style, to perpetuate something he wants to retain from Moore's "arguments"-- their gestural import. Wittgenstein is convinced that if there is anything

[228] In one instance, in § 379, Wittgenstein announces his mental state and then italicizes the relevant emphases: "I say with passion "I *know* that this is a foot"—but what does it *mean*?" See also *On Certainty* §§ 38, 56, 133, 143, 246, 344, 357, 442 etc.

impressively on-target in Moore's common sense essays, it is his impatience with the skeptic and the idealist (see my fn. 213). Wittgenstein's way of perpetuating this impatience is by breaking free from Moore's vocabulary and giving free reign to a way of writing that proves more powerful against Moore's nemeses. In Wittgenstein's treatment of Moore the gesture is not bogged down by propositional explanations but is given, so to speak, a life of its own.

Another way in which Wittgenstein recharges the language of philosophy is by reconsidering the notion of literal meaning. The problem of distinguishing between the different uses of a word—a problem that occupies Wittgenstein in his analysis of Moore's "I know that this is a hand"-- is connected to the question if we mean what we say literally or figuratively. At a few junctions in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein alludes to the possibility that not one word in our everyday vocabulary is guaranteed to possess a simple, straightforward meaning. For him even the meaning of the word "hand" is not exempt from this.[229] And to the extent that it is, he continues, "the strange thing is that when I'm quite certain of how the words are used, have no doubt about it, I can still give no *grounds* for my way of going on."[230] If grounds are lacking for anchoring the meaning of a simple word, our meaning of what we say gets contaminated with the same fluidity that Wittgenstein sees in our epistemological claims. Indeed, this fluidity accounts for the fact that we can and we often do, e.g. in poker, use words like "hand" figuratively. It is thus very likely that the unthinkable, which I earlier gave as an example of an intractable

[229] ""I don't know if this is a hand." But do you know what the word "hand" means? And don't say "I know what it means now for me." And isn't it an empirical fact—that *this* word is used like *this*?" (*On Certainty*, § 306)
[230] *On Certainty*, § 307.

manner of speaking from the perspective of Moore and the *Tractatus*, is a figure which the Wittgenstein of *On Certainty* can wholeheartedly accept.

My second external point of reference here is Timothy Binkley's book *Wittgenstein's Language*. I think that Binkley's approach is extraordinarily sensitive to the dynamics of Wittgenstein's phrase; it also deserves credit for following Cavell's general caution to refrain from "the pervasive absence of any worry that some remark of Wittgenstein's may not be utterly obvious in its meaning and implications."[231] At the center of Binkley's work is his piecemeal re-creation of the *Philosophical Investigations* whereby clusters of the original book's paragraphs are grouped together by theme or common feature and careful steps are made in elucidating the criteria for such groupings. In the process of doing this Binkley zooms back and forth in Wittgenstein's oeuvre to illustrate the changes of phrase and vocabulary that it is subject to.

Binkley places his emphases on a number of notions in Wittgenstein which suggest that the linguistic shifts were necessary and were most probably recognized as such by Wittgenstein himself. The first notion is that of Wittgenstein's "sketches of landscapes" which he programmatically proposes as his building method in the *Investigations*. The sketches are a significant departure from the concrete pictures that the *Tractatus* thought to have made possible. Wittgenstein's ambition in the *Investigations*, in Binkley's words, is to "present concepts in their natural surroundings, emphasizing the lack of any clear and simple order open to view."[232] Binkley's observation is also

[231] Cavell, Stanley. "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy." *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (Jan., 1962), P. 68.
[232] Later in the same paragraph Binkley substantiates his claim by citing from Wittgenstein's *Remarks*: "You cannot learn to view the geography of a landscape as a whole, if you move in on it so slowly that you

confirmed in *On Certainty*. The following two paragraphs in my opinion develop both Wittgenstein's idea of sketching and Binkley's reading of it:

> "We believe, so to speak, that this great building exists, and then we see, now here, now there, one or another small corner of it." (*On Certainty* § 276)
>
> "So when Moore sat in front of a tree and said "I know that that's a tree", he was simply stating the truth about his state at the time. [I do philosophy now like an old woman who is always mislaying something and having to look for it again: now her spectacles, now her keys.]" (*On Certainty* § 532)

Both of these paragraphs allude to the synecdochal nature of Wittgenstein's elucidations. If we only have parts of the whole picture available to us at different times, or from different viewpoints, the best we can do in conveying a *world picture* is to supply the greatest amount of sketches of *aspects* of it. In answer to Moore, whose own "Here's a hand" constitutes a synecdochal attempt to illustrate an external reality, *On Certainty* proposes a singular priority of the sketch over the object sketched. In Wittgenstein's language, the use of synecdoche is both a reminder of the futility of Moore's project and a way of repurposing the philosophical enterprise; the old woman will only find her keys if she forgets, for the time being, about her spectacles and, indeed, about everything else.

Binkley's second concern I want to point attention to—Wittgenstein's self-confessed methodological preference for description over explanation—also has a

have already forgotten one bit when you come to another." (Binkley, Timothy. *Wittgenstein's Language*. Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1972. P. 21)

bearing on Wittgenstein's language in *On Certainty*.[233] The descriptive enterprise, chronologically started in *The Blue and Brown Books*, evidently demands enrichment of one's vocabulary and turns of phrase. Binkley reminds us that the project of the *Tractatus* is to, as Stroll also noted, condense a philosophical cloud into a drop of grammar. With such an effort comes the requisite language of condensation that Moore and the early Wittgenstein share. The later Wittgenstein, in contrast, aims differently and consequently writes differently.[234]

I share Binkley's belief that the language of the *Investigations* is explicitly metaphor-driven and I think his analysis is relevant to *On Certainty*, too. Wittgenstein here indulges in metaphor at almost every turn—the king that can make rain, the wine that becomes blood, the teacher instructing the child, and the tribe that Moore is captured by are all metaphoric brush-strokes. They are also, as Binkley points out of the metaphors in the *Investigations*, irreplaceable in the sense that each metaphor relates to each description in a unique way. The infamous burden of understanding the later Wittgenstein is thus put in a new perspective. The difficulty is partly due to the occasional impenetrability of these figures, but also and more importantly to their irreplaceability—diluting a paragraph from *On Certainty* into an eighteen-page paraphrase has often been attempted and has almost as often failed. The license which, to some degree, all

[233] "When Wittgenstein looks at language he wants to see what is there, to notice how language actually works. He gives us his sketchings of what he has seen with the aim of representing only what is there, to show simply that something is the case – or rather, in what *way* (among others perhaps) something is the case – without saying why or in any way explaining how it is the case. The sketches are sent forth for our viewing; they are not presented for assent or adjudication… To sketch an argument is not to give one." (Ibid. P. 49)

[234] "Different ideas about the nature of language are mirrored in the way language is used to express them. This is why the terminology of the *Tractatus* has been subject to much more scrutiny than the "terminology" of the *Investigations*. The latter really has no terminology, although it does rely upon guiding images and metaphors. A terminology consists of arbitrary tags, tidy labels with univocal meanings independent of context; but metaphors are just the opposite – non-arbitrary words whose meanings are rich and highly context-dependent." (Ibid. P.152)

commentators inevitably take in trying to put the Wittgensteinian puzzle together proves Binkley's point that Wittgenstein himself does not provide the blueprint but only a decoy, i.e. the enticing facets of what is not intended as and could hardly ever be a complete picture. In comparison to this, Moore's common sense essays present a straightforward attempt to order a puzzle before all pieces are available.

Not* about *Moore

I believe that while applying his new method for doing philosophy in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein also advances a new way of discussing *philosophers*. Of the method, to which Wittgenstein devotes some pages in the works preceding *On Certainty*, it can be said that it is episodic, fragmentary, example-driven, and decentralized. It is also inclusive in terms of the vocabulary it affords. Wittgenstein's conception of the treatment of another philosopher, however, is much less programmatically explicit. In fact, *On Certainty* never reveals its overarching purpose and, partly on account of this, barely finds its own place in Wittgenstein's oeuvre.[235] The question of Wittgenstein's determinations in writing about Moore remains unanswered by Wittgenstein. My overall impression of this treatment is that there is a book 'on certainty' that is written by Wittgenstein and deals with Moore while it manages to not be *about* Moore at all. And this is where I think Wittgenstein's approach to discussing other philosophers is immensely innovative.

[235] In his book on Moore and Wittgenstein Stroll writes: "In the Wittgensteinian materials that have been published to date, two of his works are generally regarded as masterpieces…But a consensus is growing among exegetes that a third work must be added to this pair, namely, *On Certainty*." (Stroll, Avrum. *Moore and Wittgenstein on Certainty*. Oxford University Press. New York 1994. P. 5)

One should recall that Moore himself never writes *about* other thinkers; he is even most often guilty of purposely burying other thinkers' identities under loose topical categorizations. I do not think that Wittgenstein does the same thing to Moore. When I state, in the previous paragraph, that Wittgenstein "deals" with Moore what I mean is that Moore is given a *voice* in the dialogue of *On Certainty*. The difference between this and the common format of addressing philosophers, and the innovation thereof, is that Wittgenstein creates a dynamic environment for Moore and his arguments to *speak for themselves*. My proof for this is in the observations I have made of Wittgenstein's involvement with Moore's language. The numerous questions, examples, exclamations and personas Wittgenstein employs in the text are indeed his own and they attest to his readiness to participate in a dialogue with Moore. But in addition to these, Wittgenstein borrows Moore's metaphors, tropes, and turns of speech. In Wittgenstein's hands and in service of his criticism of Moore, these borrowings are not mere citations but, rather, enhancements.

One such enhancement, in addition to other examples I have already devoted some space to, is evident in Wittgenstein's retooling of the metaphor of light, which I have discussed above. The latter is interesting not only in how Wittgenstein manages to subvert Moore's original, but also in the way he subverts the metaphor's *Tractarian* roots. When in § 141 Wittgenstein says with reference to how we form our believes that "light dawns gradually over the whole,"[236] he engages Moore's and his own earlier preoccupations with clarity but raises the stakes for using and staying true to the metaphor. What is here proposed is not Moore's instant analytic spotlight that is

[236] *On Certainty*, § 141

supposed to cut a well-defined domain of clarity amidst all absurdities, but rather a "gradual dawning." The clarity of a gesture or a definition is to be appreciated in philosophy as well as outside it, but both gesture and definition provide only momentary glimpses of what might *actually* be the case.

However laborious Moore's approach to philosophy is, Wittgenstein reminds us at every turn of Moore's desire to achieve too much too fast. The philosophy of impatience, to which both philosophers belong in most of their textual incarnations, thus bifurcates in two distinct strands—that where impatience is philosophical, to which Wittgenstein belongs and that where impatience is psychological, i.e. the one Moore often falls into. It is no wonder, then, that instead of abolishing the metaphor of light altogether, Wittgenstein chooses to resurrect it, to the possible chagrin of both the earlier Wittgenstein and Moore, to its ancient Platonic form. In Plato, as I have quoted him above, the spark of our acquaintance with our subject of knowledge is said to arrive only "after a long period of attendance."

Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* is not *about* Moore in any way partly because Moore himself shrewdly preempts all possibility for such effort on the part of his commentators. After so much explanation, gesturing and confession Moore successfully monumentalizes his project in the common sense essays. Wittgenstein is tickled by both the utility and the futility of Moore's monument. In terms of a positive contribution, Moore's gestures dressed in his exacting language provide an invaluable insight into a possible way of dealing, or dealing away, with skepticism and idealism. As far as their futility, the same gestures and the same language are put to work in service of explanations which, though endless and ungrounded, pretend to end an age-old philosophical battle and to ground the

supposed victory. The inconsistencies implied are irremediable if left for Moore alone to fix. This is why, instead of discussing Moore's mistakes from a distance, Wittgenstein joins Moore on a step-like maieutic quest for the remedy. Its success, of course, remains almost as difficult to assess as it is easy, after *On Certainty*, to accept that Moore could not have found the remedy on his own.

Chapter IV

Derrida and Searle on How to Undo Words with Words

I will start this chapter with a brief analysis of J.L. Austin's project in his influential William James lectures published under the title *How to Do Things with Words*. This will lay the groundwork for my discussion of the debate between Jacques Derrida and John Searle, a debate which in its subject matter, inspirations, and interest for philosophy remains mostly indebted to Austin. My main argument is that the larger part of the numerous and fatal obstacles Derrida and Searle encounter on the way to potential mutual understanding have their origin in Searle's failure to domesticate the idiosyncratic richness of Derrida's language. As tempting as it is to write this failure off on account of the well-documented discrepancies between English and French, what is at stake here is something different altogether; Derrida's contributions to the debate are more than adequately translated into English but they seem to remain incomprehensible for Searle. In my discussion I will look into the actual arguments that Derrida and Searle mount, but I will also allow myself to investigate other less explored factors that shape the debate. Problems of philosophical inheritance, inspiration, and philosophical decorum, often neglected in the literature, will all get their due share of attention.

Austin's Playground

J.L. Austin's project in *How to Do Things with Words* aims to identify and hopefully demystify some uses of language that do not conform to traditional notions of 'making a statement.' Apart from some obvious contenders such as exclamations and questions, Austin outlines a significant variety of other speech forms that we use to

simply *do* things with. In a study like Austin's, which tries to take account of so many types of linguistic instances, there is little hope for completeness, but it is important to set one's own parameters in order to guarantee an even remotely informative outcome. At the outset of his William James lectures, Austin limits himself to studying non-constative speech acts in terms of their intentionality and their performative charge. What becomes clear throughout the lectures, however, is that even the study of such speech acts strictly in terms of these two criteria suffers from the need for a more general theory of speech acts. By the lectures' end, Austin's study addresses this need and what started as a preliminary study in a rarely explored direction[237] becomes the foundation for a whole new approach to language.

The performative function in language poses a challenge to the age-old philosophical approach to statements in terms of truth and falsity. A statement such as "I hereby name you 'Aurora,'" cannot be false or true in any proper or interesting way. It can, however, be evaluated in terms of issues like intentionality, practical success, and performative charge. Philosophy often allows itself diversions into examples of the extraordinary and the absurd in order to establish firm principles about what the specific inquiry regards as the norm. With performatives, however, it is not accidents and abnormalities that are observed. As Austin notes in his first lecture sentences like the naming example above are "more common than is appreciated."[238]

Austin begins his exploration of performatives by laying out the possible factors that shape such speech acts and that distinguish them from constatives. Before this can be

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[237] It should be noted that Austin's William James lectures occurred a good four decades after Reinach's anatomy of "social acts." Austin's specific interest in what he calls the "awe-inspiring" acts of promising was also present in Reinach's 1913 studies.

[238] Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things with Words*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1962. P. 25

done, though, Austin makes sure he can safeguard performatives against the possible and popular charge of nonsensicality. In the analytic tradition of the day, instances of nonsense qualify as such because of their subversion of grammar (which performatives can rarely be accused of) and, often, their pretending unsuccessfully to be normal statements of fact. Depending on one's philosophical convictions, many common types of utterance can thus be rejected by a certain philosopher as nonsensical or pseudo-statements. Austin claims that his new category of utterances is immune to both charges. In our use of performatives, he contends, we do not purport to be stating a fact but to simply *do* something, i.e. to effect an *action*. Thus, for example, the criterion of verifiability, "not always formulated without unfortunate dogmatism,"[239] does not apply to utterances of the performative kind.

The more interesting issue for Austin is how we distinguish performatives from constatives. Austin points out that, even though the former are not used to properly state facts or describe states of affairs, they often *seem* to be employed to such ends. Still, while they masquerade (Austin's term) as constatives, performatives have an altogether different function and a unique one at that. In Austin's provisional definition a performative is an utterance that is used to perform an action, hence the name he attaches to it. Language in its performative instances is equated with action—in such instances "saying it is making it so." For this to be possible, there have to obtain certain *circumstances* and an intention to do the respective action must be in some way embedded or implied in the utterance. Thus, for the utterance "I hereby name you 'Aurora'" to perform its function (its action) will mean that there is an intention in the

[239] Ibid. P.2.

speaker to effect the baptism and that the pronouncement must be accompanied by the relevant concomitants of naming (someone or something to name, witnesses present, agreed-upon protocol etc.). As a way to capture the success (or lack thereof) of performative utterances, Austin proposes the new criterion of *felicity*. For a performative to be happy it would mean that what the speaker had set out to accomplish with it has been in fact accomplished and that it has been done in confluence with the relevant circumstances. Speaking of our setting out to accomplish anything, be it through word or action, Austin notices, commits us to some picture of intentionality. Thus, if I had no intention of naming anyone or anything 'Aurora,' no matter how favorable the circumstances are my utterance will not constitute a happy performative.

Clearly, for Austin, an utterance of this kind does not and should not satisfy the criteria of truth and falsity. The confusion of such utterances with constatives does not come from the apparent applicability of truth and falsity to them but from their general resemblance to reports. With reports, however, while facts are being stated, no actions are performed. In my example, my reporting *that* I am naming someone or something Aurora is sharply distinct from my performing of the actual naming. Austin here points to another important distinguishing feature of performatives which is most often absent from mere reports—performatives always employ "humdrum verbs in the first person singular present indicative active."[240]

In the exploration of his newly identified category of speech acts, Austin repeatedly stumbles on the realization that even though enough distinguishing characteristics for it have been sufficiently outlined, the performative remains bizarrely

[240] Ibid. P.5.

similar to statements of fact, i.e. constatives. For one, many constatives can be read as performatives, i.e. they can be read into in terms of what they *do* and not exclusively in terms of what they *state*. In a similar vein, the criterion of felicity can often be applied to certain statements that we are used to evaluating in terms of truth and falsity. Furthermore, and probably most importantly, the elusive difference between doing things with words and saying things with words engenders its own problematic that the discussion of performatives teases out but cannot possibly resolve. Austin's subsequent efforts aim at elucidating the similarities and inherent confusions between the two categories (performative and constative). This he does by advancing a preliminary theory of speech acts that takes into account these similarities and, of course, the distinguishing differences where there are such. These are some of the reasons why the project of *How to Do Things with Words* graduates from the ingenious introduction (discovery) of performatives to the ambitious beginnings of a general theory of speech acts.

Unlike Austin's confident introductory intuitions of the nature of performative utterances, the latter part of his lectures, devoted to his preliminary theory of speech acts, is more notable for what it destroys. In the process of mounting his classification of the locutionary, perlocutionary and illocutionary forms in language, Austin gradually comes to the realization that his initial distinction between the constative and the performative, however handy, must be discarded. The three forms discussed by Austin constitute a continuum between our traditional notions of *doing* and *saying*. The locutionary form is the closest to what we have learned to associate with the delivery of meaning (i.e. the making of a statement), the illocutionary form characterizes utterances from the perspective of their intended result (persuasiveness, imperative charge, etc.) and the

perlocutionary form represents the result itself, i.e. the effect of an utterance on our interlocutor in any sort of communication. In terms of the doing/saying continuum, the first constitutes the dimension of saying things with words, the second—the dimension of intending an action through words, and the third—the deed accomplished through words. Since many utterances instantiate two or three of these forms at the same time, it becomes obvious that the distinction between doing and saying is better thought in terms of overlapping layers than of stages between two extremes. Saying and doing are not the two poles of a scale, they are very often the same thing and are surprisingly often subsumed under the constative use of language. This is a realization hard to argue with and one that has in fact been adopted by most subsequent language theorists.[241] It is, obviously, difficult to sustain any clear distinction between constatives and performatives within it. As Austin points out, the frequent natural overlap between the three forms of speech act warrants doubt that an animal like "a straightforward constative utterance" exists at all.[242]

If Austin's inquiry was squarely into the problem of "how we do things with words," it would have had to retain the distinction between saying and doing and, moreover, the one between stating and performing in language. With these distinctions subverted, what we are left with is rather an inquiry into what we can say and do *about* how we do things with words. As to the latter, Austin provides a good beginning with

[241] Stuart Hampshire, in his "J.L.Austin," sums up Austin's discovery and its reception in linguistic philosophy in the following way: "Here again we shall find, if we will only pause to look at the facts, a continuous spectrum of kinds of utterance, each with its peculiar liabilities to mistake. The most famous of his discoveries in this field was of the element of performativeness that enters into many kinds of utterance ordinarily classified as statements... This was certainly a substantial discovery, which no one can henceforth neglect in giving an account of knowledge." (Rorty, Richard, Ed. *The Linguistic Turn*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1992. P. 242.)
[242] Ibid. P.110.

good reasons for exploration but very little in the manner of theoretical closure. Instead, he explicitly frames his lectures with two statements, in the beginning and at the end, of how he hopes his project will be inherited, appropriated, and possibly completed by future scholars.

Why does Austin even busy himself with considering the manner in which his project will be inherited? Firstly, he on several occasions admits of his unwillingness and incapability to tie the many loose ends of his inchoate theory. This might be due in part to the natural limitations of the lecture format. Secondly, the project gains in depth but lacks in completeness by being centered on the concept of the performative. A general theory of speech acts will, as the author admits, have to cover a much richer pool of speech forms. Thirdly, Austin's method itself does not allow for closure—within the limits of his study he is far more interested in creating, or reaching, various impasses than actually resolving them. This is evident in Austin's persistent re-cataloguing in the beginning of every lecture of the numerous difficulties he has encountered up to that point. The method behind the project appears to favor the logic that outlining a yet-to-be-resolved problem is as important a contribution to philosophy as is solving it. A corollary of the latter is the simple but powerful notion that the bigger a problem is the greater attention it should command. The accumulation of impasses, then, is Austin's attempt at contribution to a new theory of speech acts, but also, and more importantly, it is his proof for the existence and the importance of the problems a theory like this will be called upon to tackle. Lastly, Austin's consideration for the ways his project will be taken up by others is due to the responsibility the project carries as to what he calls the "revolution of philosophy" brought about by language analysis.

On the question of inheritance, Austin has three directives for subsequent researchers. Firstly, he repeatedly alludes to the need to try and make sense of the minutiae of speech. His lectures abound in examples of how this is to be done, but even in their totality these examples amount to little more than introductory sketches. Austin's method of *following through* with the analysis of a specific type of utterance (acts of baptism or marriage in the William James lectures, promises and excuses elsewhere in his works) is always rewarding and at the same time always incomplete. This anti-climactic quality of Austin's speech act theorizing is not meant to discourage further analysis. On the contrary, it carries an invitation—a performative in its own right—conceivably meant to open a discourse through multiple applications of its candidate subject.

The second invitation, and an admittedly more challenging one, is for others to develop the general theory of speech acts Austin himself never gets to develop. As mentioned earlier, his lectures aim at legitimizing a problematic rather than dissolving it. His is the work of a reconnaissance unit rather than that of an army. And sure enough, an attack on any philosophical problem requires some legitimate demonstration of the pertinence of the problem itself. The integration of speech act theory into the fabric of contemporary philosophy after *How to Do Things with Words* testifies to this fact and, specifically, to the effectiveness of Austin's reconnaissance efforts.

The third way of inheriting Austin, one he identifies in the closing paragraphs of his lectures, is by simply partaking in the fun of constructing and applying the new theory. However un*serious* this invitation might sound, it signals as serious a break with tradition as Austin's earlier subversion of the constative / performative dichotomy did. The invitation itself, in the words "I leave to my readers the real fun of applying it (the

general theory of speech acts) in philosophy,"[243] would have been no more than an empty gesture had Austin himself not made it clear on numerous occasions that his work is significantly marked by the pleasure of discovery. This mark not only sets Austin apart from the self-seriousness of prior language analysts, but also becomes the dividing criterion for the inheritors of his project. The pleasure, or felicity, of treading ahead in a direction little explored is part of the focus of Shoshana Felman's *The Scandal of The Speaking Body*. In her analysis of Austin's William James lectures, to which I will return at the end of this chapter, Felman posits the criterion of *having fun* as integral to speech act theorizing and indeed philosophizing as such. The two philosophers I will be discussing in what follows, John Searle and Jacques Derrida, fall on two opposite sides of the fence when it comes to having fun with Austin's heritage. They also, as I hope to be able to demonstrate, have wildly different ways of taking up Austin's other two invitations.

Parasite Lost

Derrida's "Signature Event Context" has a double significance in Austin scholarship. It is, firstly, a fresh look at how we do things with words; fresh because it serves its own purposes, follows its own method, and sets its own aims. Secondly, Derrida's text is significant because through its analysis it digs up a new Austin that at least one of Austin's established philosophical heirs refuses to recognize. The heir in question is John Searle, the prominent contemporary philosopher and speech-act theorist. Before I address some of Searle's contentions, however, I will attempt a summary of "Signature Event Context."

[243] Ibid. P. 164.

In a world increasingly safeguarded by disclaimers, and in the world of philosophy that hopes to make sense of it, a disclaimer is certainly due as to my inclusion of Derrida in this project. Why go through the trouble and extend the historical and argumentative context of my study to accommodate such an inclusion? My remarks above about the significance of "Signature Event Context" might not be considered as justification enough. It is Derrida's language, and the challenge and terror it has been known to carry, that earns him a place in my discussion. It is customary and largely considered unobjectionable that different philosophic traditions adopt household attitudes towards their own prominent members. For example, Searle, against whom I will attempt to analyze Derrida and his language, has long been endearingly referred to as a pugilist by his colleagues. The dynamics of assigning and accepting such roles is interesting, but what I find even more interesting is the fact that, once assigned and accepted, the familial role tends to solidify into a permanent and undifferentiated blueprint. Derrida's blueprint, especially from the perspective of non-continental philosophy, suffers the same permanence and lack of differentiation. It is my intention to try and break through it for two reasons. One is that the image of Derrida as a kitten mixing up yarns (my simile, which I think captures the historical attitude towards the French philosopher from the standpoint of Searle's tradition) does not and cannot account for the depth afforded by Derrida's philosophy and Derrida's lexicon. My other reason is that I find the practice of dealing away with a philosopher's contributions on the basis of such blueprints both unfair and counterproductive.

