

*Stirrings of Analytic Pragmatism:*

*Early Writings*

Robert Brandom



## *Stirrings of Analytic Pragmatism: Early Writings*

### **Table of Contents:**

1.	Freedom and Constraint by Norms (1979)	3
2.	Asserting (1983)	13
3.	Truth and Assertibility (1976)	27
4.	Pragmatism, Phenomenalism, and Truth-Talk (1987)	40
5.	Adequacy and the Individuation of Ideas in Spinoza's Ethics (1976)	59
6.	Leibniz and Degrees of Perception (1981)	75
7.	Heidegger's Categories in <i>Being and Time</i> (1983)	108
8.	Points of View and Practical Reasoning (1982)	131

## **Original Publication:**

“Freedom and Constraint by Norms”

*American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (July, 1979), pp. 187-196.

“Asserting”

*Noûs*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (November, 1983), pp. 637-650.

“Truth and Assertibility”

*The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 73, No. 6 (March, 1976), pp. 137-149.

"Pragmatism, Phenomenalism, and Truth Talk"

*Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, Vol 12: Realism, 1988, pp. 75-93.

“Adequacy and the Individuation of Ideas In Spinoza's Ethics”

*Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Volume 14, Number 2, (April 1976), pp. 147-162.

“Leibniz and Degrees of Perception”

*Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Volume 19, Number 4, (October 1981), pp. 447-479.

“Heidegger's Categories in *Being and Time*”

*The Monist*, Vol. 66, No. 3, Categories (July, 1983), pp. 387-409.

“Points of View and Practical Reasoning”

*Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (June, 1982), pp. 321-333.

# Preface

Recently, in conversation, Sequoya Yiaueki asked me whether I had ever thought about collecting my earliest work in a single volume. I initially pooh-poohed the idea, responding that it seemed to me all the published papers were already sufficiently available (for instance, they all could be downloaded from my website, <https://sites.pitt.edu/~rbrandom>)—so there was no reason to assemble them between physical covers. Upon a little reflection, however, it seemed to me that there might indeed be a point to pulling them together, at least in electronic form. Some have not been collected in my other books of essays. And there is a certain thematic unity to them, despite the variety of topics they address. As the title of this volume indicates, one can find in them the first intimations of many ideas I would later develop in more mature works, on topics such as discursive normativity and freedom, pragmatism and social practices, assertion and inference.

I found I was amused that the result consists essentially of the tenure dossier I submitted to my senior colleagues in the philosophy department at Pitt early in the '80s. (A group that included—most frighteningly to me, not only then, but even when I think about it now—my hero Wilfrid Sellars.) There was in fact more stuff in what I had them read then, including the 1980 book, *The Logic of Inconsistency*, that I co-authored with my other Pitt colleague, Nick Rescher, as well as a couple of short logic pieces. But the bulk of it is here. The one exception to that is “Pragmatism, Phenomenalism, and Truth Talk,” which is slightly later than the rest: 1987, when the others were all published in the seven-year period 1976-1983. I chose to include it in place of the similarly-themed “Reference Explained Away,” which belongs better with the rest of the group (having appeared in 1984) on grounds of its being less technical and better echoing themes on view in the other essays of the time. I have arranged the essays thematically, rather than chronologically and begun with the most big-picture, “Freedom and Constraint by Norms.” This was the first thing I wrote after coming to Pittsburgh and emerging from the discipline of finishing my dissertation, and is a particular favorite.

Half of these essays were actually written during my four years as a graduate student at Princeton (1972-1976). “Truth and Assertibility” was a core chapter in my Ph.D. dissertation. The Spinoza piece was the result of immersing myself in his *Ethics* in preparation for the “great philosopher” oral exam required of all first-year students. The Leibniz essay was written as a term paper for Margaret Wilson’s course on that great philosopher, and “Points of View and Practical Reasoning” was my term paper for Philippa Foot’s metaethics seminar. The latter I only even thought about rewriting and submitting for publication in a rush to “clean out all the drawers” prior to my tenure decision. Perhaps it would have been better left interred. But as I was often reminded in my early school years, everything you do is liable to end up “on your permanent record.”

A more seasoned writer, regarding the work of that brown and gold period from the vantage point of this black and silver one, struggling to forgive obtrusive infelicities of expression and conception that would not now pass muster, is somewhat consoled by the still audible echoes of its rallying cry: Contango!

Bob Brandom

Fall Creek Lodge, 2021

### III. FREEDOM AND CONSTRAINT BY NORMS

ROBERT BRANDOM

THE issue of human freedom classically arises in the context of appraisal of action according to norms, when we seek an account of praise and blame, approval and disapproval. The issue of freedom arises again in the political context of an account of the ways in which an individual is and ought to be constrained by norms imposed by his community. One of the most suggestive responses to the first set of concerns has been developed by the Kantian tradition: the doctrine that freedom consists precisely in being constrained by norms rather than merely by causes, answering to what ought to be as well as to what is. Hegel and his admirers, in their turn, have responded to the second sort of concern with an influential doctrine of freedom as consisting of the self-expression made possible by acquiescence in the norms generated by an evolving community (the social synthesis of objective spirit). The central feature determining the character of any vision of human freedom is the account offered of *positive* freedom (freedom to)—those respects in which our activity should be distinguished from the mere lack of external causal constraint (freedom from) exhibited by such processes as the radioactive decay of an atomic nucleus. In this paper I will examine one way of developing Kant's suggestion that one is free just insofar as he acts according to the dictates of norms or principles,<sup>1</sup> and of his distinction between the Realm of Nature, governed by causes, and the Realm of Freedom, governed by norms and principles. Kant's transcendental machinery—the distinction between Understanding and Reason, the free noumenal self expressed somehow as a causally constrained phenomenal self, and so on—can no longer secure this distinction for us. It is just too mysterious to serve as an *explanation* of freedom. Yet some distinction between the realm of facts and the realm of norms must be established if the notion of freedom as normative rather than causal constraint is to be redeemed. In this paper I will present a version of

this distinction which was not envisioned by Kant, and show how a novel response to the dispute between naturalists and non-naturalists concerning the relation of fact to norm can be developed out of that rendering. I will then argue that the account of human freedom which results from this story needs to be supplemented in just the ways in which Hegel claimed Kant's account needed to be supplemented, and will recommend an Hegelian self-expressive successor.

#### I

In order to clarify the difficult issues associated with accounts of human freedom which center on constraint by norms, we will focus our attention on the special case of norm-governed *linguistic* activity. I am not claiming that there are no significant differences between the way judgments of correctness and incorrectness function for linguistic performances and for actions in general, but I do not think we yet know which differences these are. There are certain respects in which we are surer of what we want to say about the norms that govern language-use than we are about other kinds of norms, so it is reasonable to exploit views about linguistic activity to illuminate the broader issues.

What makes a linguistic performance correct or incorrect, an utterance appropriate or inappropriate? Clearly in some sense the practice of the community which uses utterances of that type generates the standards of correctness by which individual tokenings are to be evaluated. The objective truth or falsehood of claim-making utterances need not concern us here, since appropriate utterances may not be true, and true ones may not be appropriate. I have argued elsewhere<sup>2</sup> that the notions of truth and meaning should be understood as theoretical auxiliaries introduced as part of a

<sup>1</sup> I am not concerned to *expound* Kant (or, later, Hegel), but to develop various consequences of quite general features of his views which can be discussed in abstraction from detailed consideration of particular texts.

<sup>2</sup> "Truth and Assertibility," *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 73 (1976), pp. 137–189.

certain kind of theory of the practices of using a language which generate norms of appropriateness. For our present purposes we need not invoke these notions, since we need not delve below the level of the practices which constitute the shared use of a language. That it is actual human social practices which determine the correctness as a linguistic performance of an utterance on some particular occasion is clear from the fact that the community whose language is in question could just as well use some other noise on the relevant occasions.

We can express this point in terms of the *conventionality* of the association of particular vocables with standards of usage, so long as we are not seduced by this form of words into thinking of conventions or rules of usage for linguistic expressions as formulated in some ur-language (even *mentalese*) by the users of the language, an ur-language which they must understand in order to conform to the regularities of usage which constitute the use of the language by that population. We should rather think of those regularities as codified only in the *practices* of competent language-users, including of course the practices of criticizing the utterances of others for perceived failures to conform to the practices governing their linguistic performances and the practices available for adjudicating such disputes as may arise about the appropriateness of some utterance. So long as we think in this way of the norms governing communal usage of linguistic expressions as implicit in the practice of the community, we avoid the pointlessly puzzling regress generated by any rendering of those norms in terms of (linguistically expressed) rules or conventions which must themselves be applied correctly.<sup>3</sup> We can still give whatever causal account we like of the objective capacities in virtue of which individuals are able to engage in the complicated practices we attribute to them, for no regress is generated unless we seek to explain the ability to engage in those linguistic practices in some fashion which appeals to prior linguistic abilities, e.g., the following of a rule.<sup>4</sup>

What sort of a thing is the social practice which embodies a standard of correct and incorrect linguistic usage? Differently put, what makes a given act or utterance an instance of, or performance in accord with, some social practice? Consider a community whose members have a practice of greeting each other with gestures. In virtue of what

is some particular arm-motion produced on an occasion an appropriate greeting-gesture according to the practice of the community? Clearly, just in case the community takes it to be one, that is, treats it like one. The respect of similarity shared by correct gestures and distinguishing them from incorrect ones is just a *response* which the community whose practice the gesture is does or would make. To specify a social practice is just to specify what counts as the community responding to some candidate act or utterance as a correct performance of that practice. The criteria of identity for social practices appeal to the judgment of the community (where "judgement" here is not to be taken as entailing that the response is an explicit verbal evaluation). What the community says or does, goes, as far as the correctness of performances of their own practices are concerned. Classifying the behavior of a community in this way into social practices according to complexly criterioned responses is something that *we* do from the outside, as part of an attempt to understand them. The members of the community need not explicitly split up their activities in the ways we do, though they must do so implicitly, in the sense of responding as we have postulated.

Social practices thus constitute a thing-kind, individuated by communal responses, whose instances are whatever some community takes them to be. *Objective* kinds are those whose instances are what they are regardless of what any particular community takes them to be. *Galaxies more than a hundred light-years from the Earth* is such an objective thing-kind. Linguistic practices determining the appropriateness of utterances on various occasions are social practices rather than objective things according to this classification. It may be that for many of these linguistic practices we cannot specify anthropologically just what it is for the community to treat such an utterance as an appropriate performance (we will have more to say about this issue later, under the heading of translation). But whatever epistemic difficulties of *identification* we may have do not alter the criteria of *identity* of such practices, which consist solely of communal responses to utterances. The language-using community has the last word about the linguistic correctness of the performances of its members. As pointed out before, to say this is not to deny that in addition to appraisals of correctness according to the lin-

<sup>3</sup> See Ludwig Wittgenstein's, *Investigations I*, Section 198 ff.