Turning to "Signature Event Context," it is of crucial importance to note that Derrida's aim goes well beyond discussing, or discrediting, Austin. The project at hand

addresses the relation between the spoken and the written word. For Derrida, the written word liberates the concept of communication from the determinations of context, intentionality, and expression of meaning (Austin's *locution*). The graphematic sign, which stands at the core of writing, can operate only if we allow for its illimitable iterability. The repetition and variation that this iterability entails ensure the survival of what is written, but also challenge traditional notions of communication. Derrida claims that the written word is inescapably unhinged from the determinations of its contextual origin. Had it not been so the written word would have had to survive as a singular occurrence (event) and not as the possibility of multiple repetitions. About intentionality, Derrida claims that writing remains readable after its moment of production, the "collectivity of presences organizing the moment of its inscription,"[244] partly because it can distance itself from the author's intention.[245] The stamp of the author's intention can only remain in-tact if we had guarantees for the author's self-presence in intending and the reader's ability to understand, both of which Derrida deems difficult to secure. As to locution, Derrida points out that the traditional notion of communication as transporting meaning assumes a *unity* of meaning that is not entirely present in written language. This traditional notion, as exemplified in a Condillac text quoted by Derrida, assumes a homogeneity of meaning that allows for words to carry the same semantic properties over a wide range of uses. Derrida's contention here is that writing is marked as much by what is *lost* of the original meaning of the word as by what is retained in divergent uses. This is so because in the proverbial (and necessary) *absence* of the author or the reader, or both,

[244] Derrida, Jacques. *Limited Inc*. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois 1990. P.9
[245] "But the sign possesses the characteristic of being readable even if the moment of its production is irrevocably lost and even if I do not know what its alleged author-scriptor consciously intended to say at the moment, i.e. abandoned it to its essential drift." Ibid. P.9

the written word will remain readable only if it remains infinitely interpretable in new contexts, i.e. outside the context that gave it its meaning in the first place.

This initial discussion on the specifics of written language is informed by the contrast between it and speech. When considering the latter, Derrida notices some semblances of context, intentionality, and locution still at work. They remain relevant mainly because of the apparent immediacy of the spoken word. However, when Derrida turns back to the traditional concept of communication, he realizes that our speech is equally subject to the contingencies of iterability and is thus far from justifying the timeworn conceit of straightforwardly 'delivering meaning.' If we look at the circumstances of saying something, our interlocutor's claim to understanding is not adequately informed by the minutiae of the conversational context, or by her having reliable access to our intentions, even less by her grasp on our meaning. Her understanding of what is being said, quite like our understanding when we read, necessarily hinges on the speech form, a repeatable and variable sign that can accommodate the needs of a particular context, a particular intention and a meaning but is never fully determined by them. Ultimately, for Derrida, both speech and writing remain *graphematic* in this way.[246]

Before I move on and focus on Derrida's interpretation of Austin I digress to make a point about methodology. As opaque as Derrida's prose is considered to be, in the part of "Signature Event Context" I have been discussing Derrida's method betrays a debt to Austin even before Austin is properly mentioned. If we recall *How To Do Things With*

[246] "This structural possibility of being weaned from the referent or from the signified (hence from communication and from its context) seems to me to make every mark, including those which are oral, a grapheme in general; which is to say, as we have seen, the nonpresent *remainder* [*restance*] of a differential mark cut off from its putative "production" or origin." Ibid. P.10

Words, Austin starts out from the potent contrast between constatives and performatives, then tries to identify the defining characteristics of the latter, fails, and ultimately discards the initial contrast. What comes out of this is, firstly, the emergence of the problematic of speech acts in general and, secondly, the need for a new theory to take speech acts into account. A corollary to these results is Austin's suspicion that we will have to fully reconsider our traditional view of propositions as limited to expressing truth and falsity. Going back to Derrida in "Signature Event Context," the project starts from the sharp contrast between writing and speech, tries to identify the defining features of writing, fails to establish substantial difference from speech and discards the initial contrast. What comes out of Derrida's project is the proposal that we consider a wider, graphematic basis of language in all its importance and, also, that we completely dismantle our over-determined traditional picture of communication. Derrida never credits Austin for the prototype of his own methodological approach, but it is telling that he takes on Austin immediately after he is done with the general implications of his previous concerns. Apart from being curiously revealing of Derrida, this display of methodological mimesis between Austin and him will bear on my later discussion of Searle's claim that Derrida renders Austin "unrecognizable."

How is Austin's work in *How To Do Things With Words* relevant to Derrida's worries? As Derrida notes, Austin's project heavily relies on challenging the traditional view of speech acts as straightforward acts of communication. This challenge involves the piecemeal scrutiny and occasional disruption of the three pillars of communication—intentionality, context, and locution—that play out through the increasing overlap between performative and constative utterances. Derrida considers these preoccupations

relevant to his own argument for the graphematic basis of all language, spoken and written. In fact, he contends that many of Austin's impasses can be avoided if the graphematic principle is applied to the discussion of performatives. The study of performatives, according to Derrida, relies partly on a basic presupposition of *event*fulness, which in turn carries with it assumptions of self-presence and, more specifically, conscious intention. Now, however cleverly Austin turns his back on the workings of such assumptions in his study, they continue to diminish his ability to get the "results" he might be hoping for. A great part of this unproductiveness is caused by Austin's perpetual refusal to broach a general theory that would take account of the nature of events and the ways the burden of conscious intention weighs onto it. Derrida believes that his own considerations of citationality, iterability, and the graphematic basis of all language provide the relevant framework for tackling some of the questions Austin avoids and, possibly, for answering them.

At the outset of his analysis of Austin, Derrida plays along with Austin's initial desire to outline a separate purpose and purposefulness for performatives. In order for an utterance to effect an action, Austin claims in the beginning of his lectures, it has to answer to a large system of requirements, a set of determining *circumstances*. Derrida notes that the most important requirement here is that there is a self-present intention in the speaker.[247] This becomes problematic for Derrida when the category of *infelicity* is introduced. Derrida notices that the criteria for felicity Austin proposes focus exclusively

[247] "One of those essential elements—and not one among others—remains, classically, consciousness, the conscious presence of the intention of the speaking subject in the totality of his speech act. As a result, performative communication becomes once more the communication of an intentional meaning, even if that meaning has no referent in the form of a thing or of a prior or exterior state of things. The conscious presence of speakers or receivers participating in the accomplishment of a performative, their conscious and intentional presence in the totality of the operation, implies teleologically that no *residue* [*reste*] escapes the present totalization." Ibid. p.14.

on the circumstances of a given utterance and not on the utterance itself. In other words, Austin allows for the utterance to be fully determined from outside, as if infelicity was not a possibility inherent in the utterance itself. As an attempt on Austin's part to preserve the intentional center of the speech act this is temporarily expedient but ultimately unsatisfactory. Austin himself admits as much by acknowledging that there are other sources of infelicity, unchecked by his criteria, such as "extenuating circumstances" and "factors reducing or abrogating the agent's responsibility." These other types of infelicity are in Austin's customary fashion left to be dealt with by a future general theory of speech acts. The problem with this is that a general theory of speech acts will have to elaborate on the inner constitution of a speech act, and acts in general, which threatens to unravel Austin's presuppositions of intentionality. Derrida contends that, at this point, Austin's procedure of outlining the performative is at the peril of falling victim to its own methodological limitations.[248] For Derrida, this is nowhere more evident than in Austin's treatment of what he calls the *parasitic* uses of language.

In Austin's text, an utterance is defined as parasitic if it is used "by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy."[249] Such utterances are understood as parasitic because they depend on *normal* use, but are nonetheless not used *seriously*. A disclaimer is due here as to Austin's fondness of the category of parasites. In a footnote in his essay "Pretending," Austin mentions the "parasitic" cases of "let's-pretending and pretending-to-oneself" as examples of marginal variations of the normal

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[248] "The opposition success/failure [*echec*] in illocution and in perlocution thus seems quite insufficient and extremely secondary [*derive*]. It presupposes a general and systematic elaboration of the structure of locution that would avoid an endless alternation of essence and accident." Ibid. P.15-16.
[249] Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things with Words*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1962. P.22.

case of pretending.[250] Here as in *How to Do Things With Words*, the employment of the word ‘parasitic’ serves to establish a hierarchy in the relative importance of speech forms. The negative connotation the term carries over from its scientific application—of a non-contributing entity sponging off a benign host—is only partially relevant to Austin’s uses of it. There is a sense with both non-serious speech acts and those marginal cases of pretending that they are secondary derivations of some clearer and more common forms of language. For Austin, though, this does not render these uses dangerous—it only makes them marginal. Apparently, the only reason Austin even acknowledges their existence is to avoid having to deal with some unfruitful objections their complete omission may seem to warrant.

What then could Derrida’s problem be with Austin’s exclusion of parasitic forms from his discussion of performatives? It is certainly not simply a question of normativity—Derrida does not read just a value judgment into Austin’s exclusion. The significance Derrida finds here is that what is excluded, no matter what terminological umbrella Austin chose to place it under, is the intrinsic citationality of every speech act. According to Derrida, the question ‘If quoting *from* ordinary language is considered marginal can ordinary language even exist?’ cannot be answered within Austin’s project; and Derrida maintains that this is an important question for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is a trivial truth that any ordinary expression in any of its uses repeats, with infinite variation, other ordinary expressions used earlier. In this, all speech acts, along with all written words, are variable citations of previous ones.[251] Secondly, after Austin has

[250] Austin, J.L. *Philosophical Papers*. Oxford at the Clarendon Press, Oxford 1970. P.267.
[251] A far more radical statement in the same vein, made by Ferdinand de Saussure, and quoted by G. C. Spivak in the preface to his translation of Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*, provides a glimpse into the possible

conceded that a thing such as a "pure performative" does not exist, his exclusion of cases of citation—ostensibly utterances of impure nature--seems problematic. Thirdly, the provenance of a soliloquy differs from that of a *normal* speech act most importantly in their implied intentions. What Austin assumes is that in a soliloquy, if my intention is to entertain an audience, my words are only bound by that intention and are "empty" with reference to the intention implied in the same words when used in 'normal' circumstances. This assumption, for Derrida, informs the distancing of citational uses from the philosophical ideal of "the absolutely singular uniqueness of a speech act" that remains at play in Austin even after Austin has renounced it as unattainable.[252] Derrida would not go as far as equate a pronouncement on the stage with the same pronouncement made in a conversation.[253] He does, however, caution against the natural temptation to find the latter less problematic than the former on account of the latter's unalienable uniqueness and 'eventfulness.' Ultimately, if Austin had pursued the similarities, rather than the differences, between 'ordinary' speech acts and specialized acts of citation, he would have been far more convincing in his doubts about the ideal of communication and, probably, more successful in positioning the performative.

origins of Derrida's fondness for infinite variation in language: "…the 'same' phoneme pronounced twice or by two different people is not identical with itself. Its only identity is in its difference from all other phonemes." (Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. G. C. Spivak, trans. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1977. P.xi-xii.)

[252] "In excluding the general theory of this structural parasitism, does not Austin, who nevertheless claims to describe the facts and events of ordinary language, pass off as ordinary an ethical and teleological determination (the univocity of the utterance [enonce]—that he acknowledges elsewhere [pp. 72-72] remains a philosophical "ideal"—the presence to self of a total content, the transparency of intentions, the presence of meaning [*vouloir*-dire] to the absolutely singular uniqueness of a speech act, etc.)?" (Derrida, Jacques. *Limited Inc*. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois 1990. P.17.)

[253] "Not that citationality in this case is of the same sort as in a theatrical play, a philosophical reference, or the recitation of a poem. This is why there is a relative specificity, as Austin says, a "relative purity" of performatives. But this relative purity does not emerge *in opposition* to citationality or iterability, but in opposition to other kinds of iteration within a general iterability which constitutes a violation of the allegedly rigorous purity of every event of discourse or every *speech act*." Ibid. P.18.

After his brief treatment of Austin's exclusion of parasitic discourse, Derrida turns to the question of the ever-postponed general theory of speech acts. In this, again, it is the status of events that will determine how one will do things with words. In order to illustrate the role the singularity of events plays in Austin's assignment of different purposes to different speech acts, Derrida adopts Austin's example of signatures. Trivially, as Austin points out, signatures are used to effect the tethering of a written text to its author, or source. In the context of his discussion, this remark serves to cement the requirement of authorial presence for the category of performatives. In his critique Derrida notices that what is at play here are two distinct senses of presence. On the one hand, the term 'presence' can be understood as Austin's articulation of the importance of a locatable source of an utterance (or a document). On the other hand, though, the notion of presence can be applied, and according to Derrida *is* unwittingly applied by Austin, to the self-presence of the author to the intention of his/her words and their respective meaning.[254] With signatures in particular, Derrida finds the presumption of self-presence dubious. If a signature should seal the unique effect of a certain performance by a unique agent, it will have to distill the moment of signing, together with the array of necessary concomitants of a determining context. For Derrida this is not impossible and, in fact, is admittedly put to practice "every day." This fact, however, does not establish or support the "pure reproducibility of a pure event" Austin assumes. In Derrida's own words: "In order to function, that is, to be readable, a signature must have a repeatable, iterable, imitable form; it must be able to be detached from the present and singular intention of its production. It is this sameness which, by corrupting its identity and its singularity, divides

[254] It is obviously this second sense of presence that makes all the difference, for Austin, between the soliloquy and its ordinary counterpart—because the source (actor) in the first case is at least once removed from the intention of the second (character).

its seal [*sceau*]."[255] The corruption of the seal here does not refer only to the graphic variability inherent in every act of reproducing one's signature. It refers primarily to the *act* of signing and opens the possibility that every such act--as an attempt to distill the circumstances of signing and one's own intention in doing it—will employ iterable speech forms (or graphemes) that will always simultaneously guarantee and obviate its success. This iterability allows for the successful repeated and repeatable use of a grapheme but it also accounts for the grapheme's possible disengagement from its original performative purpose. The *event* of signing is then a mere psychological expedient, rather than a determining locus of intention. When Derrida by the end of his essay counterfeits his own signature, he does it to illustrate this relative independence of the act of signing, and the ways a signature can be read, from the agent's intention.

In Derrida's "Signature Event Context" it becomes clear that he shares Austin's fondness for Austin's own impasses but for a different reason. If Austin treasures the seemingly insurmountable obstacles he builds for himself for their role in measuring the gradual progress he is making, Derrida is fond of them because he admires how much Austin manages to accomplish without realizing that all these obstacles point back to, so to speak, one original impasse. This impasse, according to Derrida, is Austin's refusal to let go of the ideal of subjecting each speech act to a respective "total context." Even if there is a totality of contemporaneous circumstances, intentions, role assignments, utterances and signatures that determine the speech act, this totality will hardly ever be known by us as such. For Derrida the reason why this is so is because the center of any speech act (and act of writing) is always necessarily occupied by a speech form

[255] Ibid. P. 20.

(grapheme) whose functionality and understandability rely heavily on its being weaned from the “total context.”

Austin’s hope to locate the performative in a total context anchored by a central intention is misguided in its assumption of a total consciousness, or the conscionability of the act. In order to secure the cross-section of such totalities, the implied uniqueness of each act (or event) will ideally require a corresponding unique utterance—something which language clearly does not provide for. At this point we do not need Derrida to remind us that there are infinitely many speech ‘events’ that are attainable within the limits of our standard, limited, and repetitive vocabulary. After all, Austin bases his entire project on this unassailable observation. The mistake Austin makes is to take this observation a step further by supposing that since the same utterance can accomplish different things when pronounced by different agents or in different situations (as part of different singular events) the success of the utterance hinges only on the situational coordinates and not at all on the dynamic nature of the speech form itself. Just like Saussure’s phonemes that do not remain self-identical through different uses, Austin’s performative is infinitely colored or modified by its different applications. But could the utterance, simply as a graphematic form, surrender to such modifications if it did not carry in itself the susceptibility to being colored, i.e. a dynamic *iterability*? And will there ever be a clean-slate speech form that will readily and completely disappear under the determinations of context? These questions, as Derrida suggests, cannot be answered with much satisfaction by what Austin gives us in his lectures.

Furthermore, Austin’s picture of the conscious, self-present, context-bound performative suggests a general theory that will remain equally unable to address the

problems iterability raises. In contrast to this picture, the speaking agent, for Derrida, emerges not as a performer of a unique intentional speech act but as the unconscious borrower of a variable speech form.[256] What Derrida means is that the study of speech acts needs a new typology, in which "the category of intention will not disappear; it will have its place, but from that place it will no longer be able to govern the entire scene and system of utterance [*l'enonciation*].[257] This proposal, as is often the case in Derrida's philosophy, might seem to take too much license and invite anarchy to the study of speech acts. Another way of looking at it, however, is that Derrida has simply followed Austin's advice to project the findings (and impasses) of Austin's project onto a general theoretical frame. And, sure enough, Derrida's exposing of Austin's original impasse accomplishes that by locating at least one major problem a general theory of speech acts will have to tackle. Through his discussions of citation, signatures, and writing Derrida also sets off an investigation into the status of events, which constitutes simultaneously a significant contribution and a great challenge to Austin scholarship.

It is admittedly tempting to chalk Derrida's critique of Austin up to the French philosopher's reputation as a troublemaker. Furthermore, the specifics of his critique appear self-serving because they neatly further Derrida's own program (of reinstating the primary importance of the written word) in "Signature Event Context." Still, there are many points that Derrida makes, which I find congenial and useful. The first one is Derrida's proposal for a graphematic understanding of language. This is relevant to Neurath's self-admittedly difficult quest for economizing our vocabulary through the

[256] "Above all, this essential absence of intending the actuality of utterance, this structural unconsciousness, if you like, prohibits any saturation of the context." Ibid. P. 18.
[257] Ibid. P. 18.

construction of ideogrammatic alphabets. Derrida's grapheme is a far more fecund and realistic a tool of expression than any artificial sign (or sign-system) that we, or Neurath, can come up with. The concept of the grapheme is also general and intricate enough to remain largely unchecked even by Austin's numerous criteria for the respective types of speech forms.

The second point of Derrida's, which I think merits, for lack of a better word, *serious* attention is his distrust with Austin's tacit allegiance to an age-old model of communication. Even though Austin himself attempts to break the shackles of this model by continuously diffusing the differences between performative and constative utterances, at the end, as in the beginning, he remains at least partially under the spell of the "two fetishes which I admit to an inclination to play Old Harry with, viz. (1) the true/false fetish, (2) the value/fact fetish."[258] These fetishes are often subverted in Austin, but just as often they are reinstated and fortified, which leaves the status of communication as the straightforward delivery of meaning largely intact. I share Derrida's unease with this model of communication and with Austin's fear of abandoning it for the same reason: I agree with Derrida that it is highly counterproductive of Austin to explore and expand the limits of language use beyond our traditional idea of it while remaining intermittently loyal to the very model that demarcates these limits.[259]

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[258] Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things with Words*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1962. P. 151.
[259] Alice Crary, in her article "The Happy Truth"(Crary, Alice. "The Happy Truth: J.L. Austin's How To Do Things With Words." *Inquiry*, 45, 2002.) argues that Austin's study was in fact emancipated from such traditional concerns, a fact both Derrida and Searle failed to notice. I will come back to Crary's argument later in my comparison of Derrida and Searle on Austin. It is, for now, enough to point out that the possibility that Austin operated at odds with the traditional model of communication is what drew Derrida, and myself, to Austin in the first place. I assume, and I hope not presumptuously, that it is on account of this same possibility that Derrida would ever have felt 'invited' to attempt an interpretation of Austin.

My third place of agreement with Derrida is his treatment of Austin's concept of "ordinary life." I have always found it tempting to compare the concept with its nearest logical opposite—*extraordinary* life—for the sake of making it clear to myself what Austin could have meant in the first place. Derrida seems equally baffled by the concept, especially in his discussion of general citationality. As aware as I am of the history and ideas of ordinary language philosophy, which Derrida undoubtedly was also acquainted with, I agree with Derrida that the exercise of basing a study of speech acts on any assumption of ordinariness is highly suspect. It is enough of a proof, I hope, to point out that even Austin's own category of performatives is outlined with heavy reliance on the opposite of ordinary expression and our understanding of it, no matter what that turns out to be.[260] Both ordinary life and its extraordinary counterpart are inadequate, on their own, to encompass the variable applications of language. Ultimately, whatever general conceptual frame will facilitate a better understanding of speech acts, I agree with Derrida that it will reside beyond the confines of Austin's "ordinary life."

Lastly, I would like to take up the issue of Derrida's claim to Austin's heritage in "Signature Event Context." It is useful here to go back to Austin's suggestions on how he imagines his project inherited—his advice for subsequent researchers to follow through with the minutiae of speech, his hope that a general theory of speech acts will emerge from his commentators' work, and his reminder that in following the previous two directives philosophers should look to retain the sense of novelty and fun that

[260] In his "J.L. Austin," a brief account of Austin's life and work, J. O. Urmson, one of Austin's literary executors, cautions against reading too much into Austin's notion of the "ordinary." In their strict sense, according to Urmson, "ordinary" life and language simply refer to the "unphilosophical" lives we live and the language we use to make sense of them. One problem with such a neat and narrow reading of Austin's terms, even if Austin wholeheartedly accepted it, is that some of the *special cases* Austin excludes from his field of interest such as the "parasitic" uses of language are deemed *extra-ordinary* but certainly not on account of their philosophical nature.

characterizes Austin's work. By these criteria, Derrida may be deemed a legitimate heir to Austin. The French philosopher does continue Austin's practice of branching out to discussions of different language forms, most notably in his treatment of citations and signatures. Derrida also, as I hope to have shown above, contributes to the widening of Austin's scope out to an array of general-theoretical considerations. As to Austin's third recommendation, there might never be a better inheritor of his project than Derrida. After all, it is clear all throughout Derrida's essay that its author is inspired by Austin, his project's possibilities, and the chance to add something of his own to it. From the playful way he engages Austin's vocabulary, to his methodological mirroring of Austin, to counterfeiting his own signature, one thing Derrida cannot be denied is that he is having fun. It is on account of these solid claims on Austin's heritage and, partly, of what Derrida actually proposes in way of philosophical arguments that John Searle's attack on Derrida becomes inevitable.

My Waiter, Jacques[261]

John Searle's "Reiterating the Differences; A Reply to Derrida" sets out to expose the apparent mistakes Derrida makes in his interpretation and critique of Austin. I propose the following general classification of philosophical mistakes that will hopefully systematize Searle's charges: 1. mistakes in factuality, 2. mistakes in reasoning, and 3. mistakes in propriety. Before my attempt to find the fit for Searle's claims within the respective classes, I find it important to make the inspiration for my classification of

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[261] In his review of Searle's *The Construction of Social Reality*, Alan Nelson addresses Searle's notion of institutional facts by introducing the following example: "Consider, for example, the fact that Jacques is Searle's waiter." (Nelson, Alan. *Ethics*, Vol. 108, No.1, Oct. 1998. P. 208.) Considering Searle's well-publicized dislike for Foucault, the second least fortunate choice of French name for the waiter in Nelson's example would have been Michel.

mistakes explicit. If we allowed ourselves the liberty to regard Searle's *Reply* as an extended speech act, which it often reads as, it would have to fall squarely into Austin's category of *verdictives*.[262] A verdictive is "essentially giving a finding as to something—fact, or value—which is for different reasons hard to be certain about." To this Austin adds that "verdictives have obvious connexions with truth and falsity, soundness and unsoundness and fairness and unfairness."[263] It is these last three oppositions that my classes of philosophical mistakes are trying to engage—1. mistakes in factuality are intimately dependent on truth/falsity, 2. soundness/unsoundness provide a good touchstone for mistakes in reasoning, and 3. mistakes in propriety often boil down to violations of some notion of fairness. It is important to remember that if Searle's essay assumes the role of an extended verdictive (or a string of verdictives), it by Austin's default will have to carry the burden of offering findings "as to something… which is for different reasons hard to be certain about." In other words, Searle's decision to place multiple verdicts as to Derrida's mistakes commits Searle to an assumption of controversy and the belief that he can argue it away. In what follows I will try to demonstrate why Searle's *Reply* is more effective in perpetuating controversy than it is in its professed philosophical solutions to it.

I will firstly discuss Searle's *Reply* without any reference to Derrida's reply to it (*Limited Inc*), Searle's subsequent indirect elaborations on his initial critique of Derrida, or the secondary literature on this unlikely debate. One of my reasons for preferring this approach is that I would like to stay closer to an (unwritten) rule of the debate--both

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[262] Derrida, in his reply to Searle's "Reply," identifies Searle's pronouncements on his philosophy as verdictive in their nature.

[263] Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things with Words*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1962. Pp. 151-153.

Derrida in his treatment of Austin *and* Searle in his treatment of Derrida limit themselves to the primary sources (Austin's *How to Do Things With Words*, and Derrida's "Signature Event Context" respectively). My second reason is that the differences in philosophical approach I find between Derrida and Searle are most visible when not blurred by elaborations, the philosophers' own or from commentators. My third reason is that the haste and verve that characterize Searle's "Reply" betray a philosophical impatience in the application of verdictives, which is of central interest for me and which can get diluted if I chose a less insular approach. In due course, I will engage some other sources that more or less throw light on Searle's initial reaction to Derrida.

I will start with Searle's identification of factual mistakes in "Signature Event Context." The first such mistake Derrida is said to commit is the statement that iterability accounts for the difference between spoken and written language. Even if Derrida made this claim, which I believe he does neither explicitly nor by implication, it would directly undercut Derrida's entire enterprise of placing speech and writing on an equal footing. In fact, iterability for Derrida looms over spoken and written words alike as it does over experience in general.[264] For Searle it is trivially true that the functions of iterability are equally at work in speech and writing, and Derrida is mistaken to think otherwise. But, since Derrida explicitly agrees with Searle, the charge against the French philosopher is empty. The second mistake of fact Searle claims Derrida to be making is Derrida's belief that Austin's exclusion of parasitic language uses is of a metaphysical character. As I

[264] "Are these three predicates, together with the entire system they entail, limited, as is often believed, strictly to "written" communication in the narrow sense of this word? Are they not to be found in all language, in spoken language for instance, and ultimately in the totality of "experience" insofar as it is inseparable from this field of the mark, which is to say, from the network of effacement and of difference, of units of iterability…?" (Derrida, Jacques. *Limited Inc*. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois 1990. P. 10.)

pointed out earlier, and this is something Searle embraces, Austin's treatment of parasitic discourse is not *meant* to perform a metaphysical ostracism. Still, Derrida reads such an ostracism into it. I need not retread Derrida's reasons for doing this. Instead, I will propose a simple example that I hope will make it clear that Austin's exclusion of parasitic utterances, which Searle supports on account of the *logical* dependence of such utterances on standard speech, is not metaphysically unproblematic. When a toddler repeats the words of an adult it is not an ordinary case of citation and it is even less a case of intentional utterance. But it is crucial to notice that the toddler's utterance retains some elements of both. The conditions for citing and those for intentionally making a, so to speak, *original ordinary* utterance seem to overlap simply by virtue of the fact that in a toddler's case we customarily do not assign expectations of conscious intentionality. What is even more important is that if we should give *logical* precedence to one of the two types of utterance, it will be given to citation, because for the most part toddlers would use words they have heard *before* developing an understanding of the apparatus of intentions, meanings and proper contexts. It is true that as the toddler grows up she becomes gradually better aware of this apparatus, but it remains possible and it is very often the case with perfectly mature people that the application of an utterance, its original intention, and the workings of its context retain a sense of mystery for the speaker. What this amounts to is the possibility that our utterances are at all times somewhat inaccurate citations, in a very general sense of the word, of what we have heard other people, or ourselves, say. The special cases of citation that Austin discusses, of poetry, fiction etc, are similar enough to my example of the toddler to warrant further explication. Derrida's unease with their ostracism in Austin, be it strictly metaphysical or

not, comes from his sense that a general citationality is inherent in language and must be found a place for in Austin's project. When Searle claims that it is simply not true that Austin's exclusion of some special types of citation is *meant* as a metaphysical gesture he fails to notice that there are, still, ways in which the exclusion can be viewed as *amounting to* such a gesture.

The third factual mistake Derrida is said to have made is to suppose that illocutionary intentions "*lay behind* the utterance" like some "inner pictures animating the visible signs."[265] What is at stake here is the status of intentionality in the performing and understanding of an utterance. Derrida claims that the neat transferring of meaning that the traditional picture of communication presupposes depends too heavily on the, as he calls it, "self-presence" of the speaker as to what their utterances aim to accomplish. Some reference to consciousness, or self-consciousness, cannot fail but creep into this picture. Still, Derrida never argues that intentions *are* fully present or separate from the utterance for that matter, on the contrary, his program relies on them being at least partially *unconscious* and, also, fully integrated in and indistinguishable from the act of utterance. Yet again, what Searle identifies as a mistake of Derrida's turns out to be a claim that Derrida is not making but is rather attributing to an ideal that he feels responsible to dismantle. Here, as in many other places, Searle and Derrida are in agreement, strangely enough, without Searle noticing.

The last factual mistake Derrida makes, according to Searle, is in claiming that "Austin thought parasitic discourse was not part of ordinary language."[266] I will not

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[265] Searle, John. "Reiterating the Differences; A Reply to Derrida." *Glyph*, Issue 1, 1977. P.202.
[266] Ibid. P. 206.

dwell on this as I have given my reading of Austin's concept of ordinary language and Derrida's understanding of it above. I only find it useful to summarize that here, as with Derrida's other alleged factual mistakes, Searle remains reluctant or unequipped to understand his interlocutor. And if my category of factual philosophical mistakes has by now begun to be suspect, I share the responsibility with Searle from whom it is partly borrowed. In all four instances of mistakes that I have listed within this category, Searle insists that these matters which Derrida is wrong on are, indeed, all matters of fact. Well, if they are, and if my hunch that both philosophers mostly agree on them turns out to be true, how is it possible that Searle does not realize it? I intend to come back to this question in due time.

The first mistake in reasoning that Searle claims Derrida to be making is that the latter confuses iterability with permanence.[267] The notion of permanence barely figures into Derrida's text. According to Searle, however, Derrida's assimilation of features of writing with features of the spoken word relies on the assumption that a general iterability and the permanence of the written word share the same functions. Searle is right to point out that Derrida tries to assimilate features of writing with features of the spoken word, but is wrong in supposing that the assimilation hinges on assumptions of permanence. In

[267] It is important to note that serious, though not always insurmountable, difficulties are indeed to be found with Derrida's concept of iterability. Such difficulties do not bear on my study of the inadequacies in Searle's (mis)understanding of Derrida but one strain of them merits at least a fleeting mention. A number of Husserl scholars raise issues with Derrida's concept of iterability and the treacherous debt it seems to have to some of Husserl's notions. In light of Husserl's understanding of the relation between the ideality of sense/meanings and repeatability, Derrida's concept of iterability has been claimed to trade too much on a nominalist understanding of repetition. This makes it easier for Derrida to claim the perpetual deferring of ideality, something which goes against the Husserlian picture that Derrida is ostensibly trying to reframe. For more on these issues, see: Mohanty, J. *Phenomenology: Between Essentialism and Transcendental Philosophy*. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois 1997.

fact, Derrida invokes the notion of permanence with reference to the traditional picture of communication, a picture which Searle again forgets Derrida is going against.[268]

The second mistake in reasoning that Derrida is supposed to be making, "in what is more than simply a misreading of Austin," is to assume "that by analyzing serious speech acts before considering the parasitic cases, Austin has somehow denied the very possibility that expressions can be quoted."[269] What I think Derrida is actually doing, which I have discussed in greater detail above, is that he is proposing a more prominent role for citationality than Austin allows for. Also, significantly, Austin does not analyze serious speech acts *before* considering the parasitic cases, because, as any edition of *How to Do Things With Words* would testify, Austin never discusses the latter.[270] Derrida's worry here is not that Austin denies the possibility that expressions can be quoted—but rather that Austin's decision to marginalize (and, ultimately, not deal with) citationality renders his project incomplete. Present to this charge, the *only* significant charge Derrida makes as to Austin's exclusion, Searle inserts the remark that questions of marginal interest such as those raised by citationality have been answered in "writings subsequent to Austin."[271] The "writings" Searle refers to here is his own essay "The Logical Status of

[268] "A written sign, in the current meaning of this word, is a mark that subsists, one which does not exhaust itself in the moment of its inscription and which can give rise to an iteration in the absence and beyond the presence of the empirically determined subject who, in a given context, has emitted or produced it. This is what has enabled us, at least traditionally, to distinguish a "written" from an "oral" communication." Derrida, Jacques. *Limited Inc*. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois 1990. P. 9.
[269] Searle, John. "Reiterating the Differences; A Reply to Derrida." *Glyph*, Issue 1, 1977. P. 206.
[270] Here Searle gets entangled in the same type of absurdity that Lewis Carroll's character does when he offers "more tea" to Alice before she has had *any* tea.
[271] Ibid. P. 205.

Fictional Discourse," whose claim to providing the final word on citationality does not seem to have stood the test of time.[272]

The third mistake in reasoning that Derrida is supposed by Searle to be making is to assimilate the way writing is parasitic on the spoken word with the way in which fiction is parasitic on non-fiction. Searle's counterargument here is that the relation between fiction and non-fiction is one of "logical dependence" while the relation between speech and writing is a matter of mere historical contingency. In testimony to the latter, Searle reminds us that "in mathematical and logical symbolism the dependence goes the other way."[273] Yet the analogy Derrida makes is of a different order. When he claims that writing and fiction are considered "parasitic" on their respective counterparts, this is a remark about the philosophical tradition that marks them as such and not about the actual relations in questions. In his *Of Grammatology* Derrida readily agrees with Searle about the contingent and, so to speak, organic-historical development of writing from speech.[274] This is, in the first place, why Derrida sets out to criticize the philosophical

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[272] Searle's essay "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse" posits a picture of fiction as *pretending*. ("It is a general feature of the concept of pretending that one can pretend to perform a higher order or complex action by *actually* performing lower order or less complex actions which are constitutive parts of the higher order or complex actions." (Searle, John. "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse." *New Literary History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, On Narrative and Narratives, (Winter, 1975). P. 327) Thus, what a novelist offers us is a pretended account of events and similarly when an actor performs they merely pretend to be committing their character's illocutionary acts. In his rejoinder to Searle from 1991, "How to Do Things On Stage," drama theorist David Saltz points out that the notion of 'pretending' is to narrow to explain what happens on stage: "To say an actor 'pretends' to murder does not help us understand what the actor really *is* doing. I would prefer to say that the actor is (really) committing an action that *counts* as murder within the conventions of the play." (Saltz, David. "How to Do Things On Stage." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 49, No. 1, (Winter, 1991). P. 42) The difference, for Saltz, between the actor's actions and the character's actions lies only in the conventional constraints imposed on the former. But this, if we accept it, is enough of a loophole to accommodate Derrida's notion of a general citationality; since most of our *ordinary* actions are governed by *some* conventions, we have very little to gain from identifying fiction or theater as "special cases," and "parasitic" at that.

[273] Ibid. P. 207.

[274] "Since the operation of writing reproduces that of speech here, the first *graphie* will reflect the first speech: figure and image." Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. G. C. Spivak, trans. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1977. P. 282.

tradition that would identify the relation between writing and the spoken word as one of unidirectional dependence, i.e. as parasitic. As to the relation between fiction and non-fiction, which is traditionally, and by Austin, accepted as parasitic, Derrida believes that such an interpretation is severely limited and unhelpful. Fiction, for Derrida, is only one of the many cases where language relies on some form of citation or *citing itself*. The recursive applications of a general citationality which he thinks are at work in every utterance and piece of writing are too important for our understanding of *how we do things with words* to be swept under Austin's carpet.

Searle identifies Derrida's fourth mistake in reasoning in the following way: "A leitmotif of Derrida's entire discussion is the idea that somehow the iterability of linguistic forms (together with the citationality of linguistic forms and the existence of writing) militates against the idea that intention is the heart of meaning and communication."[275] And, indeed, Derrida's program relies heavily on this notion. The key word in Searle's statement is "somehow." His use of this word can suggest either that Derrida purposely shrouds the above relation in mystery, or that Derrida is simply mistaken. It soon becomes clear that Searle is fonder of the second interpretation. In way of answering Derrida, Searle advances what he calls "precisely the converse thesis:" "The iterability of linguistic forms facilitates and is a necessary condition of the particular forms of intentionality that are characteristic of speech acts."[276] Since this is Searle's closing argument of a highly charged (and charging) critical essay, it seems especially important to ponder its merit. Immediately, however, the argument fails at its main task—to become a counterweight for Derrida's beliefs. There are two reasons for this

[275] Searle, John. "Reiterating the Differences; A Reply to Derrida." *Glyph*, Issue 1, 1977. P. 207.
[276] Ibid. P. 208.

failure, one logical and the other circumstantial. The logical failure of Searle's counterargument is due to the fact that what he proposes is not at all incompatible with Derrida's assertion. In fact, Derrida reminds us on several occasions that the two functions of iterability—1. of militating against our full awareness (as speakers, writers, listeners and readers) of the determinations of intention in our language, and 2. of buttressing our uses of language around *some* awareness of their concomitant intentions—are always simultaneously at work.[277] The circumstantial failure of Searle's "precisely converse" argument is due to the fact that, apart from his refusal to see the two functions of iterability as possibly complementary, Searle does not *notice* that his interlocutor has clearly identified them as such. In this, Searle applies a species of the obstinate all-or-nothing logic that he will later accuse Derrida of espousing.[278]

Probably the most interesting class of mistakes Searle identifies in Derrida are what I have called mistakes of propriety. How are issues of philosophical propriety relevant to the Searle/Derrida exchange? Searle makes two normative claims that point us towards an answer. The first one, from the opening paragraph of the *Reply*, is his disclaimer that "it would be a mistake…to regard Derrida's discussion of Austin as a confrontation between two prominent philosophical traditions." The reason he cites is that Derrida "has misunderstood Austin's position on several crucial points… and thus

[277] "Rather than oppose citation or iteration to the noniteration of an event, one ought to construct a differential typology of forms of iteration, assuming that such a project is tenable and can result in an exhaustive program, a question I hold in abeyance here. In such a typology, the category of intention will not disappear; it will have its place, but from that place it will no longer be able to govern the entire scene and system of utterance [*l'enonciation*]." Derrida, Jacques. *Limited Inc*. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois 1990. P. 18.
[278] Searle's earlier example of someone writing a note to himself is born of the same logic of all-or-nothing—the example's artificiality attests to the dangers of painting oneself in a philosophical corner.

the confrontation never quite takes place."[279] It is useful here to attempt and reconstruct, from the little Searle gives us to work with, what Searle's idea of *proper* confrontation of the kind would be. Well, most obviously, had Derrida not committed the mistakes Searle thinks he did, "Signature Event Context" might have amounted to a proper confrontation. This necessary condition, however, seems far from sufficient. For self-explanatory reasons, Searle's own reading of Austin, if we assumed that it was in no way mistaken, would not constitute a proper collision of two different philosophical traditions. The tradition Derrida belongs to, in its turn, *is* different from Austin's and Searle's. By arguing that Derrida's alleged mistakes prevent the collision in question from happening, Searle simultaneously opens the possibility that some other representative of Derrida's tradition (or even Derrida himself, if he had been more discerning) could effect the confrontation and the other, less charitable, possibility that Austin might plainly be out of reach for anyone belonging to Derrida's tradition. This latter implication, which is made explicit in Searle's subsequent work, constitutes the center of Searle's first normative claim.

The second claim he makes is much less complex but just as problematic: "Derrida's Austin is unrecognizable. He bears almost no relation to the original."[280] Derrida is here accused of a peculiar transgression of propriety—defacing a philosophical legacy. Apart from serving to reaffirm my simile of a particular attitude to Derrida as a kitten mixing up yarns, this charge has other much graver repercussions. Firstly, it calls for recognizing Austin but at the same time severely restricts the chances of recognition. Still, if Derrida indeed manages the feat of rendering Austin unrecognizable *for Searle*, it

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[279] Searle, John. "Reiterating the Differences; A Reply to Derrida." *Glyph*, Issue 1, 1977. P. 198.
[280] Ibid. P. 204.

remains possible that Derrida's Austin can be deemed appropriately recognizable by philosophers other than Searle. The second repercussion of Searle's charge is that there emerges an "original Austin,"[281] against whose immutability different philosophical renderings will stand or fall. Here, it is most clear that a great part of what Searle is trying to claim (on account of Derrida's mistakes of propriety) is his own exclusive right to Austin's heritage.

If we go back to Austin's suggestions for his preferred ways of being inherited it is hard to diminish the legitimacy of Derrida's contribution to Austin scholarship. It is similarly hard to deny Searle his own contribution to the same. Why is then Searle so bent on refusing Derrida the privilege? There are two common ways in which a verdictive claim may play out—it can be hastily bestowed upon someone on account of their violation of a normative principle or it can be laboriously deduced from a set of incriminating circumstances (words, actions etc.). In the case of Searle's reading of Derrida we get both. Searle is equally unhappy with Derrida as an impostor and Derrida as a philosopher. The interesting fact is that most often, especially within the analytic tradition and especially with Searle, perceived impostors are not even dignified with a philosophical response.[282]

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[281] On the issue of interpretations with "almost no relation to the original," I am reminded of a Picasso anecdote. Someone reportedly accused the painter's portraits of not representing reality accurately. Later, when that same person was showing the painter a photograph of his house, Picasso commented that if that was *really* the person's house, it seemed too little to live in.

[282] In his essay "Virtual Music," David Cope recounts the following story: "John Searle once told me about a conversation he had with the late Michel Foucault: "Michel, you're so clear in conversation; why is your written work so obscure?" To which Foucault replied: "That's because, in order to be taken seriously by French philosophers, 25 percent of what you write has to be impenetrable nonsense."" (Cope, David. "Virtual Music." MIT Press, 2001. P. 291) This is one of several occasions of Searle's infamous refusal to engage perceived philosophical impostors as philosophers.

Still, in "Reiterating the Differences" (a most unfortunate title for a tract that unwittingly often agrees with Derrida and partly misinterprets him) Searle for once leaves his comfort zone and opts to offering actual arguments against the unannounced guest at Austin's table. The gravity, and the risk, of this undertaking are further emphasized by Searle's own admission, at the beginning of his "Reply," that he might have misinterpreted Derrida as profoundly as he believes Derrida has misinterpreted Austin.[283] Searle thus emerges with two solid reasons not to engage Derrida. These reasons, instead of remaining within the genre of the disparaging footnote which they are most akin to, are then perpetuated in the impatient analysis I have given my account of. This bizarre gesture on Searle's part is underwritten by the assumption that even though Derrida is an impostor, and maybe just because he is one, it is worth trying to understand and refute his arguments piece by piece. There is no doubt that Searle considers himself to have understood Derrida and to have proved him mistaken on all counts discussed. In regard to Searle's opinions of Derrida's mistakes, I hope my analysis above has shown that they are largely off target. But what about Searle's assumption that, contrary to his bashful initial disclaimer, he understands what Derrida is talking about?

Black Swans

The issue of one philosopher's understanding of another invites many questions that I do not intend to deal with. My chief interest here and a great part of the reason I have chosen to look at the Searle/Derrida exchange, is the role differences in philosophical vocabularies play in the mutual understanding, or the lack thereof, between any two thinkers. Even a cursory glance over "Signature Event Context" and "Reiterating

[283] Searle, John. "Reiterating the Differences; A Reply to Derrida." *Glyph*, Issue 1, 1977. P. 198.

the Differences" registers a sizeable rift between Derrida's and Searle's language. I find it philosophically important to investigate into how Searle's arguments demonstrate a failure on his part to understand Derrida's language (and, thus, Derrida). Most of Searle's interpretations of Derrida's mistakes that I have discussed above can serve as examples of this failure. But, instead of retreading these, I will look into two fresh examples. This way, I will also avoid overlap with Derrida's own examples from his reply to Searle, *Limited Inc*, which I will address shortly.

The first example I want to point attention to is Searle's misinterpretation of Derrida's notion of linguistic "codes." In one of the closing arguments of his essay Searle writes: "On a sympathetic reading of Derrida's text we can construe him as pointing out, quite correctly, that the possibility of parasitic discourse is internal to the notion of language, and that performatives can succeed only if the utterances are iterable, repetitions of conventional—or as he calls them, "coded"—forms."[284] It appears here that Searle is conflating Derrida's notion of iterable language forms with that of linguistic codes, two things which cannot be more different for Derrida. What Derrida identifies as a linguistic code is actually "a system of rules"[285] for our application of an iterable form and *not* the form itself. A careful reading of the relevant passage in Derrida makes it abundantly clear that what he refers to by expressions like "linguistic code," system of rules," "organon of iterability" etc. is synonymous with the language analyst's long domesticated concept of syntactical rules. It is then a matter of chilling coincidence that Searle ends his essay with a discussion of the iterability of syntactical rules, completely oblivious to the fact that his final, and fatal, stab at Derrida is really a generous tribute to

[284] Ibid. P. 207.
[285] Derrida, Jacques. *Limited Inc*. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois 1990. P. 8.

Derrida's thought. In a hopeless attempt to give Searle some credit, it should be acknowledged that when Derrida talks about syntactical rules he does not call them "syntactical rules," but is not it one of the founding hopes of philosophy that we can match the thing to our operational definition of it?

My second example, and one that sweeps through most of Searle's "Reply," is Searle's narrow reading of Derrida's concept of iterability. For Searle, throughout, iterability remains equivalent to "the repeatability of the linguistic elements."[286] Against this, Derrida's own definition of iterability is significantly richer—"*iter*, again, probably comes from *itara*, *other* in Sanskrit, and everything that follows can be read as the working out of the logic that ties repetition to alterity."[287] Derrida's whole project, and his concept of iterability, rests on the connection and interplay between difference and repetition. One ongoing argument in Derrida is that the iterability of linguistic elements accounts for the relative detachment of a word from its referent. Derrida connects this to the fact that the intended meaning of a speaker/writer will very often change once the utterance/inscription is weaned from its context. The latter can (and almost invariably does) happen in many different ways—through the author's death, the acquisition of new knowledge, a change of the author's intention etc. At one junction in his lectures, Austin gives a relevant example which seems to share Derrida's sense of alterity:

> "Suppose that before Australia is discovered *X* says 'All swans are white'. If you later find a black swan in Australia, is *X* refuted? Is his statement false now? Not necessarily: he will take it back but he could say 'I wasn't talking about swans

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[286] Searle, John. "Reiterating the Differences; A Reply to Derrida." *Glyph*, Issue 1, 1977. P. 199.

[287] Derrida, Jacques. *Limited Inc*. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois 1990. P. 7.

absolutely everywhere; for example, I was not making a statement about possible swans on Mars'. Reference depends on knowledge at the time of utterance."[288]

It is important to notice here that Austin allows for a turnaround in *X*'s intention and, from there, in *X*'s referential scope. Apart from this agreement between Austin and Derrida being a good indication that Austin does not necessarily emerge "unrecognizable" from Derrida's interpretation, it is an agreement that Searle's narrow understanding of Derrida's concept of iterability cannot domesticate. The element Searle is missing—the alterity signaled by the *iter*—makes, for lack of a better word, all the difference in Searle's take on Derrida's reading of Austin and on Derrida's project as a whole. To go back to one of Searle's verdictives, the claim that Derrida confuses the survival of the written text (due to its material permanence) with iterability would not be able to stand on its feet if Searle had taken into account the implications of alterity for writing—according to Derrida, a written text continues to be written for as long as it is read because the text is a string of elements that is liable, by the logic of repetition and difference, to engender illimitable new meanings, understandings, and possibly even intentions.

I hope that my analysis has accomplished its aim to demonstrate some major inadequacies in Searle's mis*reading* of Derrida and, also, the infelicity of Searle's counterarguments as based on such a mis*reading*. The text of the *Reply*, however, be it because of the material presence of its hard copies or because of its potential to engender itself anew, something no doubt it is doing here, remains and remains interesting. Even bereft of its argumentative punch, Searle's essay retains its verdictive, gestural ambition.

[288] Austin, J.L. How to Do Things with Words. Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1962. P. 144.

If nothing else, Searle manages to subjectively identify Derrida as a philosophical impostor and to manipulate Derrida's words through the prism of Searle's own vocabulary and well-guarded heritage. And, perhaps, nothing much else.

Wasting Ink

Chronologically, after Searle's "Reply," what might have grown into a philosophical debate gives way to a rarefied backstage drama. This is not for lack of trying on Derrida's part—his *Limited Inc*, published shortly after the "Reply," rides the momentum of the initial exchange but fails to seize Searle's immediate attention. I will conclude my Chapter with a brief overview of *Limited Inc* and of Searle's two belated and indirect rejoinders to it. After this overview I will address some secondary sources on the issues at hand.

In order to be fair to Derrida and Searle I have to start my comments on *Limited Inc* with the preliminary that in this text Derrida goes out of his way to avoid advancing any straightforward arguments against Searle. As Derrida notices, even if Searle demurs about his own understanding of Derrida, the currency of over-confident labels ("obviously false," "major misunderstandings" etc.) in the *Reply* attests to something else. Derrida chooses to believe that even if Searle did not understand much he was at least "touched"[289] by "Signature Event Context." This belief is in line with the generally gestural character of Searle's "Reply." It also partly explains the series of counter-gestures which Derrida employs in *Limited Inc* instead of arguments. The first, and most notorious, gesture is Derrida's inclusion of the entirety of Searle's text in *Limited Inc* in

[289] Derrida, Jacques. *Limited Inc*. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois 1990. p.41

quotation form. The second is Derrida's ingenious construction of a collective addressee—Sarl (French for Society With Limited Responsibility)—out of Searle and the two people he co-credits for fleshing out the ideas of the *Reply*. The third gesture is the alphabetizing of the text's sections, which substitutes an artificial convention for the conventions of academic writing. The fourth gesture, one less obvious but dominating the text as a whole, is the title *Limited Inc*—a riff on Austin's title "Three Ways of Spilling Ink" and a preliminary reminder of Searle's decision to limit his philosophical responsibility by sharing it with others.