<sup>4</sup> The distinction between these two sorts of explanation will be our topic in the next section.



guistic social practices one must conform to in order to be speaking the language of the community at all there can be appraisals (for instance of the truth or loudness of an utterance) which concern entirely *objective* features of that utterance—which are what they are independent of the responses of the community to those utterances. Our concern, however, is with those norms conformity to which is a criterion of membership in the linguistic community. The truth of utterances is obviously not one such, else languages would be unlearnable since they would presuppose infallibility. It is, on the other hand, probably a condition of having learned a language containing certain minimal formal devices (the conditional, a truth predicate, etc.) that the majority of one's utterances be *deemed* true by the community. *Taking* something as true is a social practice, not a matter of objective fact, however.

One consequence of the criterial dominion communities enjoy over the social practices they engage in is particularly important for our argument in the next section. Consider what one would have to be able to do in order to characterize a social practice objectively. The practice could be expressed by an objective description of past performances which had been accepted as in accord with the practice (were responded to appropriately), together with an account of the dispositions of the community to respond in the specified manner to future activities. These dispositions would be complex along a number of different dimensions. First, notice that it may well matter in what order different candidate performances come up for consideration. Social practices evolve the way case-law does—an issue may be resolved very differently depending upon where in a chain of precedents it comes up for adjudication. Thus the community may accept an act as in accord with a particular practice, and later refuse to accept acts objectively as similar as you like. In addition to the position of a performance in the tradition of precedent performances which comprise the social practice viewed temporally, we would in general have to take into account the location in the structure of the community at which a performance is initially considered. For the community need not be democratically organized with respect to its social practices. There may be experts with various kinds of special authority with respect to judgments

of the appropriateness of a performance, as is the case in English with the correct use of words like “molybdenum,” or as could well be the case with the determination of the appropriateness of a bride-price in some tribe.<sup>5</sup> The point is that the past decisions of a community as to what accords with a practice of theirs admits of codification in objective rules only with large areas of indeterminacy as to future possible performances. And even complete knowledge of the complex dispositions of the community will enable the filling-in of these indeterminate areas only insofar as we can also predict exactly when and where in the social structure each possible case will actually arise. This is a formidable undertaking. The trouble is that the community has total authority over their own practices, so that even if in the past they have exhibited a strong objective regularity in their responses, they may depart from that regularity with impunity at any time and for any or no reason.

There is another source of difficulty in capturing social practices in objective terms, namely the possibility of *nested* social practices. We have been talking so far as if the response which a community must make or be disposed to make to a putative performance in order for it to be in accord with a social practice were always some objectively characterizable response. The objective expression of a social practice is then a matter simply of being able to predict when that response will be elicited from the community, a difficult but not mysterious enterprise. But what if the response which for us identifies some social practice is not an objective response, but rather some performance which must be in accord with *another* social practice? There is clearly no problem envisaging such a situation as long as the second, criterial, social practice is itself definitionally generated by some objective response. This being granted, there is no obstacle to even longer chains, just so they terminate eventually in a practice generated by an objectively characterizable response. The objective description of a social practice of a community for which such chains of social responses were the rule rather than the exception (e.g. linguistic practices) might thus require the prediction of everything anyone in the community would ever do. Although it is not obvious at this point, it will be shown in the next section that we can envisage a situation in which

<sup>5</sup> On such linguistic division of labor, and in particular the importance of the possibility of adjudication of some disputes by expert elites to be socially constituted only in the *future*, see Putnam's “Meaning of Meaning” in pp. 215–272 of his *Mind, Language and Reality, Philosophical Papers*, vol. II (Cambridge, 1976).

every social practice of the community has as its generating response a performance which must be in accord with another social practice. This possibility has profound consequences for our account of the relation of the realm of objective things to the realm of social things.<sup>6</sup>

## II

Simple as this social practice idiom is, it allows us to describe the relation between norm and fact in a new way. To see this, consider the naturalism/non-naturalism dispute about what sort of distinction we are to envision between norms and facts. According to the naturalist, norms are facts, as objective as any other facts (although, of course, naturalists have various views about what sort of facts are important). Accounts of what ought to be may legitimately be inferred from accounts of what is. According to the non-naturalist, on the other hand, norms and facts are different kinds of things, and this ontological difference reflects or is reflected by the impermissibility of inferences of whatever complexity from "is" to "ought." It is clear that social practices, paradigmatically, *linguistic* ones, generate or express norms insofar as those practices are constituted by traditions of judgments of correctness and incorrectness. At least for the case of these norms which are inherent in social practices,<sup>7</sup> the distinction between norm and fact coincides with the distinction between social practices and any matter of objective fact. The naturalist/non-naturalist dispute here translates into a disagreement about the relation of social practices (with their inherent norms) to objective fact. The naturalist sees no distinction of kind operating, and is committed to viewing social practices as complex objective facts concerning the functioning of various communities. The non-naturalist sees a new category of norm or value emerging in these situations.

When the issue is put in these terms, a *via media* accommodating the motivating insights of both view becomes possible. For we need not choose between the claim that there is an objective difference between the social and the objectively factual and

the claim that there is no difference at all between them. We may think instead of the difference as genuine, but *social* rather than objective, according to our criterial classification. On this view, whether a certain body of behavior constitutes a set of social practices (and hence expresses a normative constraint on performance) or merely exhibits complex but objective regularities is not a matter of objective fact. It is not, in other words, independent of how any community treats or responds to that body of behavior. The criterial classification of things into objective and social is itself a social, rather than objective or ontological, categorization of things according to whether we treat them as subject to the authority of a community or not. What, then, is the difference between treating some system as a set of social practices and treating it as consisting of objective processes?

For the possibly special case of *linguistic* practices, a straightforward answer is available. We treat some bit of behavior as the expression of a linguistic social practice rather than an objective process when we *translate* it, rather than offering a causal explanation of it. Let us agree to extend the application of the term "translation" to include any transformation of the capacity to engage in one set of social practices into the capacity to engage in some other set of social practices. Transformation of the ability to engage in those practices which constitute the use of German into those which constitute the use of English will then be a special case of general translation. We are considering two ways of coping with some complex behavior. Objectively, any spatio-temporally locatable performance can be described objectively and explained as part of a causal web consisting of other similarly described events. In practice, this sort of explanation of, say, the reliability of some signal as an indicator of red objects, may involve the causal understanding of quite complex facts about the physiology and training of the signal-producer. Instead of attempting such an objective account, we may instead use our own set of social practices as an unexplained explainer, and be responsible for an account of how the system in question *differs* from what we

<sup>6</sup> Among contemporary philosophers, Wilfrid Sellars has made the most of this basic sort of distinction between the objective and the social. He has argued throughout his works for the importance of such a distinction between a causal or descriptive order and a normative order of justification and reason giving (a dualism indebted to Kant, Schopenhauer, and the early Wittgenstein, rather than Descartes). This point is one of the keys to the classic "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind" in Sellars' *Science, Perception, and Reality* (London, 1963). See also chapter 7 of *Science and Metaphysics* (London, 1968). Richard Rorty elaborates this perspective in his forthcoming *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, to which I am indebted.

<sup>7</sup> Although I cannot argue the matter here, I believe that the social practice idiom offers a quite general account of the nature of normative constraint. To show this, however, would entail discussing such issues as the relation of moral norms to other sorts of social norms, a project I don't want to enter here.

would do in that situation. Insofar as we adopt this second strategy, we expect the system in question to conform to the same sorts of norms of appropriateness and justification of its performances as govern ours. Translating, rather than causally explaining a performance, consists in assimilating it to our own practices, treating it as a dialect of our own practical idiom.<sup>8</sup>

There are two consequences of this distinction which we should notice. First, causal explanations can proceed atomistically, building up the behavior of a complex system out of independently describable behavioral elements. Translations, however, even in our extended sense, must proceed holistically. One assimilates a complex of behavior to a whole set of our own social practices, providing a commentary to control disanalogies and specify the variety and goodness of fit intended. For our own social practices cannot in general be specified in isolation from one another. A performance is in accord with a particular practice of ours just in case it is or would be responded to in a particular way by our community. But that response typically is itself a performance which must be in accord with a social practice, i.e., one which does or would elicit another response in accord with another practice, and so on. From the point of view of an external objective account of our practices, the invocation of a chain of critical-constitutive practices of this sort which didn't end in an objective criterion of correctness would involve us in a vicious explanatory regress or circle. But for us to engage in a web of social practices no such requirement applies. All that is required is sufficient agreement within the community about what counts as an appropriate performance of each of the practices comprising the web; then holistic objective regularities of performance can take the place of appeal to objective criteria of correctness in any particular case. I am not claiming that this situation always arises—we can specify a social practice generated by an objectively characterized response. The point is that it is not a necessary condition of the possibility of our community

engaging in a set of social practices that we or anyone else be able to dissect that set into inferential or critical chains of practices, each ultimately governed by some objective response.

Next, notice that on this account, the measure of social practice is *our* social practice. When we treat a performance in this way we treat the performer as a member of *our* community, subject to *our* norms of appropriateness and justification. By translating, rather than causally explaining some performance, we extend our community (the one which engages in the social practices into which we translate the stranger's behavior) so as to include the stranger, and treat his performances as variants of our own. What we should remark about this is that who is or isn't a member of a particular community is a paradigm case of a matter which is social rather than objective according to our criterial classification. The community has final say over who its own members are. That is just the sort of issue that the community could not coherently be claimed to be wrong about. It might be inconvenient, or arbitrary for them to draw the boundaries around "us" in a certain way, but it is clearly not the sort of issue there is an objective fact to be right or wrong about, independent of what the community takes its own membership to be (of course they can *say* false things about who is in their community—what is decisive according to our criteria is how they behave or respond to the various candidates). So insofar as the distinction between the social and the objective is to be drawn as we have suggested, depending upon whether one copes with the behavior in question by causal explanation and manipulation or by translation, that distinction, while genuine, is social rather than objective, a matter of how the behavior is treated by some community rather than how it is in itself.<sup>9</sup> We will have some more to say about the crucial distinction between translation and explanation in the next section. For now, let us notice the consequences which this way of approaching things has for the larger issues we are concerned with.