It is important to recall that Derrida's "Signature Event Context," the paper that provokes his "unlikely" debate with Searle, does not avail itself of such gestures. What, then, necessitates their use in *Limited Inc*? Derrida makes it clear that, even after Searle's "Reply," the arguments of *Sec* remain untouched.[290] This is so for two reasons—firstly, because Searle's purported counterarguments largely fail to address the issues *Sec* brings up and, secondly, because Searle's verdictive approach stems from an insistent refusal to engage *Sec* on its own terms. Still, when Derrida chooses to answer Searle's gestures with counter-gestures, he is not looking for methodological reconciliation. Derrida's gestures are of a different order altogether. The main problems *Sec* identifies are those of iterability, general citationality, authorship and context. Thus, in *Limited Inc*, Derrida's quoting of Searle's essay in its entirety refers back to *Sec*'s discussion of iterability and citationality,[291] the text's title and the extraction of Sarl out of the Reply's underwriters

[290] "Concerning iterability, for instance: in reiterating what can be read on each page of *Sec*, re-plying or reapplying it, it is difficult to see how the *Reply* can object to it." Ibid. P.47.
[291] "I have cited at length and shall continue to, so the reader is now forewarned. I shall do so, first of all, because it gives me pleasure that I would not like to miss, even though it may be deemed perverse: a certain practice of citation, an also of iteration (which, despite what Sarl asserts, was never confused with citation,

refer to Derrida's earlier thoughts on signatures and authorship, and, finally, the alphabetizing of the text's sections revisits Derrida's arguments about the arbitrariness and inscrutability of contextual determination. All in all, Derrida's gestures in *Limited Inc* are *illustrative* rather than verdictive in their nature.

However actively Derrida tries to abstain from straightforward argumentation-- by postponing what he after Searle calls "serious" discussion-- *Limited Inc* does offer its share of it. The "serious" arguments Derrida advances retain the illustrative character of his gestures but they also provide analytic counterweights to Searle's contentions. Instead of recalling these counterweights here, I prefer to investigate into Derrida's compulsive need to illustrate *Sec*'s notions for Searle. If the "Reply" is held together by a number of major misunderstandings on Searle's part, which I agree with Derrida is the case, pure argumentation does not seem an adequate tool in clearing such misunderstandings away. The Reply's biggest offense seems to be in analyzing *Sec* without reading it. Convinced of this, Derrida embarks on a re-read of both *Sec* and Searle's critique of it. The better part of *Limited Inc* (sections **l** to **z**) is thus devoted to a total, and often uncompromising, retracing of what *Sec* claims and how the "Reply" misreads it. My analysis of Searle's text above owes to this compulsion in Derrida to reiterate his previous points and, also, very often, to identify the numerous points of agreement between *Sec* and the *Reply*, all of which Searle somehow misses. The notion of unnoticed agreement, in its turn, occasions other interesting observations.

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as we shall verify) is at work, constantly *altering*, at once and without delay—*aussi sec*, including *Sec*—whatever it seems to reproduce. This is one of the theses of *Sec*." (Ibid. P.40)

In the afterword to *Limited Inc*, an exchange Derrida had with Gerald Graff a decade after the original text was published, Derrida tentatively identifies two customary difficulties in establishing agreement between two philosophers that also apply to his debate with Searle.[292] The first difficulty is that of not sharing a philosophical heritage, which Searle also has a lot to say about in his later writings, and the second one is not being "attentive" to each other's language. Curiously, with the exception of Derrida's reference to it in the afterword, the problem of not being attentive to another philosopher's language, however relevant to the debate, remains only an undercurrent in Derrida. On the one hand, it is very probable that Derrida, on account of his remark here and his general attitude in *Limited Inc*, for the most part takes Searle's inability to understand his parlance for granted, or as a necessary evil. On the other hand, Derrida's 'autopsy' of the *Reply*, without explicitly referring to the limitations of Searle's lexicon, is replete with elaborations on these limitations. There is no evidence, however, that Searle is even conscious of posing and espousing this obstacle to what could have possibly been a congenial and collegial exchange.

For Derrida both problems (of disparate philosophical heritages and of different linguistic inventories) are obstacles to what he calls the "minimum consensus" required for research and mutual understanding. In *Limited Inc* Derrida reminds us that his

[292] "But I believe that no research is possible in a community (for example, academic) without the prior search for this minimal consensus and without discussion around this minimal consensus. Whatever the disagreements between Searle and myself may have been, for instance, no one doubted that I had understood at least the English grammar and vocabulary of his sentences. Without that no debate would have begun. Which does not amount to saying that all possibility of misunderstandings on my part is excluded a priori, but that they would have to be, one can hope at least, of another order. Inversely (to take only one example, which could be multiplied), if Searle had been familiar enough with the work of Descartes to recognize the parodic reference to a Cartesian title in my text (cf. what I say about this in **t**), he would have been led to complicate his reading considerably. Had he been attentive to the neological character of the French word *restance*—remains—which in my text does not signify permanence, he would have been on the right track and well on the way [*sur la bonne voie*] of reading me, etc." Ibid. P.146.

treatment of Austin in *Sec* operates in compliance with the context of a particular colloquium, which in all likelihood was held and attended mostly by adherents of what is loosely termed "continental philosophy." Furthermore, in Derrida's attempt to reinstate the primacy and overall importance of writing his chief historical reference is Condillac. And, although Derrida allows himself to suggest a similarity in Condillac and Austin's metaphysical presuppositions, he is also very careful to identify the two thinkers as members of their separate traditions. Still, part of Austin's allure for Derrida (and a source for potential scandal in *How To Do Things With Words*) is the observation that, on occasion, Austin seems to betray his own philosophical heritage.[293] It is not without Austin's help that Derrida manages to incorporate certain issues of Austin's project into *Sec* to the benefit of both.[294] This cross-pollination, on the face of it, seems to create confusion for any potential seeker of "minimum consensus," but, at the same time, it testifies to an effort in *Sec* to follow Austin's lead in remaining open to different manners of interpretation and improvement.

Searle's "Reply" lacks in consideration for Derrida's concerns about scholarly consensus and for the two minimum requirements for it. The only manner of recognition of these requirements is Searle's insistence in the "Reply" that Derrida's attempt to criticize and subvert Austin's project is illegitimate. Searle's protective attitude as to Austin's philosophical heritage, criticized by Derrida in *Limited Inc*, is presumptuous and unproductive. This attitude is also dismissive of the possible need, in lieu of possible

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[293] "Austin's procedure is rather remarkable and typical of that philosophical tradition with which he would like to have so few ties." Ibid. P.15.

[294] "I consider myself to be in many respects quite close to Austin, both interested and indebted to his problematic. This is said in *Sec* very clearly; Sarl forgets to mention it. Above all, however, when I do raise questions or objection, it is always at points where I recognize in Austin's theory presuppositions which are the most tenacious and the most central presuppositions of the *continental* metaphysical tradition." Ibid. P.38.

consensus, for Searle to enter a debate with Derrida with some awareness of Derrida's own heritage. But the still greater hurdle to philosophical consensus remains the unchecked rift between Derrida and Searle's choices of words. Adding to my earlier examples of this rift and Searle's lack of awareness of it are Derrida's defenses of expressions from *Sec* which Searle fatally misreads and seems to take considerable pleasure in mocking.[295] It is such *mis*readings that ultimately turn out to be decisive in Searle's *dis*agreements or, more properly, *missed* agreements with Derrida.

Both of Searle's subsequent contributions to his debate with Derrida—his review of Jonathan Culler's *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* and his essay "Literary Theory and Its Discontents"-- are not addressed directly to Derrida but are rich with clues as to what Searle's direct response to *Limited Inc* might have been. The first of these rejoinders of sorts is the book review titled "The Word Turned Upside Down" from 1983. The review is unique in that it by definition, as a commentary on a third party's book, separates itself from the Derrida/Searle debate, but in its content and concerns it manages to perpetuate an opposition its author once explicitly deemed "unlikely." Importantly, for my purposes, if taken at face value Searle's arguments about and against Derrida throw some light on the original exchange between the two thinkers.

The first major claim that Searle makes as to Derrida's invention and practice of deconstruction is that the latter operates within a strict historical lineage in philosophy and is largely unaware of the accomplishments of most of other philosophy. According to

[295] One typical defense on Derrida's part reads: "To begin with, instead of quoting even a single sentence of the paragraph without interruption, the citation has been cut precisely before the one little word that suffices to ruin the point Sarl is trying to make. Where in *Sec* we can read, and I underline, "But even 'the green is either' *still* signifies *an example of grammaticality*,' […signifie *encore example d'agrammaticalité*], Sarl cuts out the *encore*, which I have just underlined and which transforms the utterance entirely." Ibid. P.81.

Searle, Derrida's way of thinking descends more or less directly from Nietzsche, Heidegger, Husserl, and Saussure. The trouble Searle finds with this lineage is that it signals the exclusion of contributions to language philosophy by members of the analytic tradition. Searle does not stop here; he makes it clear that for him the methods and findings of analytic philosophy of language are superior to those of deconstructionism.[296] The problem with this claim is twofold. Firstly, in order to compare philosophical programs, Searle has to be an authority on both approaches, which he repeatedly reminds us he is not. Secondly, and more fatally, Searle's assumption that the two different traditions he is comparing operate completely at odds with each other is more the product of wishful thinking than historical reality. In proof of this I recall Derrida's apt and fecund treatment of Austin but also such slightly less obvious cross-pollinations between the two traditions as, say, Wittgenstein's declared fondness of Schopenhauer. Ultimately, Searle's own decision to engage Derrida, however unfruitful in its offerings, is a reminder of the fact that the door between the two traditions has always remained open. The other problem—of Derrida's awareness of the tradition he, according to Searle, does not "quite" manage to confront—is at least partially solved by Derrida's manifest willingness to read Austin and Austin's self-proclaimed heirs in detail.

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[296]"It is not only the age of the great dead giants, Frege, Russell, and Wittgenstein, but also the age of Chomsky and Quine, of Austin, Tarski, Grice, Dummett, Davidson, Putnam, Kripke, Strawson, Montague, and a dozen other first-rate writers. It is the age of generative grammar and speech act theory, of truth-conditional semantics and possible-world semantics. No doubt all of these theories are, in their various ways, mistaken, defective, and provisional, but for clarity, rigor, precision, theoretical comprehensiveness, and above all, intellectual content, they are written at a level that is vastly superior to that at which deconstructive philosophy is written." (Searle, John. "The Word Turned Upside Down." *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 30, No. 16, October 27, 1983. Pt. 5.)

The second major claim about Derrida Searle makes in his review is to equate Derrida's *style* to "a lot of pretentious verbosity"[297] and, quoting Foucault, to "obscurantisme terroriste."[298] In support of such claims Searle deems it appropriate and sufficient to merely reproduce passages from Derrida that *appear* bizarre *to Searle*. From the picture we have of Derrida by now, we are guaranteed that the biggest issue he would have had with this type of demonstration is that it operates on the same dubious ethic that allowed Searle to quote statements of *Sec* out of their context and, often, in conveniently truncated form. Adding insult to injury, or shall we say *surgery*, Searle contends that "There is in deconstructive writing a constant straining of the prose to attain something that sounds profound by giving it the air of a paradox."[299] Well, isn't this "straining" a necessity in philosophy, one welcomed as much by Derrida as by, say, Wittgenstein?[300] And, if it turns out that some philosophers are better equipped to strain their prose towards paradox or are mysteriously exempt from being criticized for it, why does not Searle care to qualify such license and exemption? By the end of his review Searle's answers to such questions are obviated by an, yet again, uncollegial reference to Derrida, which makes it abundantly clear that the review suffers from the same verdictive impatience with Derrida's style that the "Reply" did.[301]

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[297] Ibid. Pt. 3.
[298] "Michel Foucault once characterized Derrida's prose style to me as "*obscurantisme terroriste*." The text is written so obscurely that you can't figure out exactly what the thesis is (hence "*obscurantisme*") and then when one criticizes it, the author says, "*Vous m'avez mal compris; vous êtes idiot*" (hence "*terroriste*")." (Ibid. Pt. 2)
[299] Ibid. Pt. 3.
[300] "I am sitting with a philosopher in the garden; he says again and again "I know that that's a tree," pointing to a tree that's near us. Someone else arrives and hears us, and I tell him: "This fellow isn't insane. We're only doing philosophy." Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *On Certainty*. Ed. G.E.M. Anscombe, G.H. von Wright. Harper Torchbooks, New York 1972. P. 61.
[301] "I said that deconstruction had found little appeal among professional philosophers. But there are some notable exceptions, much prized by deconstructionists. They tend to be ambiguous allies. One of these characterized Derrida as "the sort of philosopher who gives bullshit a bad name." We cannot, of course,

The last major charge Searle makes that I would like to discuss is that Derrida and his followers unwittingly espouse what amounts to a foundationalist metaphysics. Searle's argument here is that when deconstruction undermines meaning and intention in language, it operates on the unstudied assumption that such undermining would not have been necessary (or even possible) if a firm "transcendental grounding for science, language, and common sense"[302] had been there in the first place. Only a cursory glance back at *Sec* suffices to show how misguided Searle's charge is—the assumption of a missing foundation is precisely what Derrida overtly criticizes. And if perchance, we granted Searle that blinded by the excitement of his deconstructionist enterprise Derrida fails to realize that in undermining meaning and intention he is embracing a form of the foundationalism he criticizes, it would be hard to explain Derrida's constant reminders in *Sec* that meaning and intention *remain* salient factors in language on account of the iterability of both language forms and the syntactic codes (rules) for using these forms.

The second of Searle's belated rejoinders to *Limited Inc* is integrated in the paper "Literary Theory and Its Discontents." This paper, published a good two decades after the original Derrida/Searle exchange, is again only tangentially addressed to Derrida. As its title suggests, Searle is supposed to be attending to much greater worries here; and we in fact find him diagnosing a number of confusions in contemporary literary theory and offering a series of arguments as cure for them.[303] But, again, Searle's impatience with

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exclude the possibility that this may be an expression of praise in the deconstructionist vocabulary." ." Searle, John. "The Word Turned Upside Down." *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 30, No. 16, October 27, 1983. Ft. 3.

[302] Ibid. Pt. 4.

[303] "In what follows, I will argue that if you get certain fundamental principles and distinctions about language right, then many of the issues in literary theory that look terribly deep, profound, and mysterious

Derrida is so dominant that it often manages to upstage the very purpose of the paper—the program statement of the introduction (See my fn. 299) appears only after Searle has given an account of a point of contention with Derrida on an issue mostly unrelated to the paper's topic. The most important and radical, for my purposes, claim that Searle makes is that literary theory's "discontents," and consequently Derrida's, are all rooted in a profound ignorance of the achievements of analytic philosophy of language.

If Searle aims to effect the confrontation of two traditions here, something that according to him Derrida does not "quite" manage to do in *Sec*, he fails for two reasons. Firstly, suggesting that Derrida and his like are stuck in a pre-Wittgensteinian attitude to philosophy, a charge repeated several times, is problematic. It is problematic because there are places in Wittgenstein, most notably in *On Certainty*, where Wittgenstein himself reaches back to a pre-Wittgensteinian stance; and, also, because I am not sure that Searle is ready to concede that all analytic philosophers who work within the tradition have learned the lessons safeguarding them from any and all mistakes of the kind literary theorists are said to be making. Another reason for the failure of Searle's confrontation is the hidden motivation of Searle's enterprise. The notion of confrontation, quite like Derrida's notion of minimum consensus, supposes some sort of *common* platform. The latter, which I have discussed above, involves awareness of your interlocutor's heritage and understanding of their language. The problem with Searle's motivation is that he requires others, in this case literary theorists and their deconstructionist informants, to learn about *his* school of philosophy and to be able to

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have rather simple and clear solutions." Searle, John. "Literary Theory and Its Discontents." *New Literary History*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 25th Anniversary Issue (Part 1). (Summer 1994). P. 639.

understand *his* language without making the effort to return the favor.[304] Searle's motivation is thus rather didactic—he extends a patronizing unidirectional gesture of good will (charity?) towards literary theory. It is safe to assume that, unlike little children, Searle does not believe that doctors are immune to any disease. Still, the contradiction implied in prescribing treatment for someone that one would not, in similar circumstances, prescribe for themselves comes close to the childish paradox of ever-healthy doctors. And as to literary theory's discontents, they might indeed be partially alleviated with the help of some of Searle's arguments, but they are very unlikely to be explained away by them. Strangely, Searle forgets that the opposite of discontent is contentment.

Alice Crary's "The Happy Truth: J.L. Austin's How To Do Things With Words" brings the poles Derrida and Searle occupy somewhat closer. Crary's thesis is that, even though Derrida and Searle's takes on Austin are largely divergent in their general attitudes, they converge in one important shared assumption about Austin's project. It should be clear by now that whatever Austin sets out to accomplish, a crucial notion that drives his project is his distrust with the straightforward (traditional) ideal "of the 'statement' as always in some way reporting on the world or imparting information about the facts either truly or falsely."[305] The hope for a neat correspondence between language and the world and its major consequent—the correspondence theory of truth—feed off of this ideal. Crary regurgitates Austin's reminder that most philosophers who espouse the

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[304] An example that comes to mind is Gilles Deleuze's book *Difference and Repetition*, which is part of the continental tradition's organon and whose title, even though not directly referring to Derrida's problematic, very well sums up Derrida's definition of iterability. It is safe to suppose that Searle's perpetual forgetting of this definition might have been cured had Searle read more of Derrida and his continental contemporaries.

[305] Crary, Alice. "The Happy Truth: J.L. Austin's How To Do Things With Words." *Inquiry*, 45, 2002. P.59.

ideal and the correspondence theory are also committed to “a view of meaning on which sentences possess what are sometimes called *literal* meanings (i.e. meanings they carry with them into every context of use).”[306] Now, it is clear that Austin rejects the latter view—he reverses the picture so that fixed, *literal*, meanings are replaced by sentence meanings determined in an ad hoc manner by the contingencies of particular contexts. What, according to Crary, Derrida and Searle do not realize is that Austin also rejects the connection between the idea of literal statements and that of the correspondence between language and the world.[307] The result of this is that Austin *can* remain faithful to some form of correspondence while discarding its two traditionally accepted concomitants—the “true/false fetish” and the valence of *literal* sentence meanings.

I am sympathetic of Crary’s thesis and I think it serves as yet another illustration of the philosophical *mis*understandings and *mis*readings I have been treating of. Derrida’s criticism of Austin is anchored on a wrongly perceived connection Austin makes between the correspondence of language to the world and the possibility of fixed (*literal*) sentence meanings. Derrida’s celebration of Austin’s shying away from literal sentence meanings is disturbed by the fact that Austin does not go the full length to denounce correspondence together with them. In fact, Derrida’s accusation about Austin’s allegiance to ideas of a “total context” and “pure speech act” is a demand for

[306] Ibid. P.60.

[307] “Although literary-theoretical commentators thus tend to disagree with philosophers like Searle, who portray Austin as preserving the idea of literal sentence-meanings, their disagreement takes place against the background of a philosophically significant form of agreement. These commentators by and large read Austin as claiming that there can be no such thing as literal sentence meaning and that *therefore* we must acknowledge that no mode of discourse can have a whole-heartedly objective bearing on the world. They arrive at the conclusion that Austin rejects the possibility of objective correspondence *because* they take him to be maintaining that there is an important sense in which an ideal of the literal ‘statement’ does justice to what such correspondence amounts to. They thus in effect agree with Searle and others in thinking that Austin is properly read as assuming that the literal ‘statement’ contains a faithful representation of what it would be for language to have an objective bearing on the world.” (Ibid. Pp. 60-61)

Austin to have gone the full length. As Crary points out, Derrida's *desire* for Austin to have made a radical break with both correspondence and literal meanings prevents Derrida from seeing that Austin never regarded the two as necessarily connected in the first place.[308] It is a different *desire* that leads Searle to the same mistake.

As I pointed out earlier, Searle's paper "Literary Theory and Its Discontents" applies a number of arguments (in the guise of principles widely adopted and used in analytic philosophy) to literary theory for, ostensibly, medicinal purposes. One of these arguments is Searle's belief that literal sentence meanings in fact carry over different contexts largely undisturbed. It is Searle's fondness of this notion, and his enthusiasm in retroactively and wrongly attributing the same to Austin, that accounts for his mistake as identified by Crary. Searle's theory of speech acts, even if jealously indebted to Austin and protective of him in all the ways mentioned above, ends up owing more to this mistake than to the actual Austin. Still, by virtue of having at least recognized Austin's distrust for literal sentence meanings, Derrida seems to have wasted half the ink Searle has.

The second source I invite into my study may be regarded as inappropriate here, but hopefully not as inappropriate as Derrida's treatment of Austin was deemed by Searle. With my eyes partially fixed on the issue of propriety, I will try to extract some wisdom from Shoshana Felman's *The Scandal of the Speaking Body, Don Juan with J.L. Austin or Seduction in Two Languages* that I find relevant to my discussion of the Derrida/Searle debate. I finish my last paragraph on the mistake Crary thinks Derrida

[308] This said, I am inclined to understand Derrida's mistake as only partial and not fatal to his overall reading of Austin. The observations Derrida makes about Austin's intermittent allegiance to some traditional assumptions about language are not invalidated by the mistake Crary identifies, they are only lessened in strength.

and Searle share with the, I admit, unkind suggestion that with respect to this mistake Derrida and Searle have wasted their ink, albeit in unequal amounts. Since Felman's book focuses on and makes a very convincing case for the seduction Austin's writing invariably exercises on his readers, I would prefer my unkind claim to be read within the context of this seduction. It is clear that both Derrida and Searle are seduced[309] by Austin and that this at least partly accounts for the two philosophers' divergent ways of making the same mistake about Austin; both Derrida and Searle *want* Austin to have taken the paths they as his readers have chosen. Felman's main thesis is that Austin's prose is seductive because it carries within it at least as much of a performative thrust as it does of a constative value.[310] At first glance, Felman's concern and her decision to illustrate it with analogies between Austin, literature, and psychoanalysis appear, for lack of a better word, *un-philosophical*. Stanley Cavell, in his foreword to the book's English translation, is quick to point to this and brush it off as *mere* appearance.[311]

What is at stake in Felman's book is the possibility that philosophy is actually written, read, and originated by humans whose humanity (along with the embarrassments of the body, the turbulences of the psyche, and the imperfect commerce with the world it implies) *bears* on philosophy as much as the proverbial "voice of reason." And while

[309] Derrida admits of this wholeheartedly in *Sec* and elaborates on it in *Limited Inc*, while Searle is less prone to admit of being seduced. Still, the sheer amount of pages Searle devotes to developing Austin's theory and the verve with which he guards Austin's legacy attest to the overall effect Austin's work must have had on him.

[310] "I had better declare that I am *seduced* by Austin. I like not only the openness that I find in his theory, but the theory's potential for scandal; I like not only what he says, but what he "does with words." And it is the import of this *doing* (as distinct from the saying, from the simple theoretical statement) that I want now to articulate…It seems to me that the history of linguistic philosophy—the history of Austin's influence and of the theoretical consolidation of his thinking about the performative—reflects an appropriation of the constative aspect of the theory, but hardly at all of its performative aspect." Felman, Shoshana. *The Scandal of the Speaking Body, Don Juan with J.L. Austin or Seduction in Two Languages*. Tr. Catherine Porter. Stanford University Press, Stanford 2003. P. 48.

[311] "If Felman's invocation of Artaud lacks philosophical decorum, so much the worse for philosophical decorum." Ibid. P. XX.

Austin is Felman's central case study of how this humanity plays out, the thesis itself cannot fail to also apply to Austin's likely and unlikely heirs. As of Austin, Felman recognizes his joy from the frequent infelicity of his own arguments--the often confusing impasses that I have treated earlier in this chapter. Felman also detects and makes a very good case for the dominant role of humor in Austin.[312] In addition, she provides good evidence that Austin is fully aware of these (under?)currents in his own work.[313] From a philosophical point of view one good result of these findings is that they leave things as they are or, to put it more precisely, they leave Austin's arguments *as they are*. (One can easily imagine a philosopher of Austin's tradition saying "The old man had fun, made fun of us all and did it all knowingly? So what?") There is, however, a consequence of Felman's observations, which might be harder for philosophers to accept, namely, that, even though these observations leave Austin's arguments *as they are*, they make all the difference for Austin's arguments *as they are read*.

For what else can account for Searle's insensitivity to certain points in Austin if not the unique interplay between the particular brand of unspoken seduction these points exercise over Searle and Searle's own preconceived notions? Similarly, what can explain Derrida's sometimes wishful reimagining of Austin if not the unique interplay between the admitted seduction Austin's prose has for Derrida and Derrida's own philosophical

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[312] "“How to do things with words,” “a plea for excuses,” “three ways of spilling ink”: what Austin's titles do, through humor, is to suspend their own entitlement…This amounts to saying that the titles, drops of spilled ink, only *do* something—with wit—by suspending their own authority to *say* something." Ibid. P. 92.