<sup>8</sup> Jurgen Habermas, in *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston, 1971) distinguished the sort of explanation one gives of causal phenomena "logically"—claiming that causal explanation employs a "monologic" of impersonal inference, while interpretation is always "dialogic" in character. While I am not sure what this logical rendering comes to, the account developed here of the difference between the social and objective coincides in many particulars with Habermas' story about the differences between control and conversation.

<sup>9</sup> The point here is reminiscent of D. C. Dennett's views about the justification of the adoption of the "intentional stance" (in *Intentional Systems* *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 68 [1971], pp. 87–106). A difference is that social practices need not exhibit any "intentional" character. I have discussed elsewhere (see note 2) some of what is required of a social practice in order for it appropriately to be taken as making a claim that something is the case. I would thus seek to account for intentionality in terms of social practices. J. F. Rosenberg has argued forcefully against the cogency of the reverse order of explanation in the opening chapters of his *Linguistic Representation* (Dordrecht, 1975).

If we can make the distinction between translation and causal explanation stick as two distinguishable ways of responding to the same behavior, then we can bypass the naturalism/non-naturalism dispute about the relation of norm to fact. For both parties to that dispute assumed that if there were any distinction between norms and facts it was an *objective* (factual, descriptive) difference. On our account, however, the difference between the normative order expressed in social practices and the factual order expressed in objective events and processes is a social difference in two ways of treating something. The social/objective distinction is social rather than objective.<sup>10</sup> If we now transfer this account of the distinction between the Realm of Nature (fact, description, cause) and the Realm of Freedom (norm, evaluation, practice) back to Kant's original suggestion that freedom consists in constraint by norms rather than simply by causes, the difference between being free and not being free becomes a social rather than an objective difference. The difference between these two "realms" is not an ontological one. The real distinction in the vicinity is between two ways of treating someone's behavior. According to this line of thought, we treat someone as free insofar as we consider him subject to the norms inherent in the social practices conformity to which is the criterion of membership in our community. He is free insofar as he is one of us. Insofar as we cope with him in terms of the causes which objectively constrain him, rather than the norms which constrain him via our practices, we treat him as an object, and unfree. There is no objective fact of the matter concerning his freedom to which we can appeal beyond the judgment of our own community. Of course the community can appeal to what it takes to be objective facts about a candidate for the extended membership granted by translation, but it is how they finally behave toward the candidate that matters. On this view, then, man is not objectively free.<sup>11</sup> Our talk about human freedom is rather a misleading way of talking about the difference between the way in which we treat members of our own community, those who engage in social practices with us, and the

attitude we adopt toward those things we manipulate causally. Being constrained by or subject to norms is a matter of belonging to a community, and that is a matter of being *taken* to be a member by the rest of the community.

### III

Reason for doubting that this notion of freedom is a finally satisfactory account emerges when we remember that anything at all can be treated as objective, and can also be treated as social. The two stances do not exclude each other. That any set of spatio-temporally locatable events is in principle capable of an objective causal explanation needs little arguing. It is a regulative ideal of natural science. When we translate another's utterance we need not presume that that utterance cannot also be explained as a part of the objective causal order, that it was not predictable (at least statistically) given sufficient information about the physiology, training, and recent environment of the speaker. Of course in situations where we are not now actually capable of such an explanation in terms of causes, there will be a certain amount of strain involved in treating an utterance as merely caused. But there is no difficulty of principle. Less obviously, anything can be treated as subject to the norms inherent in social practices, with a greater or lesser degree of strain. Thus a tree or a rock can become subject to norms insofar as we consider it as engaging in social practices. We can do this either by giving it a social role, for instance that of an oracle, or simply by translating its performances as utterances. Thus we can take the groaning of a branch to be the expression of exhaustion, or take the record-changer to be telling us that the record is over. Of course in such cases we must allow that the item in question is only a member of our community in a derivative and second-class fashion, for it is not capable of engaging in very many of our practices, or even of engaging in those very well. This is the strain involved in translating ordinary occurrences rather than simply explaining them, and no doubt this strain is the reason we usually don't do this. But

<sup>10</sup> It is a measure of the superiority of this idiom over more traditional ones that the possibility of this sort of view would not come readily to mind so long as the issue is formulated as a norm/fact, or evaluation/description distinction. For what does it mean to say that these distinctions are not factual or descriptive, but normative and evaluative? And yet this is what we are claiming, in the specific sense captured by the social/objective rendering.

<sup>11</sup> Though of course on this account that freedom is not merely subjective and imaginary either. It is rather a social matter, and the criterial classification distinguishes the social from both the subjective (which is whatever some individual takes it to be) and the objective (which is what it is regardless of how anyone takes it to be). I have argued that this criterial classification is itself social rather than objective.

there are border line cases, as with infants, cats, and temperamental automobiles. The force of the claim that the difference between the social and the objective is a difference in how they are treated by some community (by *us*) rather than an objective matter about which we could be right or wrong is that differences in convenience of one kind or another are the only differences to be accommodated here. If we want to treat the tree like one of us, the wind in its branches translated as utterances suggesting various courses of action, debating and justifying these, then the difficulty of finding a scheme which will make the tree sound sensible is the only obstacle.

It does not seem implausible to treat the difference between the social and the objective, and therefore the difference between the normative and the factual, as itself a social difference in this way. There are clear differences between translation and causal explanation of environing occurrences, and it is equally clear how those differences can generate criterial differences in objects treated one way or the other, once we have seen that such criterial classifications are not objective, ontological ones. But the account of freedom which results from conjoining this explanation of the norm/fact distinction to Kant's doctrine that freedom is constraint by norms is unattractive. Hegel objected to Kant's restriction of Reason and the norms and principles involved in it to the purely *formal* features of conduct. He regarded any account of freedom in terms of constraint by norms to be doomed to empty abstractness insofar as it ignores the *content* of the norms involved, linking freedom to the purely formal fact of constraint by some norm or other. The sort of cultural-historical particularity of the content of norms which Hegel sought in vain in Kant is secured by the token-reflexive reference in the formula—to be a Kantian rational-moral agent is to be one of *us*. This establishes only one side of the dialectic of social and individual development which Hegel urges, however. Communal autonomy is a necessary presupposition of the development of individual freedom. This latter, the freedom of the artist and the genius, is not to be identified with the former, the freedom of the peasant and the worthy Pietist. Hegel envisaged a higher form of positive freedom as self-expression and *Bildung*, enabled by but not reducible to constraint by communal norms. In the rest of this paper we consider such a notion,

elaborated from Hegel's hints, but not intended as an exposition of the account presented by Hegel in his own original and ferocious idiom.

As above, we will take our lead from the consideration of the norms which govern linguistic activity. Our concern before was with the social dimension of these norms, with what constitutes membership in the community which has those norms, and consequently with what it is to be constrained by them. Our present concern is not with the nature of such social constraint, but with its issue. In particular, we want to examine the possibility that for some sets of norms, at any rate, constraint can be balanced by the creation of a new sort of "expressive freedom" of the individual. It is a striking fact that learning to engage in the social practices which are the use of a shared language does not simply enable us to use stock expressions ("Pass the salt," "Good morning," and so on) so as to navigate the common social situations which elicit them (communal feeding, working, and so on). In fact most of the sentences that make up our ordinary conversation are sentences that have never been uttered before in the history of the language, as Noam Chomsky has forcefully pointed out.<sup>12</sup> To acknowledge this fact is not to retreat from the characterization of language as a set of social practices in our sense, since it is still the linguistic community which decides whether some novel sentence is appropriately used or not. But we must not think of the social practices governing such communal judgments of appropriateness for novel utterances the way we think of those governing common sentences like "This is red", as the product of selective reinforcement of many different utterances of that very expression on various occasions.<sup>13</sup> Learning the language is not just learning to use a set of stock sentences which everybody else uses too. One has not learned the language, has not acquired the capacity to engage in the social practices which are the use of the language, until one can produce *novel* sentences which the community will deem appropriate, and understand the appropriate novel utterances of other members of the community (where the criterion for this capacity is the ability to make inferences deemed appropriate by the community). This emergent expressive capacity is the essence of natural languages.

We ought to understand this creative aspect of

<sup>12</sup> *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), Chapter One.

<sup>13</sup> W. V. Quine's elephant topiary example in the first chapter of *Word and Object* (Cambridge, 1960), suggests that he has in mind the latter type of sentences exclusively, for it is difficult to see how his story is appropriate to the former.

language use as the paradigm of a new kind of freedom, *expressive* freedom. When one has mastered the social practices comprising the use of a language sufficiently, one becomes able to do something one could not do before, to produce and comprehend novel utterances. One becomes capable not only of framing new descriptions of situations and making an indefinite number of novel claims about the world, but also becomes capable of forming new intentions, and hence of performing an indefinite number of novel *actions*, directed at ends one could not have without the expressive capacity of the language. This is a kind of positive freedom, freedom *to* do something rather than freedom *from* some constraint. For it is not as if the beliefs, desires, and intentions one comes to be able to express when one acquires a suitable language have been there all the time, hidden somehow “inside” the individual and kept from overt expression by some sort of constraint. Without a suitable language there are some beliefs, desires, and intentions that one simply cannot have. Thus we cannot attribute to a dog or a prelinguistic child the desire to prove a certain conjectured theorem, the belief that our international monetary system needs reform, or the intention to surpass Blake as a poet of the imagination. One comes to be able to do such things only by becoming able to engage in a wide variety of social practices, making discriminations and inferences and offering justifications concerning the subject matter in question to the satisfaction of the relevant community. And this is to say that it is only by virtue of being constrained by the norms inherent in social practices that one can acquire the freedom of expression which the capacity to produce and understand novel utterances exhibits.

As a form of positive freedom, this expressive capacity does not consist simply in a looseness of fit in the constraining norms. One is able to express novel contents not simply because an utterance can be linguistically appropriate on many different occasions, nor again because the boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate utterances are vague (as is always the case with social practices, whose “boundaries”—the division between what is and what is not in accord with them—are not objective but social, a matter of how the community does or would respond). No novelty is generated by the fact that the constraint constitutive of social practice has such an open texture that lots of antecedently possible performances are acceptable. Expressive freedom consists in the generation of new possibilities of performance which did not and could not exist

outside the framework of norms inherent in the social practices which make up the language. One acquires the freedom to believe, desire, and intend the existence of novel states of affairs only insofar as one speaks some language or other, is constrained by some complex of social norms. Expressive freedom is made possible only by constraint by norms, and is not some way of evading or minimizing that constraint.

It is clear that not all sets of social practices, in the sense we have given to that term, will generate the sort of expressive freedom which we can discern as enabled by natural languages. So an account of positive freedom modelled on the creative use of language—the possibility of novel performances—will not take that freedom to be constituted by the abstract and purely formal fact that one is constrained by norms (that one engages in the social practices of some community, i.e. is accepted as doing so by some community). Not just constraint by norms but constraint by a particular kind of norms makes possible individual expressive freedom, as Hegel envisaged. Nor should we think of that freedom merely as a fact or a state to be achieved and enjoyed. Expressive freedom, as the capacity to produce an indefinite number of novel appropriate performances in accord with a set of social practices one has mastered, is an ability which must be exercised to be maintained. Following Hegel’s hint a little further, we can see the exercise of positive, expressive freedom as part of a process of cultivation [*Bildung*] of the self and of the community. For the capacity of individuals to produce novel performances in accord with a set of social practices makes possible novel social practices as well. For as the community becomes capable of novel responses (themselves subject to judgments of appropriateness), new social practices are generated. A social practice is defined as a respect of similarity evinced by performances which do or would (under circumstances which must be specified whenever we specify a particular practice) elicit some response from the community. Some sets of social practices, paradigmatically natural languages, make possible novel performances on the part of those who participate in them, and these in turn make possible further social practices. Particular novel performances and the social practices which make them possible and are made possible by them, on the one hand, and individuals and the community they comprise on the other, thus develop together in a fashion Hegel marked with the term “dialectical.” Thus a child’s relative mastery of a natural language

first makes possible the production and comprehension of appropriate novel utterances. This capacity in turn enables the child to submit to stricter social linguistic disciplines, such as govern the criticism or production of literary works or legal briefs. At the level of the community, new disciplines are founded by the novel productions of individuals—the social practices which comprise a scientific or academic discipline are produced in this way, and make possible further novel performances and their appreciation. The self-cultivation of an individual consists in the exercise and expansion of expressive freedom by subjecting oneself to the novel discipline of a set of social practices one could not previously engage in, in order to acquire the capacity to perform in novel ways, express beliefs, desires, and intentions one could not previously even have, whether in arts or sports. The cultivation of the community consists in the development of new sets of social practices, at once the result of individual self-cultivation (producing novel performances which, institutionalized as responses to other performances make possible new social practices) and the condition of it. It is in this sense that we speak of the “culture” of a group as the set of social practices they engage in.<sup>14</sup>

It is clearly not possible to specify in advance the expressive capacities of different sets of social practices, for instance in an attempt to compare two languages along this dimension. For the peculiar dialectical pattern of development of expressive capacities itself continually creates novel expressive dimensions by making possible desires and intentions which could not operate at earlier stages in the cultivation of a particular community or individual. Self-cultivating individuals and communities, developing their expressive capacities according to this dialectic of shared practice and novel performance will accordingly be a *great* deal more difficult to account for in terms of objective causal processes than will social practices which don't make possible

indefinite numbers of novel performance-types. Here the quantitative difference in convenience between coping with behavior by treating it as objective and seeking a causal explanation and treating it as social and seeking a translation of it into our own practices assumes such proportions that it is plausible to treat it as a qualitative difference<sup>15</sup> (this does not, of course, entail that we take it as an objective difference rather than as a social difference of how things are treated which is based on the objective difficulty of discovering adequate causal accounts. We are, after all, familiar with objective processes which generate new types of behavior.) Expressive freedom is thus a species of the Kantian genus of freedom as constraint by norms, a specification and supplementation of that general notion.

The final suggestion I want to make by way of recommending this way of talking about human freedom, both individual and social, is to note the sort of legitimation of political and social constraint which it makes possible. Hegel and some of his admirers (notably Marx and T. H. Green) rejected the liberal enlightenment account of justification of constraint of the individual by social and political institutions which had found that justification in the extent to which social organization made possible the greater satisfaction of individual wants, considered as fixed and specifiable in abstraction from the sort of community the individual participates in. The Hegelian tradition was acutely aware of the debt which an individual's desires owe to his community, but did not wish to succumb entirely to the antidemocratic and anti-individualist implications of an account which made the community paramount. The general form of their resolution of this dilemma, which can be reproduced in less metaphysical terms in the idiom of social practices, is this. Constraint of the individual by the social and political norms inherent in communal practices may be legitimate insofar as that constraint makes

<sup>14</sup> Defining culture in this way, we may distinguish three sorts of sub-structure: individual repertoires, traditions, and institutions. Each individual member of the community has a repertoire of social practices comprising all those he is capable of engaging in (producing performances appropriate according to) at a particular time. Such a repertoire has a history, insofar as it is different at one time than at another. Those practices have in common a particular human being who engages in them. The practices which make up a *tradition* share a common ancestry. A tradition is a tree structure whose nodes are sets of social practices engaged in by individuals (one individual per node, perhaps not his entire repertoire) and whose branches are the transmission or training to engage in the social practices are transformed. A social institution is then composed at any time of individuals and sub-sets of their current repertoires which are their *institutional roles*. The development of the institution is the evolution of those roles in their mutual relation.

<sup>15</sup> Although we cannot pursue the matter here, it is plausible to identify the difference between objective causal explanation and translation of social practices (where the criterion for adopting one or the other stance is the appearance of dialectical development by the cultivation of expressive freedom as described above) with the difference which neo-Kantians of the last century perceived between the methods of *Erklärung* and *Verstehen*, which were the distinguishing features of the natural and cultural sciences respectively (and which we might think of as codifying the difference between things which have *natures* and things which have *histories*).

possible for the individual an expressive freedom which is otherwise impossible for him. Creative self-cultivation is possible only by means of the discipline of the social practices which constrain one, just as the production of a poem requires not only submission to the exigencies of a shared language, but the stricter discipline of the poetic tradition as well. One must speak some language to say anything at all, and the production and comprehension of novel performances requires a background of shared constraint. Political constraint is illegitimate insofar as it is not in the service of the cultivation of the expressive freedom of those who are constrained by it.

To say this is not so much to present a theory as to present the form of a theory, a way of talking about political legitimation and human freedom, an idiom. It does not, for instance, even begin to settle questions about trade-offs between different varieties

of negative and positive freedom. For one cannot project a Utopia from these considerations, nor can one abstractly evaluate political institutions according to the kinds and quality of expressive freedom and self-cultivation they enable and encourage. For it is precisely the production of *novel* expressive possibilities which is admired in this account, and that novelty in principle escapes classification and prediction by a priori theorizing. The idiom of expressive freedom is useful, insofar as it is useful, for those caught up in the dialectic of individual and communal cultivation, of shared practice and novel performance, to reflectively control possible changes in practice within a concrete situation. The value of this idiom, as of any other, consists in the possibilities for novel expression which it engenders, by way of comprehending and directing this dialectical process.<sup>16</sup>

*University of Pittsburgh*

*Received July 25, 1978*

<sup>16</sup> I would like to acknowledge the many helpful comments Richard Rorty and Annette Baier kindly provided on an earlier version.



# *Asserting*

ROBERT BRANDOM

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

No sort of speech act is as important for philosophers to understand as assertion. Assertion of declarative sentences is the form of cognitive discourse, and is the fundamental activity in which linguistic meaningfulness is manifested. The question we address here is

What is it that we are *doing* when we assert, claim, or declare something?

Until a century ago the closest philosophical approach to an answer to such a question was to be found in theories of *judgment*. Judging, in Kant's usage, for instance, was a kind of internal asserting—though philosophers of this period would have said rather that asserting is merely the outward, visible sign of an inward, invisible act of judging.<sup>1</sup> The theory of judgment was an attempt to account for acts or episodes of embracing or acknowledging a sentence as true. Like asserting, judging as an episode contrasts with believing, which was understood as a persistent disposition to make certain judgments.

This problematic achieved its modern form with Frege's demonstration of a fatal flaw in the strategy of classical theories of judgment. The traditional account understood judging as predicating, representing, or classifying something *as* something. The trick was then to tell a story about what sort of mental activity such taking or classifying might be. Frege pointed out that this approach founders on the *unasserted* predications occurring in negations or as antecedents of asserted conditionals. The sentence

'Saturn is larger than Mars'

has the logical form of a predication. In the conditional

'If Saturn is larger than Mars, then it is larger than Mercury'

however, though the same predication occurs, it is not asserted that Saturn is larger than Mars. Why could it not be claimed that the same predication does *not* occur in the conditional? Because if the sentence were *not* a predication when occurring as the antecedent of a conditional, but remained one as a free-standing sentence, then we would be equivocating when we argue by *modus ponens* from *p* and *if p then q* to *q*. For this argument depends on the identity of content of *p* in its two occurrences.

The point is a familiar one, but it is worth delineating with some care. The objection is *not* another way of pointing out the logical inadequacy of the old-fashioned subject-predicate analysis of sentences. It will not help the traditional judgment theorist to add n-adic relations and to make the switch to Fregean function-argument analysis with higher-order operators such as quantifiers. For the mistake is to confuse the logical compounding operators (such as predication) which we appeal to analytically to explicate the content which is judged, with the activity of judging. What the argument from sentential compounding shows is that predicating and judging or asserting are two different *kinds* of 'activity.' The sense in which we act in constructing sentences by applying operators to sentential components is in principle insufficient to explain what we do when we assert the sentences so constructed.<sup>2</sup>

The only positive view about judging which Frege explicitly expresses in his earliest work is that it consists in acknowledging, recognizing, or affirming a sentence as *true*. This is clearly right as far as it goes. To transform this leading idea into a theory requires an account of what it is to *take* a sentence to be true, and so what it is to put a sentence forward as fit to be taken true by others.

The later Frege presents a theory of the required sort. Saying that

... judgements can be regarded as advances from a thought to a truth value.

he assimilates asserting a sentence to issuing an identity claim (what he called a recognition statement) of the form

Snow is white = The True.

That is, he uses the notion of the True as a recognizable object to reduce all assertion to assertions of identities. He clearly cannot repeat this analysis for all identity statements on pain of an infinite regress. He must give an independent account of the assertion of identities which does *not* appeal to recognizing *them* as names of the True.

He does so, analyzing asserting an identity statement on the basis of the *inferences* it licenses. In particular, in asserting an identity one licenses as truth preserving inter-substitution of the terms of that identity. I regard the suggestion that asserting be explained in terms of inferring as the key to a correct understanding of assertion, and will pursue that suggestion in what follows. On the other hand, the privileged place of identity sentences in Frege's scheme is one central expression of his semantic assimilation of sentences to names, a strategy which no longer seems promising.