[313] Felman quotes the following from Austin which is relevant to her observations on Austin's embracing of failure as a methodological tool, his humor, and his self-styling in service of both: "A disagreement as to what we should say is not to be shied off, but to be pounced upon: for the explanation of it can hardly fail to be illuminating. If we light an electron that rotates the wrong way, that is a discovery, a portent to be followed up, not a reason for chucking physics: and by the same token, a genuinely loose or eccentric talker is a rare specimen to be prized."

program in *Sec*? Different scholars from different traditions might be prone to attribute these *mis*readings to failures in reasoning on the part of one candidate or the other or both. But one should bear in mind the simple non-controversial imperative that a mistake in reasoning, while rarely obvious to the person making it, usually calls for some sort of correction when revealed. If, then, Derrida's and especially Searle's mistakes in their respective readings of Austin are stubbornly perpetuated throughout the debate in question, the debate opens its doors to extra-rational factors, i.e. to human weaknesses other than reason.

I have two reasons to believe that Searle's weaknesses of this *other* kind are much more detrimental to the debate than Derrida's. Firstly, in Searle these weaknesses are far more numerous—his preoccupation with guarding Austin's inheritance, his turning a blind eye to the parts (and words) in Austin that do not serve his immediate purposes, his disrespect for Derrida's heritage, his refusal to study Derrida's language (something, no doubt, Austin would have done, and reputedly did, with any interlocutor he dignified with a conversation), and his general verdictive impatience with Derrida. My second reason is that even after Derrida, so to speak, holds up a mirror to him in *Limited Inc* Searle remains convinced that none of these charges are applicable to him. Indeed, when Felman writes that the history of linguistic philosophy, which Searle holds so dear, "reflects an appropriation of the constative aspect of the theory, but hardly at all of its performative aspect," (see my fn. 305) this is as true of the way Austin has been generally read as it is of Searle's performance in reading Derrida and Austin.

It is not my purpose here to capitalize on the ever-fossilizing and yet dynamic differences between two traditions. In fact, one of the reasons I follow in Felman's

footsteps is because she mostly avoids discussion of such differences. The seduction of Austin's language is as influential on Derrida as it is on Searle. The mistakes this seduction has a role in engendering are equally indiscriminate of particular philosophical lineages. This is probably why the ultimate dissatisfaction with the Derrida/Searle debate is that a fair amount of ink is spilled by Searle in refusing to grant Derrida the right to be seduced too. The question if the ink has been spilled intentionally, deliberately or on purpose Austin asked in a different context has an answer of a different order here—irreparably.

Chapter V

Compromise from Wisdom to Cavell

Voice Training

This final chapter is an attempt to restate and further substantiate my main ideas about philosophical language, understandability, and intellectual inheritance. I am moved to do this because I realize that the little I have said owes some of its inspiration to and can benefit from a discussion of the work of two particular thinkers. Of the students of analytic philosophy no contributions to the working out of the issues I raise are greater than those of John Wisdom and Stanley Cavell.[314] Here are two philosophers besieged by analysis but resistant to it, with minds equally attuned to philosophical argument and philosophical language. Wisdom and Cavell are different enough in some of their concerns, but in light of my project the similarities are all the more poignant. They both can be considered Wittgensteinians to the extent that they studied Wittgenstein (in Wisdom's case even *with* Wittgenstein) and continued his work. Wisdom and Cavell are both outsiders in the sense that their projects remain entangled with the history of analytic philosophy but they often subvert its language and its core problems. They are also apt practitioners of meta-philosophical analysis, lending their ear to what moves the philosopher to write about certain things and to write in a certain way. In this I believe

[314] One obvious exception is the work of Richard Rorty. His *The Linguistic Turn* and *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* are arguably the best attempts at simultaneously honoring and subverting the analytic tradition. Still, even though my study shares some of Rorty's interests and relies on occasional references to him, I refrain from discussing Rorty at length. My main reason for this is that, quite unlike Wisdom and Cavell, Rorty offers an explicit and self-contained critique of linguistic analysis. I find it more productive to *look for* such critique in the philosophical meanderings of Wisdom and Cavell than to *find* it readily displayed in Rorty. If nothing else, my approach will hopefully demonstrate Wisdom's and Cavell's significance in reconsidering the history and the language of analytic philosophy as comparable to Rorty's.

Wisdom and Cavell, to borrow a metaphor from Timothy Gould, lend a *voice* to analytic philosophy.

The inspiration my study draws from Wisdom is accounted for by his attentiveness to the factors of *making* philosophy. Wisdom's take on the issue of choice in early analytic philosophy is unique. In his essay "Philosophy, Metaphysics and Psycho-Analysis" he writes about the necessity of "moulding the use of language"[315] so that it fits one's philosophical needs. For Wisdom deciding what our philosophical needs are is less a matter of choice and more of convention. The issue of convention in analytic philosophy is referred back to its pioneers and their needs. Thus, if there was ever any proper choice of language in the history of what we think of as analytic philosophy, it was a choice commanded by the strategic moves of Frege, Moore, Mach, Russell, and Wittgenstein. How these choices turn into convention is a matter worth-investigating especially once we realize, with Wisdom, their implications for the practice of philosophy. Wisdom's own investigation allows itself to look beyond the concrete arguments of philosophers into factors like motivation, extra-philosophical interests, and psychological make-up. He also addresses the implicit ethical stance in some of his analytic predecessors and, specifically the ethical implications of categories such as "nonsense," "impropriety" etc.

If not in specific insight, at least in spirit Cavell shares many of Wisdom's notions.[316] Cavell is awake to the problem of picking words and choosing vocabularies.

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[315] Wisdom, John. *Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969. P. 254

[316] A recent study by Fergus Kerr (Kerr, Fergus. *Work on Oneself*. The Institute for the Psychological Sciences, Washington D.C. 2008) groups Wisdom, Cavell and Richard Eldridge as a certain type of reader of Wittgenstein.

He also has his own theory of how the charges of “nonsense” and “impropriety” occur and evolve through the history of professional philosophy. Furthermore, Cavell sets the stage for a discussion of the curse and the blessing of the inner departmentalization of the analytic movement. In his work on Wittgenstein and Austin, Cavell outlines the space of ordinary language philosophy as a special form of analysis but also as a replacement of analysis.[317] Cavell himself is both widely celebrated and accused of *impropriety* on account of his language. Going back to the early analytic thinkers, such discrepancies were oftentimes all that mattered. It is enough to recount the uneasy welcome with which the shift in Wittgenstein’s style from his *Tractatus* to the *Investigations* was received. Cavell looks into this shift and argues that the sense of discomfort with it is largely due to the *Investigations’* palpable literary bent. The problem, as Cavell suggests, is partly Wittgenstein’s trespassing of the strict vocabulary zone delineated by his earlier book. Such transgressions, Cavell notes, are still being sanctioned on account of their impropriety today.

The way these and other arguments from Wisdom and Cavell will be brought to bear on my project is through straight application of their insight to my earlier contentions. To give one example with reference to Wisdom, his notion of choosing one’s vocabulary will throw some additional light on the subject of my chapter on Bradley and Moore. Cavell’s interest in the sanctions of nonsense and impropriety has direct application in the Derrida/Searle debate in my Chapter IV. It is thus that to my

[317] “The idea of “replacing” here has its own ambiguity. It could mean what the logical positivists roughly meant, that philosophy, so far as it remains intelligible, is to become logic or science. Or it could mean what I take Wittgenstein to mean, that the impulse to philosophy and the consequences of it are to be achieved by replacing, or reconcieving, the ground or the place of the thus preserved activity of philosophizing.” (Cavell, Stanley. “Freud and Philosophy: A Fragment.” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 13, No. 2, The Trial(s) of Psychoanalysis (Winter, 1987), P. 388)

dissertation Wisdom and Cavell will serve as a rear-view mirror in which problems will not appear any larger than they are but will hopefully appear much more clearly. I believe that in a more general way the two philosophers with their writings have done for the history of analytic philosophy what I hope them to do for my work here. And, most remarkably, the image of analytic philosophy and its language that appears in the mirror Wisdom and Cavell prop against it is critical but truly instructive and not subjected to its customary distortions from within the analytic movement.

Before I go on with my discussion of Wisdom and Cavell I have to deal away with two possible suspicions. Firstly, I do not intend to compare the two philosophers in any exhaustive way. What their various insights contribute to my study is at least as rich and variegated, even intangible, as each one's writings are reputed to be. I will instead look into each thinker separately and try to extract the arguments which are most narrowly relevant to my project. The second suspicion—that I will rely on Wisdom and Cavell to make sense of *all* the issues I raise and *all* philosophies I discuss—is also one I would like to lay to rest. The suspicion is somewhat warranted in light of the fact that Wisdom has a lot to say about Moore and Wittgenstein and Cavell has written a great deal on Austin and Wittgenstein. I realize the benefit of this for what I have embarked on but, while I will use some of these discussions as illustration, I will not rely on them to make my own argument. There is no better place for me to confess that what I perceive as the importance of my study is intimately connected with the philosophical stances of Wisdom and Cavell but also carries the awareness that neither Wisdom nor Cavell pursue the problematic as explicitly and as determinedly as I here attempt to do.

In terms of structure, this chapter's attention will be distributed in the following way: I will firstly turn to Wisdom's essay collection *Philosophy and Psychoanalysis* and try to justify its relevance to my study. I will subsequently do the same with some notions from Cavell's *The Claim of Reason* and a few of Cavell's essays whose reverent challenge to the history of analytic thought I find seminal in the reconsideration of philosophical language, understandability and inheritance. After this I will devote some of my attention to Timothy Gould's book about Cavell, *Hearing Things*, and, all throughout, to some other writings on my two primary sources. By the end I will hope to have accomplished the daunting task of tying the loose ends of my overall project and to have concluded it in a way which, apart from its foreseeable limitations, will invite further interest and possibly research.

Creation's Chorus

John Wisdom's place in the linguistic turn is of a singular character. He is a student of Moore and Wittgenstein, but at the same time his primary contributions to philosophy carve out a niche neither teacher would have anticipated. In addition to some thematic continuities with Moore, Wisdom admits an appreciation for the "simple, direct, child-like quality"[318] of Moore's work and, in fact, to some extent the description applies to Wisdom's prose as well. Wisdom's debt to Wittgenstein, in turn, is made obvious in the many direct attributions of inspiration from Wittgenstein Wisdom makes in his work. Wisdom is attuned to the purposes and practices of his predecessors and analytic philosophy in general, but never takes them for granted. In an essay on Wisdom from

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[318] Wisdom, John. *Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969. P. 120

1996, Ilham Dilman, a student of his, points out that one defining characteristic of Wisdom's work is his insistence on the importance of meta-philosophical inquiry: "He was very much interested in the nature of philosophy, the character of its questions, the kind of investigations these call for, and the forms of reasoning these investigations involve. He thought that working towards greater clarity about the nature of these questions is an integral part of their investigation. If this is neglected, one will not get far in one's investigation of them."[319] This peculiarity of Wisdom's sends him further afield than Moore, Wittgenstein and the rest of linguistic philosophy.

But Wisdom does not stop at meta-philosophy—towards the purpose of understanding what philosophy is he employs the sensibility and findings of contemporary psychoanalysis. Like Neurath's, Wisdom's is to a certain extent a project of applied philosophy, but where Neurath weighs his philosophical convictions against extensive sociological and scientific research, Wisdom weighs the practice of analytic philosophy against that of psychoanalysis. Wisdom's method is to look at philosophers' arguments within a *lived* context. As Dilman points out, Wisdom questions if the fly in the fly-bottle, when released, will go back where it came from or somewhere altogether different. Both the near-neurosis of looking for a philosophical solution and the satisfaction of finding it are to Wisdom as philosophically interesting as the problem and the solution themselves. His interest is as much in *what* a philosopher is saying as in *why* they are saying it, and that in the broadest possible sense of why. This, coupled with his acute sense for the subtleties of language, gets Wisdom extremely close to asking

[319] Dilman, Ilham. "Cambridge Philosophers VII: Wisdom." *Philosophy*, Vol. 71, No. 278 (Oct., 1996), P. 578.

(and answering) the question I am really interested in, i.e. "Why does a philosopher write *the way* they do?"

That Wisdom is finely attuned to the language of analysis becomes clear on even a cursory read-through of his celebrated essays. As in most aspects of his work, however, Wisdom assumes an idiosyncratic stance as to the three procedures of vocabulary formation I have outlined in my introduction. Revisiting these procedures with reference to Wisdom puts their implementation by the other philosophers I have heretofore discussed in perspective. Firstly, and most importantly, Wisdom does not erase any of the language of pre-analytic philosophy from his vocabulary. On the contrary, he engages the idealist, the classical skeptic, and the rationalist literally on their own terms. What is gained for philosophy when, for example, Wisdom uses the expression "creation's chorus"[320] is a double gift. On the one hand it signals the incongruence of such expression with the vocabulary of the day and age, thus making the ongoing linguistic shift explicit. On the other hand, such lexical indulgences make it possible to conceive of a dialogue between disparate philosophical eras and schools, a dialogue that Wisdom takes up whenever the occasion arises.[321] Another prominent instance is the word "puzzlement," which I have given as an example of Moore's refusal to engage Bradley's vocabulary, and which Wisdom resurrects and gives new currency in his essay "Philosophical Perplexity."

[320] Wisdom, John. *Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969. P. 119

[321] A noteworthy example of such curious cross-breeding is the analogy Wisdom makes between Moore's prose and Plato's dialogues. The example is taken further by Dilman's fond recollection, in the essay I quote from, of the dialogical character of Wisdom's own teaching sessions.

Wisdom stands out also in his way of handling the second procedure of the formation of the analytic vocabulary—the singling out of traditionally philosophical words that retain their importance even when they stand in need of further clarification. These words, such as "true," "false," "mind," "existence," "knowledge," "belief" etc., remain as active for Wisdom as they do for all participants in the linguistic turn. These, if we do not lose sight of the clarificatory purpose of philosophy, are precisely the terms that demand and are subject to interminable analysis and clarification. In Wisdom, these painfully familiar terms are all spun out of their comfortable seats by means of substitution, synonymy, and analogy. This would not be controversial if Wisdom's procedure did not involve another, untypical, step. Wisdom, quite unlike for example Ramsey, believes that the philosopher's job is not to provide definitions.[322] It is, actually, to offer *insight*.[323] It is thus that instead of trying to define "falsity" Wisdom looks for an example where an accepted, in this case Russell's, idea of falsity does not apply. The example is of Lewis Carroll's pronouncement that a white rabbit dropped a glove, where the truth value of what is said constitutes an interesting and informing exception from Russell's theory of descriptions.[324] Wisdom applies the same procedure of *widening* the definition of a word in his discussion of the skeptic. Wisdom approaches the word "knowledge" in all its requisite intractability not by means of a theory about what it is to know, but by means of juxtaposing social practices that are equally definitive for our

[322] Ibid. Fn. 2. P. 8
[323] Ibid. P. 7
[324] "'How is it that though he said that a white rabbit dropped a glove, and no rabbit ever did such a thing, he wasn't speaking falsely?' This puzzle cannot be dealt with by translating the puzzling sentences into others about descriptions." (Ibid. P. 204)

understanding of the word.[325] The result of this is not a strict definition of the word at all but, in the spirit of Wittgenstein, a novel form of insight into its multiple uses.

The third procedure in the formation of a philosophical vocabulary is the introduction of new terminology. As to this, Wisdom proceeds in three different ways. Firstly, he adopts the new terminology of analysis with his eye permanently fixed on the salient inadequacies of every verbal innovation. The word "analysis" itself is allotted its own analysis in Wisdom's essay "Is Analysis a Useful Method in Philosophy." To demonstrate how far Wisdom's 'analysis' goes beyond the practices *du jour* it is enough to note that in one instance Wisdom outlines the analytic practice in a self-styled contrast to the everyday practice of gossip.

Wisdom's second way of dealing with new terminology is by inventing his own. The most conspicuous example is the term "ostentation," whose meaning Wisdom explains and whose utility he tries to justify in the essay of the same name. The word for him denotes something like the informative substitution of one sentence for another. Wisdom locates the need for such a new concept after careful consideration of a certain vacuum in the history of analytic thought. The obsession with equivalence between statements, as I point out in my Chapter III, is typical of the analytic method. Bentham's "paraphrasis" and Russell's and Moore's "logical constructions" are cited by Wisdom as well-accepted tools of clarification. And, indeed, Wisdom concedes that such tools serve their clarifying purpose handsomely. What they do *not* do is call attention to the subtleties of substitution in philosophy—that it always involves the confusion between

[325] "Then there is the series which begins with the policeman asking whether you are sure that this is the man you saw hanging round the garage, and ends with the philosopher asking whether you are sure that the woman who comes down to breakfast each morning looking like your wife is always the same woman." (Ibid. P. 58)

speaking about facts and speaking about words, that it is similar to the work of the translator but carries a different intention (that to provide insight), and that it is more often employed to satisfy a mental cramp rather than to answer a logical demand. The new term Wisdom introduces is thus meant to unpack the concept of substitution together with all of its meta-philosophical implications.[326]

The third way in which Wisdom expands philosophy's lexicon, in line with his proposed relevance of psychoanalysis to philosophy, is by using terms such as "psychosis," "neurosis," "anxiety," "lament," "stimulus" etc. in his writing. The relationship Wisdom proposes between philosophy and psychoanalysis is best summed up in Mortimer Kadish's words: "Psychoanalysis, therefore, enters the discussion only in the sense that the author wants to show how philosophy is *like* psychoanalysis. Philosophy, it is held, does not provide us with new information; yet, through paradox, it forces us "to recognize things familiar but unrecognized." In this latter respect, in the respect of the gift of insight, philosophy is like psychoanalysis although, of course, it is not denied that psychoanalysis may also provide new data."[327] The language of psychoanalysis, which Wisdom so freely uses, is by his own admission not meant to replace any philosophical concepts. It is only hoped to further the enterprise of elucidating "things familiar but not recognized" by means of fecund comparison. This comparison itself is only possible if philosophy is located within a wider spectrum of linguistic practices and scholarly concerns. In this Wisdom is especially reminiscent of the Wittgenstein of *On Certainty*, who gleefully identifies certainty with a tone of voice.

[326] "I believe that philosophers have always employed ostentation although they have seldom said so because, being busy philosophizing, they have had little time to philosophize about philosophizing." (Ibid. P. 1)
[327] Kadish, Mortimer R. "Review: Philosophy and Psychoanalysis." *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Jul., 1954), P. 271

In a discussion of the difference between philosophy and science, Wisdom makes the following observation: "'What is water?' asked with a profound look and in the philosophical manner, has a confusing verbal similarity with 'What is water?' asked briskly and in the scientific manner."[328] Quite like in Wittgenstein's reference to one's tone of voice, one's profound or brisk look is what for Wisdom is allowed to become an epistemological determinant. Once such categories are invited into the respective discussions, philosophy becomes embroiled with something else through which it is easier to look *at* philosophy-- something which Wittgenstein aptly calls "forms of life."

The Taj Mahal

In the opening two paragraphs of Wisdom's "Philosophy, Metaphysics and Psychoanalysis," he manages two feats. One of them has received ample attention in the literature while the other, though not minor, I have singled out for its relevance to my study. The essay which these passages introduce is as much a demonstration of the partial overlap between the three titular subjects as it is a performative demonstration of Wisdom's verbal acuity. Both types of demonstration are in these introductory lines shown to be inseparable, i.e. they prove that good command and awareness of one's philosophical vocabulary is crucial for the persuasive power of a philosophical argument.

The first, by now notorious, feat is Wisdom's enactment of an imaginary conversation, which I will quote in its entirety:

> "However, suppose now that someone is trying on a hat. She is studying it in a mirror. There's a pause and then a friend says 'My dear, the Taj Mahal.' Instantly

[328] Wisdom, John. *Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969. P. 13

the look of indecision leaves the face in the mirror. All along she has known there was something wrong with the hat, now she sees what it is. And all this happens in spite of the fact that the hat could be seen perfectly clearly and completely before the words 'Taj Mahal' were uttered. And the words were not effective because they referred to something still hidden like a rabbit in a hat. To one about to buy false diamonds the expert friend murmurs 'Glass,' to one terrified by what he takes to be a snake the good host whispers 'Stuffed.' But that's different, that's news. But to call a hat the Taj Mahal is not to inform someone that it has mice in it or will cost a fortune. It is hardly to say that it's like the Taj Mahal; plainly it's very unlike and no less unlike now that this far-fetched analogy has been mentioned. And yet nothing will undo the work of that far-fetched allusion. The hat has become a monument and too magnificent by half."[329]

The attention this passage has garnered is due to its many unorthodox features. The first such feature, noticed by Cora Diamond in her book *The Realistic Spirit*, is the high placement Wisdom gives to imagination in the nomenclature of observing the world philosophically.[330] Another feature is the contention that metaphor is untranslatable into any clearer or more available form.[331] The third unorthodox move on Wisdom's part is the suggestion, detected by Peter Lewis, that critical reasoning carries with it positive modifications of the thing under scrutiny.[332] All three features can be referred back to my

[329] Ibid. P. 248

[330] Diamond, Cora. *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind*. MIT Press, Cambridge 1995. P. 28

[331] Hauerwas, Stanley, J. Berkman, M.G. Cartwright. *The Hauerwas Reader*. Duke University Press, Durham 2001. P. 167

[332] In the following discussion of a Harold Nicholson story, Lewis locates an illustration of the modifying powers of critical reasoning similar to that found in Wisdom's Taj Mahal parable: "Here, Nicholson locates a noticeable peculiarity of critical reasoning—its ability to operate at a deeper, less wholly rational level of

previous discussions of other philosophers and Wisdom himself. To start with the problem of imagination in philosophy, it directly concerns Moore's talk of "thinking of things imagined." It is clear with Moore that the powers of imagination are completely subsumed under rational thought. This marks Moore apart from Bradley, for whom imagining how things might be is as important as knowing how they are. The second suggestion Wisdom makes by implication, that metaphor is untranslatable and better left as it is, cuts deep into the common analytic practice of rephrasing and clarification. But, one might object, metaphor is a special case, very special indeed compared to a common assertion or even a philosophical claim to knowledge. To this Wisdom would probably reply that the comparison he tries to draw between philosophy and psychoanalysis is meta-philosophical and, as such, is just as irreducible to a philosopheme as any hat metaphor would be to a hat description. This does not bode well for Moore's attempts to retool all philosophical expression to the tune of what *we all* ordinarily say, because as I have shown Moore himself occasionally indulges in metaphor. Wisdom's suggestion is just as relevant to Searle who tries eagerly but ever-so-unproductively to paraphrase Derrida ("On a sympathetic reading of Derrida's text we can construe him as pointing out..."). Wisdom recognizes the ambition of analytic philosophy for a total paraphrase of subsequent language and, as I have indicated, even throws his own hat in the ring by introducing the concept of ostentation. But what he makes clear is that for any

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the psyche than the kinds of thought normally discussed by analytic philosophers. Our perceptual *Lebenswelt* is already structured, interpreted and imbued with value—with our wants, beliefs, memories, myths and theories. To adjust this whole interpretative set by means of critical reasoning is to make it seem, not as if the world remained the same but our theories about it altered, but that the world itself had fundamentally changed its nature. Critical reasoning appears to by-pass our ordinary, rational defences, and blights a pleasure irrevocably by means of an eccentric comparison, or makes us begin to enjoy something in spite of our determination not to." (Lewis, Peter. *Wittgenstein, Aesthetics, and Philosophy*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., Surrey 2004. Pp. 82-3)

paraphrase, total or modest, to work we need to study and respect both the limits of language and the limits of philosophy.

The third suggestion in the Taj Mahal story threatens to turn against Wisdom himself. If critical reasoning alters its subject, be it the world as Lewis chooses to believe or only language which would be enough to ruffle Wisdom's feathers, then philosophy, since it employs critical reasoning, can alter its subject too. This would contradict Wittgenstein's pronouncement that philosophy leaves everything as it is, with which Wisdom agrees. However, on a closer look, Wisdom's seemingly competing suggestions do not have to be mutually exclusive. The sense in which he believes philosophy does not change the world is that, as he says, it does not carry any news for us.[333] But this does not mean that philosophy does not rearrange, repurpose and rephrase our world and our language. The example Wisdom gives—almost as old as philosophy—is that of the slave boy in Plato's *Meno*. The turning of latent knowledge into active one *does* constitute a change but at the same time, in a significant sense, it leaves one with just as much knowledge as they started out with. What the slave boy has gained brings us back to another category of Wisdom's meta-philosophy—insight.