One way to disentangle the inferential insight from the reduction to identities is to return to the *Begriffsschrift*, written before Frege had achieved, and then become hypnotized by, his remarkable analysis of identity. The project of that work is to develop a formal language adequate to capture the conceptual contents or roles of ordinary sentences. Conceptual roles are defined as inference potentials.<sup>3</sup> The primary tool Frege employs is what we may call his *semantic principle*, namely that good inferences never proceed from premises which are true to conclusions which are not true. Truth is introduced as a technical auxiliary notion whose role is to help codify those inferences (see [1]).

Unfortunately, Frege takes his semantic principle to be not only a *necessary* condition of good inference, but a *sufficient* condition as well. As a result of this move, the only device available for making inferential practices explicit is the truth-functional conditional. And the consequence of this impoverished armamentarium is that the *Begriffsschrift* falls short of its aim of codifying the material inferences<sup>4</sup> which give actual sentences their significance, capturing only purely *formal* inferences, and expressing the conceptual roles only of purely *logical* vocabulary.<sup>5</sup>

In the context of this project, however, we can see that when the younger Frege glosses asserting as putting a sentence forward *as true*, the phrase has the sense of 'putting the sentence forward as one from which it is appropriate to make inferences.'<sup>6</sup> That is, asserting is issuing an inference license. Since inferring is drawing a conclusion, such an inference license amounts to a warrant for further assertions, specifically assertions of those sentences which can appropriately be inferred from the sentence originally asserted.<sup>7</sup>

The same conclusion can be reached by pressing another natural way of thinking about asserting, a construal in terms of the communicational function of presenting a sentence as *information*. In mathematical information theory, the information content of a signal is not an intrinsic property of the signal itself. That content is rather a relation between the signal and a set of antecedently possible performances on the part of the recipient, in the context of a set of rules or practices

restricting the set of performances which are still appropriate as responses once the signal is received. Thus a message, the appropriate response to which is to bet a number less than five on the roulette wheel, conveys more information than one which permits play on numbers less than eighteen. For sentential signals, the possible responses can be thought of as assertions the audience might make. The asserted sentence warrants the audience to assert just those sentences which may appropriately be inferred from the original claim.<sup>8</sup> To put a sentence forward as information is thus to present it as fodder for inferences leading to further assertions.

What is it that makes an inference appropriate or not? One explanatory strategy, familiar from the later Frege, Russell, Carnap, and Tarski, begins with objective reference relations between terms and things, and predicates and sets of things, and determines for each sentence a set of truth conditions as its representational content according to set-theoretic containment relations among the denotations of its components. An inference is then correct just in case the truth conditions of its conclusion are a subset of the truth conditions of its premises. On this line, inferences are to be appraised in terms of their faithfulness to the objective reality that determines which sets of representations are correctly inferrable from which others.

Another approach, which we may identify with Dewey and the later Wittgenstein, begins with inference conceived as a social practice, whose component performances must answer originally not to an objective reality but to communal norms. Here the appropriateness of an inference consists entirely in what the community whose inferential practices are in question is willing to approve, that is to treat or respond to as in accord with their practices. Following this second line of thought, it is the normative order of the rights, responsibilities, and obligations inherent in communal practice which we interrogate for an account of asserting. The authorizing of inferences, that is of further assertions, which is our first clue about assertion is to be understood as part of the social practical significance of an assertive performance. In the usual sense, one asserts that the circumstances expressed by a declarative sentence obtain. But one can also assert one's authority or rights. This broader normative usage will be invoked here to explain the narrower linguistic one.

The speech act of asserting arises in a particular, socially instituted, autonomous structure of responsibility and authority. In asserting a sentence one both commits oneself to it and endorses it. The dimension of endorsement is that which we indicated in a preliminary fashion in terms of the function of an asserting as licensing or authorizing further assertions. But without some independent grasp of what social significance must be bestowed on a performance for it to be an asserting,

invoking the warranting of further assertions merely takes us around in a rather small circle. It is the second dimension, of assertional *commitment*, which permits a larger horizon.

So far the function of assertion has been described as that of making sentences available as premises in inferences. The end result of inference is a further assertion (the conclusion), to which one becomes *entitled* in virtue of the premises. Putting a sentence forward in the public arena *as true* or *as information* is something *one* interlocutor can do to make that sentence available for *others* to use in becoming entitled to assert further sentences. But we only understand the role of assertions as warrants insofar as we know what the social significance of the difference between warranted and unwarranted assertions is.

Ordinarily the relation of an authorizing event to the performances it licenses requires at least that in the context of that event performances become socially appropriate which otherwise would not be. Thus purchasing a ticket entitles one to take a seat in the theatre, which it would be inappropriate to do without the ticket. This observation presents a dilemma. If asserting a sentence is not a performance requiring prior authorization, then we cannot understand the function of assertion as inferentially licensing further assertions. On the other hand, if asserting is a performance requiring authorization, how does one become entitled to the original licensing assertion? It is this question which is addressed by an account of the dimension of *commitment* characteristic of asserting. In asserting a claim one not only authorizes further assertions, but commits oneself to vindicate the original claim, showing that one is entitled to make it. Failure to defend one's entitlement to an assertion voids its social significance as inferential warrant for further assertions. It is only assertions one is entitled to make that can serve to entitle others to its inferential consequences. Endorsement is empty unless the commitment can be defended.

One of the original senses of 'assert' in its broader normative use is as meaning to defend, champion, or justify, as in Milton's famous expression of his intent in *Paradise Lost*

That to the highth of this great Argument I may assert Eternal Providence, and Justifie the wayes of God to men.

This use suggests taking the commitment involved in asserting to be the undertaking of *justificatory responsibility* for what is claimed.<sup>9</sup> In asserting a sentence, one not only licenses further assertions on the part of others, but commits oneself to justifying the original claim. The responsibility in question is of the sort Baier calls 'task-responsibility' ([4]: 49-84), requiring the performance of a task of some kind for its fulfillment. Specifically, one undertakes the conditional task responsibility to

justify the claim if challenged. The conditional qualification is important. Our social practices, as Wittgenstein emphasized, treat performances as appropriate and in accord with those practices until and unless some specific question is raised about them. Assertions are treated as in order, that is, as warranted, until challenged. Responding to such a challenge consists in producing further assertions whose contents are appropriately inferentially related to the original one. Each justifying consists of further assertings, which may themselves be challenged and stand in need of further justification. There is no point fixed in advance at which such a regress of demands for justification and for justification of the justification need end.<sup>10</sup>

Inference is thus the root notion from which are elaborated both the justificatory responsibility one commits oneself to in asserting, and the assertion license issued thereby. The conceptual role played by the original claim in the social practices of the community is determined by what further assertions that community would accept as appropriate justifications of it, and what assertions they would take it to license or justify.

If an assertion stands unchallenged, or when challenged is appropriately justified, then it has the social force of an inference or assertion license. We can now be more specific about the sense in which such an assertion authorizes further assertions. An assertion in force licenses others to re-assert the original claim (and to assert its immediate consequences) *deferring to the author of the original assertion the justificatory responsibility which would otherwise thereby be undertaken*. That *A*'s assertion of *p* has the social significance of authorizing *B*'s re-assertion of *p* consists in the social appropriateness of *B*'s deferring to *A* the responsibility to respond to justificatory challenges regarding *B*'s claim. *B*'s justificatory responsibility is discharged by the invocation of *A*'s authority, upon which *B* has exercised his right to rely. Further challenges are appropriately addressed to *A* rather than *B*.

If *A* is challenged concerning his assertion and fails to provide an appropriate set of justifying assertions, the socially constitutive consequence is to deprive his assertion of the authorizing force which it otherwise would have had. That is, insofar as *A* fails to discharge the justificatory responsibility undertaken in his original assertion, others are deprived of the option of deferring to *A* justificatory responsibility for their assertions of claims which follow from what *A* asserted. *A*'s authority is undermined by the justificatory failure, and others must take responsibility for their own assertings of sentences otherwise inferrable from the content of *A*'s remark. This combination of *personal* authority (justification by deference to the authority of another interlocutor) and *content-based authority* (justification by assertion of other

sentences from which the asserted content can appropriately be inferred) is characteristic of asserting as a doing.

There are cases in which it is inappropriate to issue a justificatory challenge to an assertor, due to a special socially conferred privilege or authority.<sup>11</sup> Also, a speaker may cheerfully admit that no justification is possible of his claim, and yet insist on asserting it. In neither instance of what we may call 'bare assertions' need this failure to shoulder the usual justificatory burden impugn the status of their utterances as assertions. So the previous remarks require some qualification. But notice that there is reason to treat these cases as derivative from or parasitic on a paradigm in which justificatory responsibility is undertaken as a matter of course. For what is the force of these bare assertions in the mouths of a tribal Deity or religious enthusiast? It is that others may take their word for the truth of what is asserted—others have the speaker's warrant to rely on what has been asserted as a premise for inference. And this dimension of authority makes sense only if such authority can be appealed to to justify otherwise impermissible utterances. Thus even bare assertion presupposes a context in which the *audience* consists of assertors and inferers who *do* undertake justificatory responsibility for their remarks.<sup>12</sup> So bare assertion is a special case, made possible by the more fundamental assertions exhibiting both the dimension of responsibility and that of authority.

The structure so far described is fundamental in another regard as well. In general one incurs a justificatory responsibility whenever one departs from a socially recognized norm or practice (this is what Baier calls "responsibility in the sense of answerability" [1]). Satisfying the demands of this sort of responsibility is justifying one's conduct. Doing so is producing assertions which stand in a special relation (not in general inferential) to the conduct in question. Assertional practices are thus presupposed by any system of social practices rich enough to exhibit even a limited requirement of answerability. Although one can be answerable for assertings as for any other doings, (e.g., for their being rude, impolitic, or ungracious) the conditional justificatory task responsibility undertaken in assertion must not be confused with responsibility in the sense of answerability, which it makes possible.<sup>13</sup>

By being caught up in assertional practices with the dual structure of authority and responsibility, sentences acquire a content in the sense of an inferential-justificatory role. Understanding a sentence as used by a community ('grasping' its inferential-justificatory role) is being able to tell what counts as a justification of it, and in what justifications it plays the part of a premise. Failure to understand a sentence in this sense disqualifies one from asserting it. It is for this reason that a parrot trained reliably to say "It's getting warmer" only as the temperature

climbs past 80 degrees never succeeds in asserting that it is getting warmer. However well the bird's responsive dispositions to produce this report match our own, it is incompetent as an assertor. The parrot cannot tell justifications of his remark from arguments against it, and cannot discriminate the further assertions which would thereby be licensed from those incompatible with what it has said.<sup>14</sup> As we grant socially the sorts of responsibility and authority characteristic of adulthood only gradually and in proportion to a child's mastery of the demands and the skills required to fulfill those demands, so it is with assertion. According to our conventions, the utterance of a declarative sentence under normal circumstances claims for itself the social status of an assertion. But we accord this status to the utterances of children, madmen, and foreigners only to the degree we take them to understand the inferential relations within which the responsibility and authority of asserting arise.

In the ideal *Sprachspiele* of assertion as here delineated, the social significance of each performance is determined by how the community does or would respond to it. Not having mastered these practices, the parrot and the infant do not understand the significances performances can have according to them. Whether or not one claim justifies another, for example, is not determined by some objective semantic content or relations the sentences have and which the community must try to live up to or reflect in their social practices of recognizing some claims as justifying others. Rather, a justification is whatever the community treats as one—whatever its members will let assertors get away with. It is from the communal responsive dispositions to recognize some claims as justifying others that the sentences involved first acquire their semantic contents, which will in turn determine their compounding potentials, paradigmatically their behavior as antecedents of conditionals. The meanings do not determine the appropriate inferences, but what inferences are socially appropriate determines the meanings of the sentences involved in those inferences.

What makes a performance a *move* in such a social behavioral system or game is then how it is appropriate, according to the community, to respond to it. For them to respond to it in a certain way is what it is for a community to *take* a performance *as* having a certain significance (for instance to be a justified assertion). The social roles performances can be taken as playing are accordingly defined and individuated by the communal *responses* appropriate to performances of that type. For instance, a performance is a violation of *tabu* in a totemistic society just in case the tribe would under suitable circumstances respond to it by punishment of the offending performer, attempts at expiation, etc. Of course the responsive dispositions which partition the space of possible performances into social significance equivalence



classes or co-appropriateness classes may themselves be required to be performances with some *other* social significance, hence defined by some *further* responsive disposition. Thus in Football a referee confers the social status “Offsides” on a performance by responding to it in a special way. That special response gets its significance in turn from *its* being appropriately responded to on the part of other officials by their imposition of a 5-yard penalty.<sup>15</sup>

The genesis of social significance from responsive cognitive dispositions may be illustrated for the case of asserting by considering the epistemologically crucial distinction between justification and truth. What is ontologically distinctive about the categories of significance induced by social practice is that performances have exactly the significance the community takes them to have. There is no difference for these kinds of things between *being* a K (a breaking of a *tabu*, a play run offsides, an unjustified asserting) and being treated as such by the community.<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, justification and truth will be distinguished within the asserting game just in case *taking* a claim to be true and *taking* it to be justified are socially discriminable responses.

What is it for one community member to *take* the remark of another to be justified? (Either because no justificatory challenge need be issued, or after such a challenge has been responded to with further assertions?) It is for the respondent to recognize the inferential authority of the original remark. This recognition in turn consists in the respondent’s disposition to accept as legitimate deferrals of justificatory responsibility to the original assertor. Acknowledging such deferrals is simply accepting as *justified* those further claims which would be *justifiable* if the original claim is premised. So to take one claim as justified is to be disposed to take as justified the claims which may appropriately be inferred from it. Thus whether or not a claim is (taken as) justified only has consequences for whether other claims are (taken as) justified,<sup>17</sup> for this is what the constitutive recognition of the *authority* of the original assertion consist in.

If taking a claim as justified is being prepared to recognize the conclusions of appropriate inferences from it as justified, what is it to take the claim as true? It is to be prepared to assert that claim, and the conclusions of appropriate inferences from it, *oneself*. The social difference between justification and truth is the perspectival difference between those endorsements on the part of others one is prepared to admit as authorized or permitted, and those endorsements one is oneself prepared to undertake. Thus to admit another’s remark as justified while not taking it to be *true* is to admit that the other has followed the rules of the asserting game and is entitled to his commitment and endorsement, that is, that his claim follows appropriately from other assertions he is similarly entitled to make, while not being

prepared to make that endorsement or accept its consequences oneself. The difference is that between commitments one recognizes as legitimate on the part of others, and one's own commitments. I may be willing to accept as justified your claim that there is a candle in front of you, given your information. Yet if I accept, as you do not, that there is a mirror in front of you, I will not be prepared to endorse your claim as *true*, that is to make inferences from it myself. Though there may be complete communal agreement about which claims justify which others, such agreement does not preclude significant differences between community members with regard to which sentences each is willing to endorse and undertake a commitment to.<sup>18</sup>

The social practices governing the asserting game permit four different kinds of "move." First, one may utter a declarative sentence which has the significance of an assertion, that is, counts as undertaking justificatory responsibility and as issuing an inference license. Such assertions can function either as premises or as conclusions of inferences. Second, one may demand a justification of some claim from another interlocutor. Third, one may defer justificatory responsibility for a claim to another. Finally, one may recognize a claim as (having been) justified. To do so is to acknowledge the legitimacy of its authority over other assertions, that is, its availability to others as a premise in justifying further assertions.

In these terms we can understand what it is to attribute commitment to a certain claim to another interlocutor. To make this move is to be disposed to recognize as appropriate others' deferrals to that interlocutor of justificatory responsibility for the claim. Accepting such deferrals may in turn be understood as recognizing the deferred claim as available as a premise for further justifications, with the provision that the one to whom responsibility is deferred must not have failed appropriately to respond to a demand for justification of that claim.

Each interlocutor keeps *score* for himself and for others, in the form of attributed commitments. Making a move in the assertion game can change this score. Each speaker has, to begin with, a *basic repertoire* consisting of those sentences he or she is currently prepared to authorize and explicitly to undertake justificatory responsibility for, that is, to assert. From the point of view of other speakers, however, there is also an *extended repertoire* consisting of all those sentences others are prepared to *take* that individual as committed to. In general the speaker need not be aware of all that he or she has become socially committed to in virtue of the commitments explicitly undertaken. For in being prepared to issue a certain claim one becomes committed to its consequences as well, whether one realizes what all of these are or not. This is why a threshold mastery of inferential relations is required for one to be admitted as a player in the first place. These dual repertoires

of commitments and endorsements stand in, as discursive scores (a form of social sentential property involving its own rights and responsibilities toward the sentences “owned”), for the traditional notion of belief. The basic repertoires correspond to beliefs in the sense in which we only believe that we believe we believe. The extended repertoires correspond to beliefs in the sense in which we believe the consequences of our beliefs (i.e., are committed to these) whether we know what they are or not.

At the outset assertion was described as the form of cognitive discourse. Cognitive discourse consists of *knowledge-claims*. The status of knowledge-claim as such purports to have is that of expressing an appropriately justified true belief. The account of the social practices governing asserting has provided specific interpretations of what is involved in putting forward a sentence as justified, as true, and as the expression of a belief (understood as either explicit or implicit commitment). In keeping with the social practice approach, instead of explaining what knowledge *is*, the present account explains what it is to *take* a claim as justified, as true, and as the expression of a belief or commitment.

According to this account, asserting a sentence cannot be understood simply as offering to present a justificatory defense of it if challenged. For one cannot understand the undertaking of justificatory responsibility apart from the recognition of inferential authority, which in turn is explained in terms of the *deferral* of justificatory responsibility from one interlocutor to another. Defending a claim only has a point if successfully defended claims license others to rely upon their authority in defending further claims. This point is most evident in the case of bare assertions, which involve no offer to defend a claim, operating solely as licenses authorizing inferences to further claims. Emphasizing the conditional offer to justify, to the exclusion of the aspects of authority and deferral, would leave a treatment of asserting unable to explain the crucial distinction between taking a claim to be justified and taking it to be *true*—what Heidegger might have called ‘the epistemological difference.’ For the difference is precisely that between treating a performance as successfully discharging a task responsibility and accepting the authority of a licensing performance. The dimension of interpersonal inferential authority is thus essential to the status of assertions as putative knowledge claims and as public information, their cognitive and communicative roles.

By way of conclusion, it is interesting to compare this story with the most powerful contemporary account of asserting which avoids the pitfalls enumerated at the opening of this paper. Grice’s early work on meaning suggests an interpretation of asserting a sentence as uttering the sentence with the intention of bringing one’s audience to hold the

belief expressed by that sentence, in virtue of their recognition of that very intention. For the social behaviorist, who contends that the notions of belief and of intention must ultimately be explained in terms of the social practices governing assertion, such an account is backwards. But there is something intuitively correct about it, and so it is useful to see the sense in which the social practice story merely transposes the Gricean approach into a social key. The effect of successful assertion on the audience is not taken to be belief, but commitment. It is not the intention of the speaker which matters in the first instance, but the social authority of his remark. It is not the speaker's *intention* which brings about the desired effect, but the social *convention* or practice governing his remark. On both views the speaker puts forward his claim as one which has the significance of authorizing commitment to that claim on the part of others. The difference lies in whether the locus of authority and of commitment is viewed as internal and psychological or as constituted by public social practice.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Kurt Baier, "Responsibility and Freedom," in R. T. DeGeorge (ed.), *Ethics and Society* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1966).
- [2] Robert Brandom, "Truth and Assertibility," *Journal of Philosophy* 73 (1966).
- [3] ———, "Freedom and Constraint by Norms," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16 (1979).
- [4] R. T. DeGeorge (ed.), *Ethics and Society* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1966).
- [5] Michael Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language* (London: Duckwork, 1973).
- [6] Peter Grogono, *Programming in Pascal* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1980).
- [7] Hans Hermes, F. Kambartel, F. Kaulbach, (eds.), *Posthumous Writings* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979).
- [8] Richard Rorty, "Incorrigibility as the Mark of the Mental," *Journal of Philosophy* 67 (1970).
- [9] John Searle, *Speech Acts* (London: Cambridge U.P., 1969).
- [10] Wilfrid Sellars, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," in *Science, Perception, and Reality* (New York, NY: Humanities Press, 1963).

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Dummett concludes the useful discussion of asserting in his Frege book (to which the present account is much indebted): "We have opposed throughout the view of assertion as the expression of an interior act of judgement; judgement rather is the interiorization of the external act of assertion. The reason for viewing the two this way round is that a conventional act can be described, without circularity, as the expression of a mental state of act only if there exist non-conventional ways of expressing it . . ." ([7]: 362).

<sup>2</sup>"Whereas a procedure has an *effect*, a function has a *value*."

<sup>3</sup>Section 3 of the *Begriffsschrift* (BGS) says of the contents of two judgments "[I]f the consequences derivable from the first, when it is combined with certain other judgements always follow also from the second when it is combined with these same judgements. . . [then] I call that part of the content that is the *same* in both the *conceptual content*."