The paragraph preceding that of the Taj Mahal story is the opening one of the essay. In it Wisdom does something very peculiar. He, in fact, does exactly what Moore did in the opening paragraph of his "Defence of Common Sense" which I criticize in my Chapter III—he offers what seems like an empty disclaimer. Just as Moore appeared doubtful about the merit and novelty of what he was about to say, Wisdom here assures

[333] Wisdom, John. *Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969. P. 255

us that he feels “like one does when someone asks ‘What’s the news?’ and there isn’t any news.”[334] But there are crucial differences in the two disclaimers that I think put Wisdom’s contribution to analytic philosophy in high relief. Wisdom begins his paragraph with the seemingly superfluous line “I should like to say at once what I aim to do in these lectures and then do it.” It seems unnecessary because, ideally, this desire should be implied in the very effort of committing oneself to a lecture. The presence of this sentence, however, serves a special purpose—it signals that saying what one aims to do and then doing it is a gruesomely difficult affair. The sentence that follows is thus “But there are difficulties about this.” This applies equally to Wisdom, to the practice of analysis and to any philosophical practice whatever. Against such a pronouncement Moore emerges, his bashful disclaimers notwithstanding, as stubbornly convinced in the rightness of his defence as well as his ability to carry it through. By the end of the paragraph Wisdom asks “How does anyone ever say to another anything worth hearing when he doesn’t know anything the other doesn’t know?” If this were a rhetorical question, which it very much sounds like, Wisdom’s essay should have stopped at it. In fact, both he and Moore have their answers to it and different ones at that. By now we can be sure that Moore’s answer would be that, yes, analysis has no claim of changing anything but it can clarify how things are. As to Wisdom, his answer comes in the following paragraph, i.e. it is implied in the Taj Mahal story. Stories like this do a few things Moore’s philosophy does not—they buttress a philosophical argument by means of examples tame and wild, they give up clarity in favor of depth or insight, they rebelliously display the language that analysis is bound to discard, and they reveal the tentative character of the analytic practice. These are exactly the stories that enable

[334] Ibid. 248

Wittgenstein to transcend Moore's mistakes in *On Certainty*. Wisdom's contribution, in turn, is the externalizing of the shift—while Wittgenstein quietly carries out the shift towards an example-ridden, imaginative, tentative philosophy, Wisdom gives this philosophy a name, a vocabulary and a purpose.

And What, Pray, is Philosophy?

Since Wisdom is recognized and praised for his meta-philosophical stance, it makes sense to inquire squarely into his idea of philosophy. This will provide an opportunity to compare Wisdom to his contemporaries but it also promises to throw light on the way these other philosophers position themselves within their own and against other schools of thought. Before this is done it is important to note that with reference to Rorty's swinging back and forth between two self-images Wisdom occupies a special middle ground. In his essay "Metaphysics and Verification" Wisdom discusses the verification principle as proposed by logical positivists and especially Ayer and Schlick. Wisdom argues that in order for such a general principle to work it has to be "recommended by the specific cases."[335] What is at stake here is the perennial philosophical problem of the contest for primacy between specific theories and general ones. The danger of adopting a general theory "as an equation" and deducing everything from it is that such a procedure might lead to what in Wisdom's opinion it has led to in the case of verification—"insistence and contra-insistence without end—deadlock."[336] Clearly, on Rorty's picture, the verificationist is a former revolutionary whose initially discovered principle is never questioned but is incessantly applied *en masse* to particular

[335] Ibid. P. 52. fn. 1.
[336] Ibid. P. 52. fn. 1.

theories in the minutiae of everyday analysis. What Wisdom recommends instead is a constant swinging of the pendulum. The peace at which the positivists seem to be with their general theory creates a form of stasis and leads to impasses at every turn. If the pendulum of their self-image swings faster between the confidence of their inaugural accomplishments (via the work of Frege, Russell, and in the case of the Vienna Circle also Mach) and the tentativeness of more particular application, a healthy way forward will present itself.[337] This is a good example of how Wisdom mines the field of philosophy for meta-philosophical insight. The vocal discontent with the verification principle is, according to Wisdom, a call for reconsideration of both the principle's applicability to other philosophical theories but also of its very raison d'être. In light of this the question "What is philosophy?" should be understood as asking simultaneously what philosophy does and what it *wants* to do. The meta-philosophically tinted latter question is, according to Wisdom, not merely a welcome addition to the first and more important one but is inherently a part of it, which, if not addressed, will leave the first question unanswerable too.

As I have shown above Wisdom's answer to the question what philosophy *does*, taken by itself, is not wildly different from those of Moore, Wittgenstein, and even the positivists. Wisdom does embrace the quest for clarity, the victories of modern logic and the reliance on the methods of analysis for elucidation of language. His answer to the second part of the question, however—what it is that philosophy *wants* to do—is out of joint with any of the above philosophers, with the exception of the later Wittgenstein.

[337] "On the contrary, if I were to consider either first the verification principle and then other metaphysical theories or first the other theories, I should much prefer the latter plan. In fact an intermediate plan is best—first an examination of easier metaphysical and nearly metaphysical questions, then a mention of the verification principle, then an attack upon the more difficult theories, then a more thorough investigation of the verification principle, then a return to the theories…" (Ibid. P. 52)

Wisdom's answer to this demands careful consideration of what he calls "the philosophical stimulus" and its satisfaction. It also requires intimate understanding of the dance of "provocation and pacification"[338] on which the progress of philosophy is predicated. These notions, although more immediately applicable to the second part of the question, are inevitably also brought to bear on what philosophy does.

In order to make the two-pronged question clearer and to begin to answer it Wisdom uses a number of procedures. One procedure is to try and locate philosophy's deeds and wants amongst all and sundry forms of inquiry and common human practices. As Dilman notes in his review of Wisdom's later book *Paradox and Discovery*, for Wisdom philosophy is a comparative enterprise both on the level of philosophical argument and on the level of meta-philosophical inquiry.[339] Wisdom freely compares philosophy to poetry, religious faith, science writ large and psychoanalysis in specific, art, mathematics, logic, gossip, law etc. Another procedure is to look at the symptoms of doing philosophy, i.e. the detectable outward signs that a given person at a given time is thinking or speaking philosophically. A procedure congruent with this but different in the tools it employs is Wisdom's search for the inner stimuli that make such thinking possible and—for the professional philosopher—necessary. Another procedure is the laying out of a critical-historical scaffolding for the purpose of all comparisons involved. And the last, at least as far as I can see, procedure is Wisdom's juxtaposition of all manners of speaking, languages and sub-languages, narrowly philosophical, generously philosophical, and not philosophical at all.

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[338] Ibid. P. 42

[339] Dilman, Ilham. "Review: Paradox and Discovery." *Philosophy*, Vol. 42, No. 160 (Apr., 1967), P. 155

From the titles of Wisdom's writings in the collection *Philosophy and Psychoanalysis* and elsewhere it would seem that meta-philosophy is only a part-time concern for him. But this is misleading; it should be taken for granted that whatever else he is doing Wisdom never stops trying to define the limits of the philosophical enterprise. Bouts of questioning in line with one of the above procedures are interwoven everywhere with what could be considered his "properly" philosophical arguments. Wisdom will also go further and claim that this is also the case with all other philosophers, except they mostly waver in making their meta-philosophical concerns explicit.

Before I expound on Wisdom's procedures for outlining the character of philosophy, I propose an extraordinary frame borrowed from Wisdom. Two statements found in two different essays stand out from the rest of what Wisdom says even by his eccentric standards. The first statement constitutes the closing paragraph of his "Review of Waddington's Science and Ethics" and reads: "Finally, do we value Socrates (p. 38), Van Gogh (p. 90), because of their contribution to the progress of mankind? Not on your life. Social progress be damned. It's the picture that counts."[340] The second statement, a note-to-self of sorts which unexpectedly appears in "Philosophical Perplexity," is: "Mnemonic slogan: It's not the stuff, it's the style that stupefies."[341] I find these two statements important in that they do not overtly belong to virtually any of the arguments Wisdom has about philosophy and in philosophy. The first is cryptic in its lumping together of a philosopher and a painter and also in the derogatory reference to social progress. The second is mysterious in its introduction of the highly unusual criterion of stupefaction in what seems to be a straightforward comparison of manner of presentation

[340] Ibid. P. 111
[341] Ibid. P. 38

to subject matter. Both, though, speak to a surface—one a picture, the other one a style—anticipating the turning of analytic philosophy on its head which Wisdom's procedures eventually will put in effect.

Upside Down

The first procedure is Wisdom's attempt to carve a place for philosophy out of the conceptual plenum that consists of all human inquiry and practice. A daunting task like this is made lighter by Wisdom through the incessant use of colorful examples. Philosophy is thus different from poetry as much as saying that "love is madness" is different than saying that "mind is an illusion." The latter two are different because while Proust would say the former based on what he has grasped about the world the philosopher would say the latter based on his discovery of our confusion about words. But philosophy together with certain kinds of science is close to Proust's pronouncement in that "they reveal what lies not behind or beyond but in the obvious."[342] The same complex analogy is further complicated in another essay where Wisdom says: "So do those scientists, philosophers, or poets who say one cannot stir a flower without troubling a star. What they say is mad but there's method in it."[343] The method, it appears, which science, philosophy and poetry share is that of inventing new words and metaphors to be used respectively for the harnessing, explanation, or conveyance of the world around us. This view finds a fruitful similarity between Newton's introduction of the term

[342] Ibid. P. 228
[343] Ibid. P. 254

"gravity,"[344] the philosopher's invention of a new metaphor or paradox,[345] and the poet's continuous effort to reinvent language.[346]

As to the special relationship between philosophy and science, assumptions of which remain integral to the groundwork of analytic philosophy, Wisdom has other things to add. One difference, for example, is that while the scientist searches contentment in concrete results the philosopher looks for satisfaction in the opening of a possibility for further inquiry. As Wisdom points out, when the scientist finally relaxes about the efficacy of a newly tested drug based on multiple therapeutic success, the philosopher is still prone to counter "But it *may* still be a coincidence. Where do you draw the line…?"[347] This is not at all to say that philosophy carries the work of the scientist further. Further inquiry does not have to mean further inquiry in the same direction.[348] This argument places the ball in the positivist's part of the court. The continuity between philosophy and science and their shared interest in results is central to the self-image of the logical positivist and in different measure applies to all other schools of thought within analytic philosophy. But Wisdom wants to raise attention to the fact that philosophy is also and always irreverent to the *mere* discovery of facts. In his "Note on Ayer's Language Truth and Logic," he offers the following picture:

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[344] "With the word "gravity," used in a modified way, Newton connected apples in an orchard with stars in heaven, a mammoth in a pitfall with waves high on the beach. Till he spoke we had no word connecting every incident in nature by thin lines of likeness, thin as the lines of force but stronger than steel." (Ibid. P. 253)

[345] "Then new words and metaphors and paradoxes and counter-paradoxes are what we need. A philosopher since he has no news and also cannot amuse and amaze us in the way a mathematician can must be either paradoxical or boring." (Ibid. P. 255)

[346] "It is well recognized that poets may use words in unusual ways to present what they see when in a child-like and yet grown-up experience they look at things afresh." (Ibid. P. 264)

[347] Ibid. P. 57

[348] "The philosopher is not using 'What is…?' in the scientist's sense. When the philosopher asks 'What is a chair?' 'What is water?' he is not asking for the chemical formulae for these. This may seem too obvious to be worth mentioning. But there are people who speak as if it is the business of the philosopher to carry the work of the scientist a stage further." (Ibid. P. 13)

"Philosophy is not only less like discovery of natural fact than people once supposed, it is also less like the discovery of logical fact than they next supposed, and more like literature—which makes it again more like the discovery of logical fact, only now it is the rediscovery of familiar fact through the recall of familiar logic dressed in not merely unfamiliar but scandalous clothes."[349] The news here is not that philosophy does or should do anything essentially different from the purpose the positivist slated for it. It is rather that the positivist is not aware of the metaphysical and meta-philosophical underpinnings of the *desire* to philosophize.

This same desire marks for Wisdom the point of difference between the philosopher and what he calls "the legalist." Wisdom's example of a legalist is Moore. What earns Moore the title is his practice of taking an ordinary case and recommending an ordinary notation to be used in our explanations of it. This in itself is according to Wisdom useful, "especially in the hands of someone so penetrating and utterly first-rate as Moore."[350] The problem arises in that Moore never leaves the procedure—his following through with the reapplication of known terminology to known things "leads to endless worrying, and philosophy becomes hopeless." The enterprise, as Wisdom points out, fails to give us "GRASP," whatever its other merits might be. The primary reason for this is that Moore does not look to give us anything like grasp; his purpose is to give us clarity and simplicity or, even more fatally, the "correct description" of the matter at hand. This strays substantially from Wisdom's recommendation that "the philosopher's purpose is to gain grasp of the relations between different categories of being, between

[349] Ibid. Pp. 242-3
[350] Ibid. P. 116

expressions used in *different manners*."[351] As I have noted in my discussions of Moore in other parts of this study, Moore often does use his expressions in different manners but is never aware of it, which creates discrepancies between the word on the page and the word as it is meant. Wisdom's reaction to this is to say that if we do not allow ourselves to break out of our old vocabulary and the pretense that we can sustain a straightforwardness of expression with it, we are very unlikely to ever be able to make sense of any new discovery, let alone approach any standard of correctness.[352] Moore's project can thus, by virtue of his legalist tendencies, be viewed as self-defeating. But what is worse is that what Wisdom perceives as the chief function of philosophy—to provide insight—is threatened to be drowned in Moore's dogged ambition to pick the world apart.

I could go on here about the ways Wisdom juxtaposes philosophy to religion, mathematics, logic and other areas of human interest I have not covered above. For the sake of brevity, however, I would rather proceed with Wisdom's second procedure in outlining philosophy—his study of the distinguishing symptoms of philosophizing. The utility of doing this at this point is that it will also throw light on Wisdom's analogy between philosophy and psychoanalysis. It is important to remember that Wisdom owes a good portion of his medical and psychological vocabulary to Wittgenstein, whose talk of mental cramps, the therapeutic function of philosophy etc. was at the time he first started indulging in it unprecedented in analytic philosophy. Wisdom is similarly indebted to Wittgenstein for the interest in the symptomatic gestures, mannerisms and words of

[351] Ibid. P. 42

[352] "*Besides, the detailed description doesn't give us* GRASP. *And wishing for this, the legalist says "If we looked harder still couldn't we find the correct description in general terms?* He means a description in old general terms without alteration in their use, i.e. keeping them old." (Ibid. P. 117)

philosophy. As it often happens with Wittgenstein, this interest is never made fully explicit and is not subjected to the organizing powers of a general theory. Wisdom, however elusive his general theory may be, is fully explicit in his inquiry into the psychological makeup of philosophy and he is equally explicit in the justification of this new tangent's importance for philosophy.

The outer signs of doing philosophy or thinking philosophically are for Wisdom best talked about in the language of the psyche. Philosophy thus involves anxiety, anger, lament, prayer, hope, satisfaction, denial, fear, puzzlement, glee, doubt. But there are two immediate difficulties with identifying any of these states as definitive and definitively philosophical. The first difficulty is identifying them in a philosopher, i.e. *detecting* their presence in her speech or behavior. The second difficulty is that, even if detected, psychic phenomena like these can be aptly used for describing simply *any* human being. Even if we assume that psychology and psychoanalysis have the tools of detection, Wisdom still faces the special challenge of laying out a theory of how we can distinguish philosophical anxiety, anger, lament etc. from their commonplace counterparts. As it is to be expected from him, Wisdom's way of dealing with this challenge is through numerous examples and comparisons.

Wisdom's search for the distinctive psychological traits of philosophizing is based on his belief that "there is a misleading feature which nearly all philosophical statements have—a non-verbal air."[353] It is only the profound look and the "philosophic manner" that in many cases distinguish asking a question philosophically from asking it

[353] Ibid. P. 40

scientifically.[354] The "dashing air" with which the positivist pronounces her dictum "The meaning of a statement is really simply the method of its verification" catches Wisdom's attention as much as the pronouncement itself.[355] "The triumphant laughter of the hard-headed positivist" does not go unnoticed as well.[356] Another example of a philosophical symptom is the person who "with certain bravado" insists that something which obviously happened did not happen.[357] In other places Dr. Waddington is found to be "anxious,"[358] "a small Dionysian voice grows louder,"[359] Moore "insists on knitting his brows,"[360] the philosophical iconoclast "covertly looks for shocked faces in his hearers,"[361] the skeptic gone too far hurries "agitatedly from one cult to another."[362] The portrait of the philosopher that emerges from these observations is not necessarily a psychological portrait but it is one that insistently reminds us that philosophers have bodies, egos and psyches. What Wisdom aims to do and I think accomplishes is that he pulls analytic philosophy down from its ivory tower and brings it back home—to the mess of human practices and inclinations that made it possible in the first place. When Wisdom equates philosophical objection with complaint,[363] or giving reasoning with giving *reasons*,[364] all he is trying to show is that we do not have clear ideas about the similarity or difference of these categories. The analytic imperative of correcting language (and in some extreme cases, the world) is only as achievable as it is

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[354] Ibid. P. 13
[355] Ibid. P. 53
[356] Ibid. P. 257
[357] Ibid. P. 97
[358] Ibid. P. 104
[359] Ibid. P. 107
[360] Ibid. P. 115
[361] Ibid. P. 134
[362] Ibid. P. 171
[363] Ibid. P. 71
[364] Ibid. P. 75

dynamically adjustable to different fields of inquiry. Wisdom thinks that in the case of psychoanalysis, which has been much reviled by philosophers for merely "rather proving its points,"[365] philosophical analysis and logic have little to contribute and hence they have no power of arbitration.[366] Psychological suggestions, for Wisdom, "preposterous as they sometimes are, reveal to our dismay and our relief things we had felt creeping in the shadows and now must see in light."[367] This is precisely also the function of philosophy—through paradox it breaks the seal of comfort that our preconceptions of things have imposed over the unexamined aspects of our life. With Wittgenstein Wisdom believes that the only adequate way of dealing with paradox is to develop it to the fullest. Wisdom's addition to this is that there is very little difference between how philosophy should deal with paradox and how psychoanalysis deals with neurosis. The amplification of problems and paradoxes, of course, has to start at home—and in the philosopher's case this would mean starting with a careful contemplation of her self-image.

The self-image of the philosopher, be it spelled out or not, has a lot to do with the stimulus for philosophizing. For Wisdom what stimulates one to do philosophy are puzzlement, imagination, and paradox. All three are conveniently personified by the skeptic but are not exclusive of him—they underlie at different depths the work of "the profound metaphysician," the analytic philosopher and, indeed, all other philosophers. The general philosophical stimulus is for Wisdom put not in the form of a question but of the following prayer: "*Please, give me clearer apprehension of the Arrangement of the*

[365] Ibid. P. 267

[366] "Consequently for any minute understanding of people's spiritual states laws such as 'If he loves he doesn't hate,' 'He can't think this and also not think it' become as much a menace as a help." (Ibid. P. 277)

[367] Ibid. P. 263

Elements of the fact finally located by the sentence 'aRb'."[368] (Wisdom's italics) What spurs philosophers towards this prayer is, firstly, the puzzlement brought about by linguistic confusion and linguistic penetration.[369] Secondly, imagination plays the role of a catalyst in the state of being puzzled ("*We fancy we sometimes know*…"[370]). Paradox, in turn, is the discovery by surprise or by design of something, for which reasons for and against are difficult to give.[371] Naturally, being so stimulated and trying to satisfy one's resultant urges is often a confusing affair.

In his "Philosophical Perplexity" Wisdom writes: "For when we say to the philosopher 'Go on, describe this real knowledge, tell us what stamp of man you want and we will see if we can buy or breed one' then he can never tell us."[372] The reason for this according to Wisdom is that the philosopher, even though fully engaged in the search for resolution of all manners of puzzle and paradox, does not *want* a resolution at all. What the philosopher wants is to continue being puzzled, to continue being able to imagine and re-imagine, and to go on discovering paradoxes and developing them. And if he declares to want final resolution as is the case with Russell, Moore and the positivists, this means not that he is emancipated from the perpetual stimuli of puzzle and paradox but only that he is not conscious of their work on him.[373]

One proof Wisdom offers as to the philosopher's real needs and wants is that historically very few philosophies have reached a logical or theoretic conclusion. Another

[368] Ibid. P. 15
[369] Ibid. P. 41
[370] Ibid. P. 169
[371] Ibid. P. 266
[372] Ibid. P. 44
[373] Wisdom identifies this predicament, most directly relevant to Moore, in the following: "And these extraordinary doctrines which claim to reduce the mysterious to the obvious are reactions from other paradoxes still more paradoxical—declarations that we can never know what we all know we know." (Ibid. P. 255)

proof is that metaphysics, often derided as unproductively speculative, is as inescapable for any philosophical system as are the tools of grammar, logic, and language.[374] Yet another proof is the fact that the skeptic still lives and we still care for what he has to say. To demonstrate and explain these truths Wisdom mounts a historical-critical frame through which they become more easily discernible. As to the first exhibit—that historically philosophy has avoided its own conclusion—Wisdom uses the example of analytic thought, which of all philosophies is also the one that always *seems* to want it. In the history of analytic thought there are many prominent examples of not stopping where one's line of argumentation should have stopped. The examples of Ayer, Schlick, and Moore I have quoted earlier are cases in point. Their going too far is especially evident in their treatment of metaphysics. According to Wisdom, discarding metaphysics as the source of considerable philosophical confusion involves the replacement of an age-old blindfold with a new one. Wisdom agrees that traditional metaphysics stands in need of analysis and correction, but he does not subscribe to the imperative of analyzing it *away*.[375] The latter option is just a way to perpetuate unclarity and thus to fuel the analytic enterprise from within and to a hopeless infinity. In other words, when the analyst announces to have stopped worrying about metaphysics, their artificial decision often becomes an obstacle to what it is supposed to further. In his short historical overview of analytic philosophy in "Metaphysics and Verification" Wisdom notes that

[374] This is just what Bradley contends in the early pages of *Appearance and Reality*, where he says that the anti-metaphysician is a "brother metaphysician with a rival theory of first principles."
[375] On the utility of metaphysical inquiry Wisdom notes: "Thus the metaphysical paradoxes appear no longer as crude falsehoods about how language is actually used, but as penetrating suggestions as to how it might be used so as to reveal what, by the actual use of language, is hidden. And metaphysical platitudes appear as timely reminders of what is revealed by the actual use of language and would be hidden by the new." The very last clause, that without insight into metaphysics some things will be hidden by the new language of analysis, represents an emblematic mistake of the linguistic turn. (Ibid. P. 101)

even after the significant efforts of analysis to discard metaphysics "there lingered still a peculiar smell."[376]

Wisdom's treatment of the skeptic is his third and last proof that philosophy does not want final resolutions. This is not always and necessarily because we are all bewitched by skeptical concerns—the skeptic is a special breed that is largely identifiable by the difference between him and the rest of us. But, still, there is in philosophy a hesitation that "spreads and swings" farther than is healthy and normal.[377] Moore's caution, which I treat of in my Chapter I and which Wisdom identifies as "endless worrying," is a species of such hesitation. For Wisdom no philosopher really becomes a skeptic for fear of being "removed to a home," or as Hume says "the skeptical philosopher never succeeds in killing his primitive credulities which… reassert themselves the moment he takes up the affairs of life and ceases to murmur the incantations which generate his philosophic doubt."[378] Except, the incantations persist and often flourish *within* philosophy. In an attempt to show how they do Wisdom, in the opening two paragraphs of his *Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*, enacts the trajectory of philosophical doubt. He assumes the voice of the skeptic and starts by questioning our knowledge of other minds. If we are aware of the conventional use of nods, smiles, barks and frowns, why are we not satisfied to say we know what others feel? For Wisdom, the answer is that philosophers simply are not looking to be satisfied or, worse yet, they will only be satisfied by what is philosophically unattainable. This, of course, has driven representatives of the linguistic turn and especially positivists to look for certainty and

[376] Ibid. P. 59
[377] "Driven by a caricature of curiosity which is kept for ever hungry by an inexorable desire to be logically perfect and factually infallible the philosopher diminishes his claims to knowledge." (Ibid. P. 170)
[378] Ibid. P. 170

satisfaction in mathematics and sense-experience. The latter two, Wisdom concedes happily, are out of reach for the skeptic's doubt. But Wisdom is quick to remind us that while mathematics and sense-experience do offer certainty they most significantly do not offer philosophical satisfaction.

Another way in which Wisdom puts this elsewhere is "philosophers should be continually trying to say what cannot be said."[379] This statement cuts in two directions. As I read it, its general meaning is that it is unavoidable for philosophers to travel in uncharted territories and far from the familiar certainties of familiar languages (those of science, mathematics etc.). There is here, apart from this, also an ironic undercurrent directed at the dogmatic aspect of analysis—the analyst's dream, as formulated in the *Tractarian* dictum "what can be said at all can be said clearly," is to get rid of what cannot be said and, yet, the analyst too will always find himself saying just that in old or new ways.[380] A study of the language of philosophy consequently needs to take into account what language is philosophically useful—not useful in the sense of logically expedient but useful in the sense of necessary for delivering what the philosopher *really wants*, i.e. the continuation of her interminable, near-neurotic inquiry.[381] On the evidence we have, this continuation is another crucial object of the philosopher's prayer.

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[379] Ibid. P. 50

[380] "Of a number of statements typical of the linguistic turn that he lists, Wisdom writes: "These untruths persist. This is not merely because they are symptoms of an intractable disorder but because they are philosophically useful. The curious thing is that their philosophical usefulness depends upon their paradoxicalness and thus upon their falsehood. They are false because they are needed where ordinary language fails, though it must not be supposed that they are or should be in some perfect language. *They are in a language not free from the same sort of defects as those from the effects of which they are designed to free us*." (Ibid. P. 50, My italics.)