<sup>4</sup>I.e., content-sensitive inferences.

<sup>5</sup>The preface to the BGS describes the expressive project as ultimately including the conceptual contents of sentences of arithmetic, geometry, chemistry, and physics,

though of BGS itself he says “. . . I confined myself for the time being to expressing relations that are independent of the particular characteristics of objects,” (that is, to purely formal or logical contents). In comparing BGS with other systems, Frege complains: “In contrast, Boole’s symbolic logic only represents the *formal* part of the language,” whereas “Right from the start I had in mind the *expression of a content* not a *calculus* restricted to pure logic” ([7]: 12-13).

<sup>6</sup>See for instance Frege’s first logic, as reprinted in [7]: “The goal of scientific endeavor is *truth*. Inwardly to *recognize something as true* is to make a judgement, and to give expression to this judgement is to make an assertion” (p. 2). “Logic is concerned only with those grounds of judgement which are truths. To make a judgement because we are cognisant of other truths as providing a justification for it is known as *inferring*” (p. 3). “The task of logic being what it is, it follows that we must turn our backs on anything that is not necessary for setting up the laws of inference” (p. 5).

<sup>7</sup>The practical scope of an assertion is then indicated by the audience to whom such warrant extends. A declarative sentence uttered by an actor on stage licenses inferences in the desired sense only for other characters, not for those watching the play.

<sup>8</sup>We leave aside the important question of how we distinguish inferences from the *content* of the claiming (what is claimed) from inferences from the claiming of that content. The latter we ignore throughout as pragmatic inferences (e.g., “To be so rude to her, Peter must be very angry with the doctor.”) whose possibility must be understood in terms of the primary semantic-inferential practices investigated here.

<sup>9</sup>Compare Searle ([9]: 96), who treats an assertion as “an undertaking to the effect that *p*.” The present account explains what is undertaken, and explicates the “effect” here invoked (see note 2).

<sup>10</sup>Of course it need not always be appropriate to issue a justificatory challenge. Non-inferential reports concerning the immediate environment are presumed to be in order unless the challenger can suggest some special reason why the speaker might have failed in this case to make the report any competent speaker ought to make (e.g., because of bad light or hidden mirrors, etc.). So justificatory challenges can in some circumstances *themselves* stand in need of justification.

<sup>11</sup>This category will include not only the Pope’s speaking *ex cathedra* on matters of faith and morals, but other institutionalized categories such as sincere first-person avowals.

<sup>12</sup>A discussion of reports would, I believe, require the consideration of a special kind of bare assertion. When a report is challenged, one may respond by exhibiting the reported situation, saying to the challenger in effect “Look for yourself.” This may be thought of as deferring justificatory responsibility to a *world assessor*. The reported situations are then thought of as bare assertions uttered by the world. This special sort of assertion involves only authority, and cannot itself be further queried for justification. The world’s authority in these matters is, like all authority, constituted by its social recognition, that is by the fact that members of the linguistic community accept deferrals of justificatory responsibility to the world assessor. Seeing the reportable world as in this way consisting of assertions which are reported by being overheard combined the early Wittgenstein’s conviction that the world consists of facts, not of things, with the later Wittgenstein’s assimilation of non-inferential reporting to *reading* a text. Nothing in the present account of asserting in general depends upon this idiosyncratic construal of reports, however.

<sup>13</sup>Nor, as Baier makes clear, must we confuse either of these categories with responsibility in the sense of liability to punishment. Presumably this sort of responsibility is more primitive than answerability, since behavior shaping by negatively reinforcing socially inappropriate performances seems to be a fundamental mechanism for training new community members to the point at which they can be entrusted with specific task responsibilities, become assertors, and become answerable for their deviations.

<sup>14</sup>See [10], especially sections 12-20. The present account of assertion is largely a footnote to Sellars’ seminal discussion of the dimension of endorsement.

<sup>15</sup>If the responses defining *each* kind of significance a performance can have in some social behavioral system are in this sense themselves performances whose significance is constituted by how they can appropriately be responded to (rather than by objectively definable responses such as cutting one’s throat), we may call the system of social

practices *autonomous*. See [3]. The inferential-justificatory system of practices comprised by asserting is autonomous in this sense.

<sup>16</sup>Compare this sort of social-responsive incorrigibility with the Cartesian variety investigated by Rorty in [8].

<sup>17</sup>This autonomy of significance of justification is merely a particular case of the general fact that whether or not one performance is socially appropriate according to some social practice matters only for the appropriateness of further performances. Seat-taking in the theatre is appropriate only if preceded by an appropriate ticket-purchasing. From the interpretation of a bit of behavior as governed by a particular social practice, one can draw conclusions about what performances would be appropriate, but not about which will occur. For a discussion of this feature of social practice aimed at the question of is-ought reducibility, see [3].

<sup>18</sup>For the purposes of the simplified exposition of this paper, we have assumed throughout that the community is at one with respect to the *inference* they accept as appropriate, and have investigated the sorts of authority and responsibility which can give rise to an assertional structure of endorsements and commitments according to those inferential relations. The real world is more complicated, however. As Quine emphasizes in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," which inferences one is prepared to accept depends upon what sentences one is prepared to assert and hence has available as auxiliary hypotheses. The present account can be extended to admit not only perspectival commitments but perspectival recognitions of the appropriateness of justifications and inferences, but doing so introduces complications beyond the scope of the present work.

---

---

# THE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

VOLUME LXXIII, NO. 6, MARCH 25, 1976

---

---

## TRUTH AND ASSERTIBILITY \*

THE question I will try to answer in this paper is: What role should the study of the truth conditions of sentences play in our attempt to understand the phenomenon of language? In contemporary philosophy of language there are two major opposing schools of thought on this issue. On the one hand, a tradition influenced by Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, Tarski, and Carnap takes truth to be the basic concept in terms of which a theory of meaning, and hence a theory of language, is to be developed. According to this view, the essential feature of language is its capacity to represent the way things are. Understanding this function in detail is thus a matter of describing the conditions under which particular sentences *truly* represent the way things are. Formal semantics, the study of the truth conditions of sentences of various sorts of discourse, is the natural expression of this point of view. On the other hand, there is an approach to language, shared by Dewey and the later Wittgenstein, which attributes little or no importance to the notion of truth. According to this view, language is best thought of as a set of social practices. In order to understand how language works, we must attend to the *uses* to which its sentences are put and the circumstances in which they are used. Dewey claimed that everything useful that could be said about language with the notion of truth could also be said with a more general and methodologically unproblematic notion of justified utterance or "warranted assertibility." He argued further that the notion of truth should be discarded, since, insofar as it cannot be so reconstructed, its use in a theory of language leads to confusions and pointless unanswerable questions.<sup>1</sup> One of the

\* I would like to thank Richard Rorty, David Lewis, and Bruce Kuklick for valuable comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

<sup>1</sup> John Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Holt, 1938); see especially chs. 1, 6, and 25. See also Dewey's response to Russell in P. A. Schilpp, ed., *Philosophy of John Dewey* (New York: Tudor, 1951).

striking features of Wittgenstein's mature thought is the replacement of his earlier question "What are the facts?" by the question "What are we entitled to say?" The notion of truth plays no role whatsoever in his comments on language-use (it is mentioned only in passing in the *Investigations*, by way of criticizing his earlier views).<sup>2</sup>

## I

It is not immediately obvious why stressing the kinship of language-use to other social practices should lead to the de-emphasis of the notion of truth; so let us look a little more closely at the sort of picture with which this approach presents us. The use of a particular language by a population consists in the conformity of that population to a great many regularities. There are regularities involving pronunciation, the form of utterances, the physical and social circumstances of utterance, responses to utterances, and so on. The object of a theory of that language is the characterization and explanation of those regularities conformity to which is a criterion of membership in the linguistic community. We want, among other things, to associate with each sentence of the language a set—the assertibility conditions of that sentence—which determines the regularities of usage a speaker must conform to for a given sentence. (The elements of the sets associated with sentences might be patterns of retinal irradiations, possible worlds, or sets of beliefs of the speaker; for my present purposes we can abstract from the question of what sorts of elements to choose.) Now it is clear that no regularity of appropriate utterance which a speaker learns to conform to and which is reconstructed by a hypothetical theory of assertibility conditions for a language can amount to requiring that all utterances be true, for that would make infallibility a prerequisite for learning the language. It is thus clear that many of the utterances of any population will be, as we should say, assertible but not true, or true but not assertible.

But—to return to the question raised above in connection with Dewey and Wittgenstein—what is the significance of this observation for understanding the language studied? Presumably some of the utterances are guttural or nine-worded or spoken in the sun and not assertible, or are assertible and not guttural, nine-worded,

<sup>2</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Blue and Brown Books* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1958), pp. 67–68; *Philosophical Investigations* (New York: Macmillan, 1953), part I, secs. 22, 23; see also secs. 136, 137 for the only use of truth.



or spoken in the sun. Why should the notion of truth be more important to the theory of this language than these other notions? Of course we *can* describe the linguistic behavior in terms of truth if we like, but the redundancy characteristics of our truth predicate assure us that we *can* involve that notion in any description we like, even where nothing like language is being discussed. We want to know what work is to be done by that notion. Notice that it is of no particular use to point out that in some language being studied not all warranted assertions of the presence of a deer result in venison dinners (even when nothing concrete goes wrong with the hunt, such as a badly thrown spear). For this is just to say that even if all members of the group are on their best behavior, each intending to conform to all the traditional regularities of linguistic conduct, asserting things only when appropriate and always responding appropriately, and even if everyone succeeds in these intentions, sometimes things go well and sometimes not so well. And this is surely true of their other social practices of child-rearing, planting, and propitiating the gods as well. If no notion of truth is required to explain the occasional and otherwise random failures of a certain generally successful child-rearing practice, what is it about the linguistic practices which does enforce this notion?

Approaching language primarily as a social practice or "form of life" thus presents a challenge to anyone who thinks that truth and the truth conditions studied by semantics ought to play a central role in our account of language. In the rest of this paper I will develop a precise sense in which the representationalist's concern with truth conditions can be generated within the project of the assertibility theorists.

## II

Two recent authors who have recognized the challenge presented by the two points of view we have outlined, and have made explicit attempts to reconcile them are Wilfrid Sellars<sup>3</sup> and David Lewis.<sup>4</sup> I will not draw upon their efforts here, though the resolution I will propose is similar in some respects to each of their proposals. The suggestion I will develop as to the proper role of truth in explaining language-use is that of Michael Dummett<sup>5</sup>:

<sup>3</sup> *Science and Metaphysics* (New York: Humanities, 1968), chs. 4 and 5.