[381] "The neurotic may discuss his problems—he may indeed—but he never means business; the discussion is not a means to action, to something other than itself; on the contrary, after a while we get the impression that in spite of his evident unhappiness and desire to come from hesitation to decision he also desires the

The last, but by no means least important, procedure Wisdom employs in his investigation into the nature of philosophy is the study of philosophical vocabularies. In fact, the language of philosophy has a special place in Wisdom's formidable range of interests which is everywhere equally evident in what he says and how he phrases it. In his way of enacting or dramatizing philosophy, Wisdom creates vivid vignettes of how a particular philosopher speaks. In his treatment of the skeptic he emphasizes the unusual currency of the word "probably." In Moore's favorite terms like 'plausible,' 'unplausible,' 'clear,' 'unclear' etc. Wisdom recognizes what he calls "shocking survivals of the scientific theories."[382] Most intriguingly, Wisdom even forces the word "really" into Ayer's mouth in an attempt to understand him.[383] What these expeditions in language do for Wisdom is show the limits philosophers impose on themselves. The natural antidote to these limitations, a loosening of sorts, is Wisdom's own language.

To the untrained ear, Wisdom's vocabulary is bizarre but in a familiar way, i.e. in the way the language of philosophy generally is. But against the living backdrop of analytic philosophy, Wisdom's eccentricity of phrase is unmatched. Firstly, it is important to bear in mind that Wisdom's choice of words is always intentional. He even at times announces that he is using words of a "clinical flavour"[384] or that he is saying a certain thing to make his argument more impressive in order to, finally, avoid boredom.[385] Wisdom is as conscious of his transgressions as he is of his occasional yielding to linguistic conformity with the mode of the day. When in his "Review of

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discussion never to end and dreads its ending. Have you not quite often had this impression with philosophers?—philosophers other than ourselves, for we, of course, are never neurotic." (P. 172)

[382] Ibid. 125

[383] Ibid. 230

[384] Ibid. P. 171

[385] Ibid. P. 115

Waddington's Science and Ethics" Wisdom realizes that his exposition may be found too cryptic by his fellow analysts he translates it "in jargon."[386] This time around the trick of versatility is not meant to impress but, ostensibly, educate his colleagues that there are other ways to phrase than what is commonly found expedient.

What remains unannounced by Wisdom and yet in full view is the richness of his vocabulary, drawn from almost any lexical treasury imaginable. Apart from the language of psychoanalysis the appropriation of which Wisdom discusses overtly, he often employs terms borrowed from art history, natural science, literature, and theology. Among his references are the Bible, Proust, Freud, de Chirico, Wilde, Newton, Dostoyevski, Picasso, Goethe etc. This does not betray a pretense of urbanity but, rather, constitutes a conscious effort to break decorum. When in the very first sentence of "Philosophy, Anxiety and Novelty" Wisdom states that "every philosophical question is really a request for a description of a class of animals" he quickly admits the statement's logical and verbal impropriety. He then explains that such pronouncements are just the kind of novel, and most often false, contributions to the philosophical mill that make its movement possible.[387]

If the statement about looking for classes of animals is improper, then some other statements and wordings in Wisdom border on scandalous. Such is, for example, his suggestion that "a goat is an animal in which cow, sheep and antelope vanish into one another."[388] A similarly otherworldly—or, worse yet, too painfully relevant to our

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[386] Ibid. P. 106

[387] "But these improprieties are not without a purpose: they reveal what is known but hidden. They wouldn't reveal if they weren't novel; in other words, they wouldn't reveal if they weren't wrong." (Ibid. P. 112)

[388] Ibid. P. 148

world—utterance is his “Shall we become Fascists?” given as an example in a discussion of the difference between accepting a theory and believing in it. Another, and borderline incomprehensible, question Wisdom asks himself at one point is “Isn’t the Primavera what it is, in part because in the face of the Flora are so many Springs?”[389] Of course in all cases the context justifies the particular uses and partly pacifies the possible outrage. Partly, because our eventual understanding of them does not at all undermine Wisdom’s ongoing effort to rejuvenate the language of philosophy. Even when he says ridiculous things like “’In vino veritas’…but the pubs close at 10.” he says them conscientiously, with full awareness of the havoc their inclusion may wreak in his readership, but also of the benefit such havoc can potentially have for the emancipation of the same readers from a self-imposed linguistic harness.

The Picture That Counts

I have done my best to reconstruct Wisdom’s idea of what philosophy does and what it wants to do. The ‘should’ implied in Wisdom’s search and in his vocabulary is simple and everywhere evident—philosophy should take care to know itself. It is this, and not an opening of the gates of logic, that will help Moore and Ayer avoid the impasses they reach in favor of other even more productive impasses. It is also such knowledge that will prevent Searle from sanctioning other philosophies on the unexamined grounds of his own. A quality of insight that has escaped early analytic philosophy and its heirs is that it must be fully open-ended. All of metaphysics, positivism, skepticism, psychoanalysis, deconstruction etc. are somewhat flawed. But according to Wisdom’s idea of philosophy they are all *happily* flawed in that they all are

[389] Ibid. P. 109

inexhaustible sources of philosophical insight. The corresponding languages fail the test *happily*, too—but so does the language of even the most meticulous philosopher. This much is hinted at by Moore when he admits that though there are many propositions that we can bring ourselves to understand, very few of them can be analyzed. The solution, even though Moore seems to hope otherwise, will not come from the radical overhaul of language proposed by positivists and analysts alike. A solution is simply not needed and, on Wisdom's psychological reading of the philosopher, it is not wanted either.

If we now go back to Wisdom's two cryptic pronouncements that I proposed to use as a frame for my discussion, we seem better able to understand them. "The style that stupefies" is the surface of speech in whose light and shadow the philosopher thrives. "The picture that counts" is not one that establishes a fast analogy between Socrates' and Van Gogh's contributions to progress, but the one which allows us to be stricken by each prominent figure before, and despite, their prominence. Being exposed to an object or a word afresh can be confusing but is always penetrating. And contemplating the surface of objects and words might be the first step to delving into their depths. The surface Wisdom opens for our viewing pleasure is not rid of theories and presuppositions but, at least, by virtue of its scrupulously developed self-image it is a surface that shows significantly more than it hides.

Moonstruck

(Stanley Cavell is a philosopher the discussion of whom is almost as risky as the reading of his beguiling prose. Almost, because reading Cavell is an especially dangerous enterprise—a danger manifested in Cavell's uncanny knowingness which is bound to

remind any reader of their own cultural limitations, in his philosophical acuity which oftentimes produces the impression that Cavell's lines of reasoning are, and should be by right, untouchable for any less extraordinary mind, and in his *way with words* and specifically the thorny exercise of repurposing our thinking mandated by Cavell's formidable vocabulary and brought along by his subtle subversions of common grammar and sentence structure. To claim to have understood Cavell seems to be a prerequisite for writing about him. And, yet, in these last parts of my chapter I will allow myself to *trust* Cavell while refraining from the confidence that I have sufficiently understood him. One way in which I will try to legitimize this procedure is by referring only to those arguments in Cavell that in my mind have direct bearing on my study, thus leaving out what is most substantially identified as his contribution to philosophy. The other way in which I propose to do this is by looking at Cavell's language from a limited standpoint and not in the manner of thoroughness and sophistication that it deserves.)

The issues with reference to which Cavell enters my study are, yet again, those of philosophical language, understandability, and intellectual inheritance. The ways such issues were handled by Wisdom were very much subjected to Wisdom's meta-philosophy—his search for a discipline at the crossroads between what a geographically and historically defined philosophy did and what it wanted to do. With Cavell it is at once easier and more difficult to locate philosophy. It is easier because he possesses, and allows himself to celebrate, a healthier distance from the early and more dogmatic thrusts of analytic thought. But, at the same time, locating philosophy for Cavell involves concerns of layering and confusion of inheritances which could have been foreseen by Wisdom, but were not yet *seen* by him. The main similarity between the two

philosophers is that they care to devote time and ink to the study of what philosophy is and, a corollary to this effort, that they both, in argument and word, stand witness to the existence and importance of the *text* of philosophy.

What is uniquely Cavell's is his audacity to try and thrive on the border between philosophy and literature. John Hollander, in his "Stanley Cavell and "The Claim of Reason"" locates Cavell at this border and tries to explore the location's utility for philosophy. One observation Hollander makes is that Cavell's method and his interests are not burdened by the literary but are informed by it. In this book of what Hollander calls "extraordinary language philosophy"[390] Cavell brings our attention to how philosophers write and why they do so. But Cavell's real feat is not in discussing the language and motivation of philosophy—it is in his justification of this discussion's place *within* philosophy. One insight of Hollander's that I find invaluable in understanding Cavell's justification is the observation that Cavell, unlike the poetic rhetorician, never once offers a taxonomy of literary devices and the like. Another important observation Hollander makes is that Cavell "knows that the epistemological quest for certainty is itself—unwittingly, of course—part of a complex allegorical poem."[391] This shows Cavell's quest no more poetic than Quine's quest becomes when, in a wink to Lewis Carroll's literary imagination, he chooses ""McX" and "Wyman" to serve as the eternal *A* and *B* of exemplification."[392] The difference is not in the poetic or in each philosopher's attitude to it, but in the fact that Cavell, unlike Quine, is willing and able to pursue the poetic for the sake of understanding philosophy.

[390] Hollander, John. "Stanley Cavell and "The Claim of Reason"" *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Summer, 1980), P. 581
[391] Ibid. P. 584
[392] Ibid. P. 582

In “Who Disappoints Whom?”—his short retort to a lecture by Allan Bloom—Cavell argues that the common understanding of the differences between philosophy and literature often falls victim to “vulgar confusions.”[393] This argument speaks to the charge, too often heard over the span of the twentieth century but very rarely substantiated, that one man’s philosophy is another man’s literature which persists to this day.[394] That in Cavell’s sense the word ‘vulgar’ is synonymous with ‘careless’ and ‘irresponsible’ can be gleaned from both Cavell’s arguments and his example of how to do philosophy. One concrete argument he advances in the same essay begins with Cavell’s recollection that the positivist heritage made it possible in the late forties and fifties for the reading of texts to be regarded as “a hobby in comparison with the serious business of analyzing and solving problems.”[395] This according to Cavell gives rise to a conflation of the distrust of reading, a healthy and positive part of the philosophical spirit, with “the refusal or incomprehension of reading”[396] which is something different altogether. Reading the text of philosophy, with the “philosophical seasoning” of distrust, is for Cavell not a quaint lost art but a philosophical necessity and a critical one at that. And yet, the seasoning of distrust, when made programmatic and inherited unknowingly is bound to turn into something else that is more radical and, in fact, negative.

It is through the lens of such fine distinctions that Cavell reconsiders the work of philosophy and its historical self-image. Apart from his arguments, the same distinctions emerge in Cavell’s own approach to philosophy. The most telling example of this in “Who Disappoints Whom?” is Cavell’s comparison between opera and film. The

[393] Cavell, Stanley. “Who Disappoints Whom?” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Spring, 1989), P. 610
[394] In my experience as a graduate student I have had philosophy instructors refer severally to Hume, Nietzsche, Bergson, and Derrida as writers of literature.
[395] Ibid. P. 608
[396] Ibid. P. 608

relevance of the example to the question of reading is brought home by Cavell's observation that the relation between high and low culture is as stagnant and in dire need of examination as that between philosophy and literature. Cavell is conscious and possibly proud of the scandal his analogy might cause ("I wonder what Bloom would think of the proposition…"[397]) but he is equally present to its critical pertinence. And if there is enough to say philosophically about the continuities between opera and film, something which Cavell handsomely proves elsewhere, why should not we tackle the continuities between philosophy and literature in similarly inclusive ways?

The question of choice in how we write philosophy and how we write about it is another one that stimulates Cavell. In his "Something Out of the Ordinary," the lecture which I have referred to as the place where Cavell proves that talking philosophically of the continuities between opera and film is possible, he tackles the question of choice in a masterly roundabout way—by quoting Dewey quoting Emerson.[398] There are a few different strands in this elaborate citation and each of them carries an important implication as to the nature of philosophy and its self-presence to a language. The first implication, in the words of Emerson quoted by Dewey, is reminiscent of the burden of Kant's definition of enlightenment as "the use of one's own intelligence without being guided by another." As I point out earlier, Preston uses this definition to invite caution against conformity to a way of thinking. Via Dewey's reading of Emerson Cavell extends

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[397] Ibid. P. 609

[398] "As Emerson says in his essay on "Self-Reliance": "A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within,…Else to-morrow a stranger will say with masterly good sense precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be forced to take with shame our own opinion from another."…Language does not help us at this point; rather the habits of our vocabulary betray us… To know what the words mean we have to forget the words and become aware of the occasions when some idea truly our own is stirring within us and striving to come to birth." (Cavell, Stanley. "Something out of the Ordinary." *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, Vol. 71, No. 2 (Nov., 1997), P. 23)

the problem of conformity onto the field of language—when Dewey cautions that "the habits of our vocabulary betray us" Cavell reads the expression as indicating what he calls "experience lost or missed."[399] In this latter figure I see Cavell's warning of the expected result of succumbing to a language. Fighting the forces of such habit is often the object of analytic philosophy, but succumbing to other forces of other linguistic habits is equally at work beneath the veneer of analytic clarification. The clue to Cavell's stand on this matter is found in the last sentence of Dewey's argument where he suggests that we must forget words in order to claim a new cognitive experience. Later in the essay Cavell contrasts this forgetting of words with "an effort to transcend or to purify speech" which ends by "depriving the human speaker of a voice in what becomes his… fantasy of knowledge."[400] Cavell cites the work of Austin and Wittgenstein as constituting an attempt to bring that voice back without bringing it back to any place familiar. The historical figures he contrasts them to are Ayer and Quine, whose prominence in the analytic pantheon is beyond question.

But this only scratches the surface of the initial question of the choice philosophers make. In Part One of his *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell introduces his idea of something he calls "the economics of speech."[401] He is prompted to thinking about the creation of vocabularies by his realization that *the way* one speaks is not a "shuttling of fortune" but is the result of calculation. And this calculation for Cavell is based on allegiances and interests far from noble and rational.[402] A counterpoint for this is

[399] Ibid. P. 24
[400] Ibid. P. 28
[401] Cavell, Stanley. *The Claim of Reason*. Oxford University Press, New York 1999. P. 94
[402] "If we formulate the idea that valuing underwrites asserting as the idea that interest informs telling or talking generally, then we may say that the degree to which you talk of things, and talk in ways, that hold

presented for Cavell in the case of modern art—its lack of "history, convention, genre, form, medium, physiognomy, composition" purifies the connection between desire and expression in modern art. Choosing a language in modern art and the critical means of discussing this language are thus determined only by a "strictness or scrupulousness of artistic desire."[403] Cavell transposes this observation onto philosophy using the example of Wittgenstein whose philosophical motivation Cavell recognizes as confluent with his style. Cavell's other example is Thoreau in whom the economics of language is not based on theoretic calculation but is bound only by the pressing urgency of what Thoreau wants his philosophy to do. One negative example, given by way of quotation at the beginning of Part Four of *The Claim of Reason*, is that of Moore's task-oriented approach to philosophy. Moore does a great disservice to his reader or listener by obviating the question of desire altogether. While he keeps a narrowly obsessive focus on the task at hand, he risks not only misunderstanding but also a sense of secrecy or mystique that is hardly consistent with his hope for clarifying language.[404] What emerges from these examples is the notion that we are as present to our language as we are to our desires unless, as Cavell suggested in "Who Disappoints Whom?", our language or our desires fail to be originally ours.

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no interest for you…is the degree to which you consign yourself to nonsensicality, stupify yourself." (Ibid. P. 95)

[403] Ibid. P. 95

[404] The quotation in question is from I.A. Richards and it recounts the impression Moore's method left on his immediate audience: "[G.E. Moore] was not like any other lecturer I have heard or heard of. He made you sure that what was going on mattered enormously—without your necessarily having even a dim idea as to what it could be that was going on. We were, in truth, undergoing an extraordinarily powerful influence, not one that I would suppose Moore could for a moment conceive. He was not at all interested in that. He was interested in the problem in hand: more interested in it than, I think, I have ever seen anyone interested in anything." (Ibid. P. 327)

Fear and Loathing

The possibility of failing to own one's desires and words is best explored in conjunction with the question of philosophical inheritance. As I hope to have shown, different modes of inheritance have their share in the outlining of different philosophies. Some of what is handed down from previous philosophy makes space for new philosophy and other gifts, as it were, fix the sent to the sender. In Cavell, as in Wisdom, the question of inheriting becomes a question of self-presence. In other words, inheritance is "ambiguous and obscure in its effects"[405] only as much as it is unexamined. And how are we to examine what is handed down and our mode of receiving it? One way of doing this Cavell suggests is by differentiating the substance of the gift from its provenance. Cavell does this in his essay on Benjamin where he finds affinities between him and Wittgenstein *despite* the long-internalized difference in the respective philosophical pedigrees. Cavell notices that inheritance is bound by betrayal so that his own interest in Wittgenstein and Austin is stimulated by these thinkers' allegiance to the analytic tradition but just as much by their refusal of the same tradition. The joy of overlap is suggested to be much less instructive than the critical stance afforded by difference. It is through this fissure of difference, great but not fatally so, that Benjamin gains entrance to Cavell's study of Wittgenstein. It is also, as I argue in Chapter IV, through a similar fissure that Derrida earns his much-contested place as a legitimate commentator of Austin.

Another avenue in examining what we inherit and how we inherit is open by our acknowledgment of the inner diversity of what is handed down to us. What this brings

[405] Cavell, Stanley. "Austin at Criticism." *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 74, No. 2 (Apr., 1965), P. 205

attention to is the fact that intellectual heritages are literally *mixed bags* of postulates, beliefs and vocabularies. Cavell points to this by reference to Wordsworth's realization that there is no perverseness greater than being taught a system.[406] A simple example of this is that when referring to Wittgenstein if one does not carefully distinguish between *which* Wittgenstein is being referred to confusion is bound to ensue. I for my part have made the mistake occasionally with the hope that the particular context will reveal the true identity of my respective referent. And, yet, this hope is empty if my reader is insufficiently attuned to the accepted separation between an early and a later Wittgenstein.

Hope and acceptance, or better yet the hope of acceptance, are thus crucial to inheriting and being inherited. Cavell signals this in his discussion of Freud, whose interest in being inherited has been analyzed by Derrida as a fear of the impossibility of inheritance. In agreement with Derrida Cavell suggests that, unlike science, philosophy and psychoanalysis are indeed mixed bags whose contents might not be teachable in any straightforward way.[407] That thought is teachable is recognized by Cavell to be a popular pretense of Anglo-American philosophy and on account of this pretense thinkers such as Wittgenstein and Heidegger are held at a safe distance. Against this difference the real hope of philosophy shines through in a peculiar light—while we say we want to be understood what we really hope for is to be accepted. Our inheriting of previous philosophy is, consequently, a way of securing our place in a lineage, of being requited

[406] "For to be mistaught is worse than to be untaught; and no perverseness equals that which is supported by systems, no errors are so difficult to root out as those which the understanding has pledged its credit to uphold." (Cavell, Stanley. *The Claim of Reason*. Oxford University Press, New York 1999. P. 327)

[407] While capitalizing on some agreements between Cavell and Derrida in my exposition I stand far from the claim that there is any general agreement between the two philosophers. For an in-depth analysis of the differences and continuities between the two, see Bearn, Gordon. "Sounding Serious: Cavell and Derrida." *Representations*, No. 63 (Summer, 1998), pp. 65-92

retroactively by those whom we accept. It is to be expected that such anxiety will blind the philosopher to *what* she inherits, as I hope to have demonstrated in my discussions of Searle. And while every thinker of old has operated on a system of thought, whatever various insights such systems offer are best inherited separately. It is important here to note that Cavell, when he claims Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's heritage, does so by parceling its questions apart from its answers. It is mostly the questions—of the nature of philosophy, of how to do philosophy, of the possibility of teaching thought etc.—that Cavell gladly inherits. Ultimately, the student of philosophy is ideally, as I read Cavell, left alone by his teachers.

These thoughts apply just as strongly to the inheriting of a philosophical language. In Cavell's discussion of Freud I have referred to, the inheritance of language is equated to a "game of repetition and dominance."[408] A similar picture of how we acquire words is the one Wittgenstein starts his *Investigations* with—Augustine's child stealing (Cavell's term) words from his elders. As to the latter picture Cavell reminds us something Wittgenstein does not articulate, i.e. that the child's process of learning is predicated not on the desire to speak like adults but on wanting to *be* like them.[409] The danger here, as I see it exemplified in the practices of analytic philosophy, is that even if certain philosophers do not want to be like their predecessors the wholesale adoption of their elders' vocabularies results in such continuity of desire. Going back to repetition and dominance, it is not surprising that the simile Cavell borrows from Freud is of the game the father and the grandfather play—repetition being a requirement for being

[408] Cavell, Stanley. "Freud and Philosophy: A Fragment." *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 13, No. 2, The Trial(s) of Psychoanalysis (Winter, 1987), P. 389
[409] Cavell, Stanley. *The Claim of Reason*. Oxford University Press, New York 1999. P. 176

understood and dominance for being accepted and for accepting oneself.[410] But this interplay of repetition and dominance is not philosophy's own—it belongs properly to science, "our modern paradigm of the teachable,"[411] because only in science it is ever productive to simply repeat the patterns and language of dominant theory. What Cavell proposes for how philosophy is to inherit a language is a different procedure altogether, more akin to Derrida's function of iterability, a repetition with *variation*:

> "In philosophizing, I have to bring my own language and life into imagination. What I require is convening of my culture's criteria, in order to confront them with my words and life as I pursue them and as I may imagine them; and at the same time to confront my words and life as I pursue them with the life my culture's words may imagine for me: to confront the culture with itself, along the lines in which it meets in me."[412]

This reminds me of Cavell's contention that in Austin "other words, compared and distinguished, tell what a given word is about."[413] If this is so, then of course we cannot inherit a language *en masse*—at pain of inheriting pieces of a puzzle that is not ours to put together or, worse yet, of inheriting a puzzle fixed where every word has only one sense, one application, and one purpose. What Cavell reads in Austin, and what Derrida celebrates in the implications of Austin's work, is that our words only mean anything when surrounded by other words of ours. Our attention to how the meaning of a word is to be determined is an exercise of our imagination over the field of inheritance, a

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[410] "I would like to say that the topic of our attachment to our words is allegorical of our attachment to ourselves and to other persons." (Ibid. P. 355)

[411] Cavell, Stanley. "Freud and Philosophy: A Fragment." *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 13, No. 2, The Trial(s) of Psychoanalysis (Winter, 1987), P. 389

[412] Cavell, Stanley. *The Claim of Reason*. Oxford University Press, New York 1999. P. 125

[413] Cavell, Stanley. "Austin at Criticism." *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 74, No. 2 (Apr., 1965), P. 210

procedure where repetition is only useful in the service of variation. Ultimately, the procedure proposed is closer to creating a language than inheriting one. But this, as Cavell suggests, does not mean forgetting what is inherited as Moore so obviously does. Instead, in the process of creation we should methodically glance back at the culture and the language that make the confrontation of our new words possible.

The Logic of Discovery

"And what kind of choice do we have about accepting a form of language?" Cavell asks in Part Two of *The Claim of Reason*. In way of approaching an answer to this question Cavell brings out Kant's reminder of the limitation of our reason, i.e. that "reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own."[414] In agreement with this Cavell argues that "we can accept or reject whatever in language *we* can construct." But this should not, and does not for Cavell, mean that we are in any way confined by language. On the contrary—our freedom is a function of our willingness and ability to continually tamper with language, others' and our own. Cavell proposes Thoreau, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche as paragons of such tampering. Significantly, in light of Wisdom's imperatives, these same philosophers are singled out by Cavell for their "acquaintance with the topic of self-knowledge."[415] And, conversely, Cavell draws a parallel between the lack of self-knowledge and the acceptance of a ready-made language in the statement: "Ignorance of myself is something I must work at; it is something

[414] Ibid. P. 242

[415] "If so, this serves to explain why the writing on the part of those who have some acquaintance with the topic of self-knowledge—Thoreau or Kierkegaard or Nietzsche, for example—takes the form it does, of obsessive and antic paradox and pun, above all maddening irony. As if to write toward self-knowledge is to war with words, to battle for the very weapons with which you fight." (Ibid. P. 352)

studied, like a dead language."[416] On both extremes the implications of choice are clear—one has to make a choice to either fight language or to be sedated by a "dead language." The greatest palpable difference being that in the second case our lack of self-knowledge tends to conceal our choice from us.

In Part One of *The Claim to Reason* Cavell gestures at one explanation for how the latter choice is made possible. In a section where he introduces the topic of criteria in Wittgenstein, Cavell parenthetically suggests that the customary distinction in professional philosophy between ways of discovery and methods of proof has a role in how we go about doing philosophy, a role which is easily underestimated. If there is anything like the logic of discovery and conviction, we lack the instruments to develop it. Instead, by tradition or inheritance, we look at discovery and conviction from a merely psychological perspective.[417] Cavell again uses Wittgenstein as an example of how we can think of discovery in a more determined way. Wittgenstein's criteria, according to Cavell, are "necessary *before* the identification or knowledge of an object."[418] What this means is that in order to discover an object or to be convinced of our knowledge of it we have to work on some preconceived, or most often unconcieved of, rule for what *counts* as discovery and conviction. I am here again reminded of Wittgenstein's observation that looking for something always involves the assumption of what 'looking for' means—a rule, a method, a logic etc. In the same spirit what Cavell suggests is that under the guise of discovery and surprise there lies a choice of method or logic, and I believe Cavell's

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[416] Ibid. P. 385
[417] "We are, or until recently were, so drilled in the knowledge of the difference between ways of discovery and modes of proof, that it is hard for us to conceive what a logic of discovery or conviction could be: such things can have no logic, only a psychology." (Ibid. P. 17)
[418] Ibid. P. 17

philosophy is partly an effort to unveil the specific choices which, once made, continue to elude us.

Going back to how, if at all, we choose our language, I turn to Cavell's essay "Austin at Criticism" which has relevant insight to contribute to a possible answer. In Austin's "Excuses" Cavell finds Austin referring to the "over-simplification, schematization, and constant obsessive repetition of the same small range of jejune 'examples'…far too common to be dismissed as an occasional weakness of philosophers."[419] On a personal note, from my perspective, if whoever crossed the Rubicon never did again in a philosophical discussion, philosophy will be none the poorer. The observation is not only valid but came, by the time Austin made it and by his own admission, some fifty years too late. Austin attributes the endemic weakness he talks about partly "to an obsession with a few particular words, the uses of which are over-simplified, not really understood or carefully studied or correctly described."[420] I take this as a hint that the question how and why we choose *these* words is intimately connected with their longevity, i.e. with the question why we would be satisfied to operate on a fossilized vocabulary at all. Cavell's answer to the second question is, as we have seen, that philosophers are often blinded by the assumption of significance and authority as to matters of words and deeds. This paints a psychological complacency not unlike the one registered by Wisdom in his study of how paradox and discovery are avoided by philosophers.

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[419] Cavell, Stanley. "Austin at Criticism." *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 74, No. 2 (Apr., 1965), P. 214
[420] Ibid. P. 214

How we get to something like Wisdom's diagnosis, according to Austin, is by denying ourselves the "fun of discovery, the pleasure of cooperation, and the satisfaction of reaching agreements."[421] This touches again on the little I have borrowed from Shoshana Felman's study of Austin in Chapter IV. The philosophy of fun, to which no doubt Austin, Wisdom, Cavell and Derrida willingly belong, is surrounded by a ditch made not of criticism but of denial. What we often deny other philosophers is the possibility that what they find pleasurable can also be instructive. The way such denial plays out is shown by Cavell in a reference to Hampshire. Hampshire, in his discussion of Austin's novel distinctions, expresses the opinion that they drain accepted philosophical theses and comparisons of philosophical interest.[422] To Cavell such draining out does not and should not mean that Austin is having too much fun at the expense of philosophy—on the contrary, Austin's discoveries and the *style* of his presentation are best regarded as providing new material for philosophical investigation.[423] In effect, Wisdom's call for reassessment of philosophy's self-image is echoed by Cavell in terms of reassessing philosophy's language.

A few of my intuitions about Cavell and some of my uncertain claim of understanding him are informed by Timothy Gould's book on Cavell, *Hearing Things: Voice and Method in the Writing of Stanley Cavell*. To Gould I owe my attention to Cavell's "economy of speech," to Cavell's agreement with Derrida on the issue of self-

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[421] Ibid. P. 214
[422] Ibid. P. 208, fn. 5
[423] "Part of Hampshire's suggestion is that accepted philosophical theses and comparisons are drained, set against Austin's distinctions, of philosophical interest (cf. p. iv). This is a familiar enough fact of contemporary philosophizing, and it suggests to me that one requirement of new philosophical answers is that they elicit a new source of philosophical interest, or elicit this old interest in a new way. Which is, perhaps, only a way of affirming that a change of *style* in philosophy is a profound change, and itself a subject of philosophical investigation." (Ibid. P. 208, fn. 5)

presence, and to the importance of lending a voice to other philosophies and one's own. Of course, Gould has a lot more to say about everything I have discussed and he also sometimes says things I do not agree with. But, for the purposes of my study, there are two points of his I would not like missed. The first is Gould's observation, via Cavell, that "inside the career of a single writer, there is no such thing as meta-philosophy."[424] The scandal of this to my study is that it contradicts the healthy forces of self-imaging that I find in Wisdom and heartily support. What Gould is getting at, however, is not a rejection of meta-philosophy, but something else. When Gould says that "there is no place from which to get outside your work and assess its progress and its obstacles,"[425] he implies that knowing oneself is difficult. But the second point of his I want to draw attention to puts this difficulty in a different light and effectively renders it surmountable.

At the beginning of his book, Gould voices the following concern: "Why, when a philosopher is raising the question of the limits of philosophy and its modes of expression, does it seem necessary to enact the transgression of those limits?"[426] Cavell is obviously a practitioner of such transgression. As to its necessity for outlining the limits of philosophy and its language, I think that Cavell's example leaves no place for valid objection. How else will we know ourselves, how else will we unpack the gifts of our predecessors, how else will we learn to *speak our mind*, but by constantly redrawing the grounds of philosophy? In Wisdom and Cavell we do not see two blazing success stories, but simply, and what is more than enough, two stories of how philosophy can get reacquainted with itself and thus domesticate its fear of unintelligibility.

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[424] Gould, Timothy. *Hearing Things: Voice and Method in the Writing of Stanley Cavell*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1998. P. 67

[425] Ibid. P. 67

[426] Ibid. P. 3

Jive Talkin'

> "It is a ridiculous demand which England and America make, that you shall speak so that they can understand you. Neither man nor toadstools grow so…As if there is safety in stupidity alone. I fear chiefly lest my expression may not be extra-vagant enough, may not wander far enough beyond the narrow limits of my daily experience, so as to be adequate to the truth of which I have been convinced. *Extra vagance!* It depends on how you are yarded."[427]

The loose talker, a figure whose special merit for philosophy Austin recognizes[428] and I have referred to in Chapter IV, re-enters the general picture, and my project in particular, in the person of Cavell. But before any reconsideration of this figure and its role in philosophy, it is instructive to give one more example of the forces of resistance it has faced historically. In Hampshire's essay on Austin, the same one that Cavell cites from, the thesis is advanced that Austin favors a "plain, under-laborer's style" over the "dramatic rhetoric of philosophers" and "that further exploitation of personality which has been such a comical, and perhaps harmful, feature of contemporary philosophy."[429] Clearly, if Hampshire has to identify which style is a truer example of loose talking, it would not be Austin's. And yet, paradoxically, in addition to admitting congeniality for

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[427] I owe my knowledge of this excerpt from Thoreau to Hollander who cites it in full in the essay I discuss above.
[428] "A disagreement as to what we should say is not to be shied off, but to be pounced upon: for the explanation of it can hardly fail to be illuminating. If we light an electron that rotates the wrong way, that is a discovery, a portent to be followed up, not a reason for chucking physics: and by the same token, a genuinely loose or eccentric talker is a rare specimen to be prized."
[429] Rorty, Richard, Ed. *The Linguistic Turn*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1992. P. 247

this category, Austin himself easily qualifies as a loose talker by virtue of his interminable new distinctions and examples. His very contribution to philosophy, as witnessed by Hampshire and Cavell, is the *change*, a loosening of sorts he brings about in the method and language of philosophy.

What this should awake us to, if it has not yet, is that categories such as the loose talker, even when identified differently or left silent, are part of the implied normative structure of philosophy's self-image. A corollary of this realization, especially in light of Searle's treatment of Derrida, is that such normative categories do betray a normative structure but they do not explain or justify it. To the understanding of this structure Cavell contributes greatly in his "Silences Noises Voices." In this short essay Cavell addresses claims of impropriety and indecorousness as often applied to his style of writing. For the sake of brevity and at pain with analyzing Cavell much less adequately than he does himself I will confine my discussion of Cavell's language to his self-assessment in this important respect. Another reason for my refusal to analyze Cavell's language, even to the little extent I have afforded myself to do so with other thinkers elsewhere in my project, is that Cavell's own conclusions about the issues of language and style are much more valuable to my study as a whole than whatever particular insight may be gained by parceling his words.

The grounding distinction of Cavell's treatment of the normative structure of philosophy is that between propriety and decorum—"the improper risks nonsense, or emptiness, say estrangement; the indecorous courts excess, or outlandishness, say

exile."[430] Cavell, being subjected to both charges, deals with each of them in the context of his work and its reception.[431] The mark of impropriety, by his own admission, is everywhere stamped on his continuing demonstration of his "investment with words." What this means is that Cavell is *happily* explicit and indulgent about the philosophical predicament which Wisdom identifies in the statement that "all philosophic statements are, of course, made *in* words."[432] Less in manner of defense and more as a useful reminder, Cavell refers to Austin and the later Wittgenstein to whom such preoccupations and indulgences are not foreign.[433] Moreover, Cavell's quick brushing off of the charge of impropriety signals the belief that being present to one's interest in language and to one's vocabulary has yet to be substantively qualified as a philosophical flaw.

The second charge, of indecorousness, leads Cavell's critics to the counting of words and the weighing of sentence clauses. And certainly, Cavell's prose is difficult in that it proves a treasure trove for anyone whose distrust for reading is reduced to assessing the magnitude of an author's transgressions. Such distrust is again limited to what Cavell elsewhere identifies as "the refusal or incomprehension of reading." Why would anyone refuse such a thing, the communion with another human being in a text? By now we must allow that the analyst's excuse that she has more important work on her hands is empty. The analyst's pursuit of truth is not exempt from her fantasy of a life of

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[430] Floyd, Juliet, Sanford Shieh, Eds. *Future Pasts, The Analytic Tradition in Twentieth-Century Philosophy*. Oxford University Press, New York 2001. P. 355

[431] Efforts to identify Cavell as doing theory rather than philosophy are aptly analyzed in: Kronick, Joseph G. "Telling the Difference: Stanley Cavell's Resistance to Theory." *American Literary History*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Spring, 1993), pp. 193-200; Conant, James. "On Bruns, on Cavell." *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Spring, 1991), pp. 616-634

[432] Wisdom, John. *Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969. P. 3

[433] Floyd, Juliet, Sanford Shieh, Eds. *Future Pasts, The Analytic Tradition in Twentieth-Century Philosophy*. Oxford University Press, New York 2001. P.

truth, just like the skeptic's pursuit of doubt is not exempt from the fantasy of a life of knowledge. And where these fantasies show is on the human body and in the text of the philosopher. Cavell agrees with Freud that no human being can keep a secret because "betrayal oozes out of him at every pore."[434] And the secret the philosopher is always trying to hide is his disappointment with the inadequacies of his own fantasy—what the philosopher *wants* to achieve is "closure or order or sublimity in our concepts."[435] This is, ostensibly, what prompts Cavell's critics to count words—looking for a piece of clarity or closure in someone else's welcome failure. Cavell fails happily. Indecorousness, if it can only be sanctioned through a phantasm of the impossible, becomes valuable. As Cavell suggests, before we have a concept of the general form human folly takes, all forms of inquiry that expose or investigate its nature are to be treasured.

Wisdom's and Cavell's transgressions are significant in that they negate very little. They both speak of the limitations of analytic philosophy under no pretense that the rest of philosophy is immune to them. Both thinkers also speak of the limitations of philosophizing under no pretense that they themselves are exempt from them. Being at peace with philosophy—a goal that is revealed by Wisdom and Cavell to require all of self-presence, intellectual autonomy, creative imagination, a sense of great responsibility, a weakness for reading, consideration for the subject's history, patience, a healthy irreverence, palpable extra-philosophical interests, humor, and a love of language—is proven in them to be achievable. As to enjoying philosophy, we all have, or must urgently develop, our own idea of how it is to become attainable. To this purpose, I confess I will find joy in seeing philosophy, mine or anyone else's, address such

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[434] Ibid. P. 356
[435] Ibid. P. 357

seemingly non-philosophical questions as why Whitehead would claim that life was a robbery or what Quine meant when he once confessed that he had a taste for desert landscapes. This will constitute another good beginning.

Conclusion

In the preceding chapters I have identified multiple ways in which philosophy can run afoul of itself. It is thus that—against the backdrop of the normative attitude towards language I identify in early analytic philosophy—my project retains a normativity of its own. Lest my normative stance remain unclear, I find it necessary to step out of my own lab and look back at my study from the distance of a broader critical and historical perspective. This conclusion will take several steps in that direction. Firstly, I will revisit my main contentions and my methodological choices. Secondly, I will identify and tackle possible objections to them and my project as a whole. I will then explore some alternatives both to the philosophies I criticize and to my own. All throughout, this conclusion will also constitute an attempt at self-presence—a virtue which in one way or another has bearing on most normative judgments I make in the body of my dissertation. Ascribing attitudes to language to different philosophers carries the challenge of having to explain one's own. The challenge is, however, far outweighed by the possible benefits.

In my project I rely on outlining certain important philosophical distinctions and dismantling others. The first distinction I propose is that between having a philosophical language and attending to it. Differentiating between the two helps introduce the problematic of understandability, i.e. of the possible philosophical avenues one's inventory of words opens for one's readers and inheritors. It also introduces a way of evaluating the successes and failures of philosophers' substantive programs against the backdrop of their linguistic entanglements. My second distinction is that between building a sense of historical perspective into one's philosophy on the one hand and isolating oneself from one's ostensible precursors on the other. This relates to my

interest in how different ways of philosophizing reflect on different approaches to intellectual history. I show that the distinction also bears on the symptomatic reading of trends in the history of philosophy—i.e. that different approaches to the past *reveal* respectively divergent attitudes to philosophy's method and purpose. The third distinction, closely related to our self-presence to a language, is between normativity about content and normativity about form. Such a juxtaposition seems to rely on a neat differentiation between form and content, one that I however do not wish to endorse. In analytic philosophy it is often the custom to derogatorily identify linguistic form as inessential—it is often referred to as "mere ways of speaking" or "window dressing." My dissertation argues for the inseparability of, and the necessary interplay between, content and form. My way of approaching this is by recognizing and studying the historical tendency in many analytic philosophies of refusing any discussion of linguistic form while inadvertently (or sometimes clandestinely) retaining normative claims about it. It is thus that the artificial distinction between explicit normativity about content and implicit normativity about form can be seen as a perceived philosophical expedient for a certain way of philosophizing but not as in any way vindicating the perennially unproductive content/form distinction.

All of these distinctions, upheld or subverted, speak to a picture of analytic philosophy that needs reframing in more general terms. While mounting my critique of the language of early analytic philosophy I have in a piecemeal fashion fleshed out an understanding of what I here choose to call 'the grounding project of analytic philosophy.' At the very center of this project stands the powerful philosophical interest in discovering or creating a language that links up to the world in a one-to-one relation.

This central hope carries with it the imperatives of simplicity and clarity that I have treated of through illustration and analysis. In addition to these, the grounding project is characterized by the search for continuity between philosophy and some forms of empiricism and scientism. The unspoken assumption behind these programmatic moves is that we can, indeed, avail ourselves of a *literal* language that will allow us to, so to speak, capture the world.

There have been, of course, enough exceptions in the history of analytic philosophy, early and late, from this general phantasm. The phantasm itself, however, has been strong and consistent enough to retain at least a partial interest for even the least conformist of analytic philosophers. A case in point is Austin, whose philosophy, as I have shown, gives up the hope for literality but still retains some notion of tight correspondence between language and the world. The trends I identify in early analytic philosophy are thus uniquely its own, but have at the same time been inherited in a piecemeal manner by subsequent generations of analysts. The problem of language, be it as form and content divorced from one another or as form and content collapsed into one, is thus to a large extent also a problem of intellectual inheritance. In laying out the grounding project of early analysis, the interest in philosophical inheritance is often marginalized or discarded on the programmatic intuition that whatever previous philosophy has to say has proven to be inadequate in capturing the world. Not standing witness to one's intellectual background is thus incorporated as a virtue into the making and, most perversely, the inheriting of analytic philosophy.

This confusion between creation and inheritance occurs similarly on the level of language or the philosopher's inventory of words. The focus in early analytic philosophy

on the content of our propositions and their potential to weigh in on a material world proves to be an internal obstacle to any pointed investigation into linguistic form. Even when the window dressing itself is problematized, as it is in Neurath's philosophy, this is done on the assumption that form and content are best thought of as separate. This is why even with Neurath the problem of keeping inventory of one's words, or being present to one's language, is tackled with a blind eye on the impact Neurath's own language has on his substantive arguments. One of the main controversies of my dissertation—my claim that a handful of thinkers best known for their meticulous sensitivity to language fail to be properly cognizant of their own language—is here put in better perspective. The controversy is not mine, but is built into the grounding project of analytic philosophy—as the new linguistic inventory of analysis emerges and takes flight, its success is predicated on the omission of one object from *the world* it is ostensibly used to capture, and that object is the inventory of words itself. This accounts for the tension I have identified all throughout my dissertation between the *actual* language of analytic philosophy and the lurking *ideal* of a perfect language that has remained an undercurrent all throughout its history.

In attending to this tension I have used a method of a somewhat idiosyncratic character—that of tracing the paths of my general claims through some specific case studies or, as I prefer to call them, exhibits. Most of my exhibits are of dialogical/confrontational encounters between different thinkers that I think justify and elucidate the subject of my study. The main virtue of this selective historical approach is that it allows for the pointed and systematic pursuit of my main worries. Still, I have pursued these fully aware of the possibility of mapping out other similar trajectories

through the history of analytic philosophy. It is in fact one of the hopes of my study that such complementary tracings can be supplanted by me or others in the future.

In my dissertation, as part of its own underlying normative structure, different philosophers are given different credit relative to their engagement with the problem of philosophical language and their respective accomplishments thereof. Of the problematic kind—philosophers who exemplify the negative tendencies I have identified—the ones I have dwelt the longest on are Moore, Neurath, the early Wittgenstein and Searle. Of the opposite kind, i.e. those whose arguments accommodate a sense of historical perspective together with the interplay between form and content in philosophical language, I have devoted some pages to the later Wittgenstein, Austin (with partial reservations), Derrida, Wisdom and Cavell. One way in which I can reinforce the reasons for this division, short of repeating the main observations I have followed through with in my exhibits, is to reveal my perception of my own place in the division as it stands. The utility of this is that my normative stance will not only become more concrete but will also assume the shape of a positive recommendation as to how philosophy, and the particular philosophical lineage I trace, can approach the overcoming of the ailments I have identified.

My main interest is in the history of philosophy. The latter remains a somewhat amorphous concept due to the many different approaches and methodologies it is associated with. The most prominent of these practices, as I see them, are those of historiography (the meticulous retelling of significant events in and contributions to philosophy along a strict timeline), the history of ideas (usually, an interpretative selective account of philosophy's greatest achievements along an often arbitrary

timeline), and finally the history of thinkers (research into the career of one or more philosophers and their significance for the perceived progress in the field). All of these practices have one important part in common—they all can be seen as *selective* in their choice of focus and reach. I think that this could not be otherwise because there is no productive sense of 'absolute history' that is available to us.

My engagement with the history of philosophy follows a particular method of selection. It involves three consecutive steps—my recognition of the inspiration I owe to prior thinkers, my attempt to analyze these thinkers and their work, and, finally, my attempt to further develop, through critique and sometimes even subversion, the implications of the philosophies which I thus analyze. What this procedure amounts to is the honoring of prior insight but also, and equally, the creation of insight all my own. In the context of my dissertation, the procedure is readily illustrated by my reliance on the work of the second category of philosophers I have identified above—including but not limited to the later Wittgenstein, Austin, Derrida, Wisdom and Cavell. It is the last two on the list in particular that fit my method and my purpose the best.

My treatment of certain ailments in analytic philosophy is set in motion by what can be understood as a historical intuition. This intuition—that early analytic philosophers and their heirs often neglect keeping inventory of their words—is equally based on my observations on a particular historical playground and on the inspiration of those whom I perceive to be its apt critics. My dissertation thus not only carves out a field of analysis, but also provides the occasion for it. The obvious rift between my critical observations of a particular strand of philosophy and the remedial approaches I propose does not have to end in mutual exclusion. I see Wisdom and Cavell as validating the

project of selective historical critique, the way I engage it, as a manner of fruitfully integrating one's chosen historical background and one's claim to creating insight. This integration is in fact what makes it possible for me, as it does for Wisdom and Cavell, to follow through with intuitions until they solidify as positive philosophical arguments.

What I see Wisdom doing in his *Philosophy and Psychoanalysis* is a direct engagement with the history of early analytic philosophy. In this, Wisdom is in equal parts a critic of and an adherent to the practice of philosophical analysis. The payoff for this double perspective is that Wisdom emerges with a better way of doing analysis against the pool of historical referents he engages. If, as I have shown, early analytic philosophy is lacking in self-awareness as to its language and background, my study and understanding of them can only benefit from Wisdom's critique of the same. The work I do in this respect is at all times alert to a simple limitation of historical consideration—since no such consideration is ever fully realized, Wisdom's critique is to be looked upon as a beginning rather than as the final word on Moore and his contemporaries. My critique, in turn, is similarly, and cheerfully, incomplete—it does not shun further substantiation but does its best to invite it. The ambition of my honoring Wisdom while trying to systematically enhance the import of his work speaks to the very ailments of analytic philosophy my intuition brings to light in the first place. If, for example, Neurath had adopted some of my approach (by way of Wisdom), he would have been better able to tackle the impasses that I identify. This is no minor matter as the general perception of these same impasses is what has relegated Neurath's work to the margins of philosophy. Similarly, if Moore had been more present to the inconsistencies in his own work, via the analysis of his own language and background as recommended by Wisdom and enacted

in my dissertation, Moore's core arguments would have appeared in an altogether different light.

With Cavell, I take the enterprise of learned inspiration even further. Cavell is obviously not explicitly concerned with the beginnings of early analytic philosophy and its particular modes of inheritance. He is, however, most finely attuned to the ailments I identify with reference to philosophy in general. Cavell's historical frame, manifested in his repeated treatments of Emerson, Thoreau, Wittgenstein and Austin, suggests the same limitation of selective historical engagement that I have identified and committed to above. The danger of *not* having such an engagement at all, however, is one of the focal points of caution in Cavell's work. In contrast to the tendency in a large part of analytic philosophy to programmatically avoid historical reference in favor of the purportedly impassionate pursuit of truth, Cavell represents the alternative of truth-seeking as a restless peeling off of the layers of previous thought. The significant break from philosophical tradition, and from the analytic tradition in particular, is that Cavell modifies the criteria for philosophical success to include considerations of philosophical inheritance, philosophical language and philosophical tolerance.

My references to Cavell's work help legitimize my central normative stance, but they also help qualify it. In terms of the latter, I follow Cavell in his contention that philosophy is a collaborative, or as Rorty calls it "conversational," enterprise and that it can only gain from the careful explication of one's allegiances. Cavell shows that self-awareness in philosophy does not have to contradict the truth-seeking imperative of analytic philosophy but is actually a way of redrawing the limits of what truth-seeking is to be understood as. For example, being attentive to the interplay of form and content in

one's language is a constant concern for Cavell. The results such attentiveness yields might seem, at first glance, far less concrete than Moore's claims to truth or Searle's stubborn claims of philosophical impropriety. These results, however, all the while speak to the conditions for success of the respective claims by Moore and Searle. My dissertation's attention to these conditions should be seen as building up from Cavell's inspiration and towards a problematic at once more specific and more general than the one Cavell himself avails himself of.

There are alternative ways of doing philosophy that might appear congenial to my method and point of interest, and not only due to the differences between them and the tradition I have chosen to criticize. Much of continental philosophy, however unhelpful the generalization is in outlining *a school of thought*, relies on the interest in the history and the language of philosophy I advocate in my dissertation. Gadamer's understanding of a 'fusion of horizons,' Ricoeur's hermeneutical phenomenology, and even Derrida's deconstructive technique are all partially relevant to my work here. Still, in some of these philosophies I also see the opposite and not altogether healthy extreme to the ailments of analytic philosophy I have identified. It is, I think, as unproductive for philosophy to obsessively pursue a phantasm of *total* presence to one's language and historical background as it is to refuse the utility of such forms of self-presence altogether. It is, for example, a consequence of the imperative of extreme self-presence that a peculiarly strong trepidation as to the defining of terms or the advancing of arguments in philosophy often threatens to undermine any claim to the creation of insight. Derrida's work is a case in point—it takes stock of our philosophical infirmities so systematically and with such fervor that, in the end, philosophy comes close to being bereaved of its claim to any

subject or purpose. As to the other extreme on this scale, I think my dissertation has provided an adequate introduction into its similarly unwholesome implications for the analytic tradition but also for philosophy as such. Where I see myself as standing on this scale is somewhere in between the two extremes—equally interested in alternative ways of doing philosophy and cognizant of the perils of both phantasms between whose brackets philosophical insight thrives. It is a position not unlike those of Wisdom and Cavell. And yet, it is different, as much in its specific thematic and argumentative limitations as in its proposed positive contributions. There are, after all, many more ways in which philosophy can run afoul of itself than there are studies of why it does it.

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