<sup>4</sup> "Languages and Language," forthcoming in the *Minnesota Studies*; also his *Convention* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1969), ch. 5, sec. 4. I believe that the view Lewis puts forward is, with minor changes, compatible with the more detailed position developed in this essay.

<sup>5</sup> *Frege: Philosophy of Language* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 451.

... the notion of truth is born in the first place out of less specific modes of commendation of an assertoric utterance, from the necessity to distinguish between it and the epistemic notion of justifiability; and this necessity is in turn imposed by the requirements for understanding certain kinds of compound sentence (451).

“Epistemic justifiability” is a part of what we have called the “assertibility conditions” of an utterance. Dummett offers an example:

If future-tense sentences could not come within the scope of sentential operators, there would be no place for such a distinction between justification and truth. We should, for example, have no basis for distinguishing between an expression of intention and a statement of intention, that is, between the forms ‘I am going to marry Jane’ and ‘I intend to marry Jane’, which differ, not in respect of the circumstances in which their utterance is justified, but solely in their truth-conditions. This distinction has to do solely with the different behavior of the two forms as constituents of more complex sentences, and, particularly, as antecedents of conditionals (450).

Dummett is thus claiming that

(1) I am going to marry Jane.

and

(2) I intend to marry Jane.

have the same assertibility conditions.

(3) If I am going to marry Jane, then I will no longer be a bachelor.

and

(4) If I intend to marry Jane, then I will no longer be a bachelor.

however, have different assertibility conditions, because within the context of the conditional the different *truth* conditions of (1) and (2) become significant. If we want to explain the assertibility conditions of (3) and (4), we must consider not just the assertibility conditions of the embedded sentences, but also their truth conditions. Unfortunately, Dummett does not say anything about the class of sentential contexts that require us to discriminate between truth and assertibility, save that the conditional is one. Moreover, (1) and (2) do not in fact have the same assertibility conditions. I might be justified in believing that I will marry Jane on the basis of some inductive inference or because of a religious prophecy with great authority in my community, without its being appropriate to say that I *intend* to do what I believe I will do. We must try to overcome these difficulties in developing Dummett’s suggestion.

Consider a language generated from a finite set  $a_1 \dots a_n$  of atomic sentences by the possibly iterated application of a finite set  $F_1 \dots F_m$  of one-place sentential operators (we lose no generality by the restriction to one-place operators). One way to formulate a theory of what a speaker knows when he can use all the sentences of such a language is to associate with each sentence  $s$  a set  $A(s)$  of *assertibility conditions*, such that, within the context of the theory,  $A(s)$  determines the concrete occasions of appropriate use of  $s$ . A finitely specifiable theory of the use of such a potentially infinite language<sup>6</sup> cannot merely associate a set with each sentence, but must generate the assertibility conditions of complex sentences by some recursion on their complexity. In the ideal case each compounding operator would be *assertibility-explicable*; i.e., for each operator  $F_i$  there would be a function which, given only the assertibility conditions of the component sentence, would generate the assertibility conditions of the compound containing it:

$$(F1) \quad \forall i \leq m \exists g \forall s \in L (A(F_i s) = gA(s))$$

Dummett claims that (F1) is false of English.<sup>7</sup> For he claims that:

$$(F2) \quad \exists i \exists s, s^* \in L ((A(s) = A(s^*)) \& (A(F_i s) \neq A(F_i s^*)))$$

offering two sentences supposed to have identical assertibility conditions, but which generate compounds with non-identical assertibility conditions.<sup>8</sup> And this indeed shows:

$$(F3) \quad \exists i \sim \exists g \forall s \in L (A(F_i s) = gA(s))$$

We will see below how to adapt Dummett's example so as to make this argument stand up. Thus in English the contribution a sentence makes to the assertibility conditions of compound sentences containing it is not exhausted by the assertibility conditions

<sup>6</sup> In the sense that there is a uniform procedure for generating a further sentence of the language from any finite set of its sentences. I believe that something like this property ought to be used to distinguish *logical* connectives from others, but a discussion of quantification is beyond the scope of this paper, so I cannot argue the point.

<sup>7</sup> There are, of course, languages that are assertibility-explicable. Intuitionistic mathematics is formulated in such a way that the assertibility conditions of compounds depend only upon the assertibility conditions of the components. Dummett discusses the significance of this point for the general dispute between those who view language primarily as a means of representing reality and those who view it as a social practice, in the concluding sections of "Truth," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, LIX (1958/9): 141–162.

<sup>8</sup> Adapting Dummett's example to our language of one-place sentential functions, we take the functor to be "If ..., then I will no longer be a bachelor," rather than the ordinary two-place conditional "If ..., then \_\_\_\_\_."

of the component sentence. Let us introduce an auxiliary notion  $B$  such that we *can* generate the assertibility conditions of a compound sentence from the assertibility conditions *and the B-conditions* of the embedded sentence. Two requirements must be satisfied:

$$(F4) \quad \forall i \exists g \forall s \in L (A(F_i s) = g(A(s), B(s)))$$

$$(F5) \quad \forall i \exists f \forall s \in L (B(F_i s) = f(B(s), A(s)))$$

In the context of this machinery, we may take Dummett to be suggesting that, in order to generate in a uniform way the assertibility conditions of compound sentences, we need to look not only at the assertibility conditions of the embedded sentences, but also at their *truth* conditions. Truth is to play the role of the auxiliary  $B$  above. In what follows I shall try to show that there is a class of compounding devices in English which are *truth-inducing sentential contexts* (TISCs). Whatever auxiliary notion a particular theory invokes to explicate (in the technical sense of F4) just those sentences generated by means of these devices will be the truth concept employed by that theory. I am not, of course, offering this as a suggestion about the origins of the uses of the everyday notion of truth, though I hope to illuminate such uses by considering a special technical project.

### III

With this project in mind, I suggest that the following serve Dummett's purpose:

(5) I will marry Jane.

(6) I foresee that I will marry Jane.

'Foresee' is little enough used in our ordinary conversation so that we can stipulate that it is to be taken as including whatever could justify one in asserting that one will marry Jane.<sup>9</sup> Thus one is justified in asserting (5) under just the same circumstances in which one is justified in asserting (6).<sup>10</sup> Whatever slight damage we must do to the sense of (6) in order to identify its assertibility conditions with those of (5) obviously does not affect the difference between:

<sup>9</sup> David Lewis suggested this use of 'foresee'.

<sup>10</sup> This is a much weaker statement than the (false) claim that (5) and (6) have the same *meaning*. For if (speaker) meaning is, plausibly, whatever it is that the speaker must be said to "know" when he can use the sentence properly, then that meaning includes on our account not just the assertibility conditions of the sentence, but also the contribution the sentence makes to the assertibility conditions of compound sentences containing it. In any language containing TISCs, *truth* conditions will thus also be a part of the meaning of every sentence that can appear embedded in such a TISC.

(7) If I will marry Jane, then I will no longer be a bachelor.

and

(8) If I foresee that I will marry Jane, then I will no longer be a bachelor.

(7) is presumably assertible whenever it is conversationally germane; (8) is assertible only under very special conditions of knowledge concerning how good at foreseeing I am.

According to our formal analysis, then, exhibiting (5)–(8) is sufficient to establish that English is not assertibility-explicable. So some auxiliary notion must be introduced to generate the assertibility conditions of compound sentences. Dummett's suggestion as we have reformulated it is that the conditional is one of the compounding devices in English which require truth as an auxiliary for their explication. Other such devices exist:

- (9) Waldo believes that I will marry Jane.
- (10) Waldo believes that I foresee that I will marry Jane.
- (11) It is possible that I will marry Jane.
- (12) It is possible that I foresee that I will marry Jane.
- (13) It will be the case that I will marry Jane.
- (14) It will be the case that I foresee that I will marry Jane.

It is clear that, for the compounding devices illustrated in these pairs as well, a difference in the truth conditions of the embedded component is sufficient to ensure a difference of assertibility conditions for the compound, regardless of the identity of assertibility conditions of the embedded component.<sup>11</sup>

Can we give a general characterization of truth-inducing sentential contexts? We might in fact get the right class of compounds for English by using the straightforward condition that any compound whose assertibility conditions are different depending upon whether it has (5) or (6) as a component, is a TISC. This would be an accidental and unilluminating way of characterizing the desired class, however. For we can imagine extending English by adding a one-place sentential compound  $F'$  such that, for any sentence  $p$  of

<sup>11</sup> As far as I can see, there is no direct way to test whether the compounding devices of (7)–(14) would yield co-assertible sentences in the event that we substituted for the components (5) and (6) a pair of sentences with identical assertibility conditions *and* identical truth conditions. For there simply are no such sentences. What would be the point of such redundancy in a natural language? I conclude that the requirement of F4 that identity of assertibility conditions and truth conditions of embedded sentences must be sufficient for identity of assertibility conditions of the compound TISC-generated sentence, offers no barrier to our taking the constructions of (7)–(14) to be TISCs.

English,  $F'p$  is assertible just in case it has an odd number of words. Since no pair constructed by the device of (5) and (6) will have two elements *both* of which have an odd number of words,  $F'$  would discriminate between them in the required fashion. Yet nothing about truth is intuitively required to explicate  $F'$ ; so it should not be taken to be a TISC. Accordingly, in generalizing from the examples we have considered, we must find a class of pairs of sentences which can play the role that (5) and (6) played with respect to the compounds we have discussed and whose selection is sufficiently motivated by its connection with ordinary notions of truth so that it will not violate our intuitions concerning manufactured connectives.

The characteristic of (5) and (6) on which I want to focus in defining TISCs is, roughly, that there is a state of the speaker which (5) expresses and which (6) states to be expressed. Sometimes there will be in the language a state-attributing term—e.g., ‘asserts-that- $p$ ’ or ‘believes-that- $p$ ’—such that, according to the regularities governing its application, the production of an utterance in a particular situation is sufficient to license the attribution of that state to the utterer. In such a case I shall call the pair consisting of the original utterance and the statement that attributes the appropriate state to the issuer of that utterance an *expression-statement pair* (ESP).<sup>12</sup> A TISC, then, can be defined as any sentential compounding device  $F$  such that, if the ordered pair  $(p, p')$  is an ESP, then  $A(Fp) \neq A(Fp')$ . That is, TISCs are those compounding devices such that it is a sufficient condition for a compound to discriminate in its assertibility conditions between elements of a pair of sentences that that pair be an ESP, let the assertibility conditions, word length, sonority, or what have you of the components fall where they may.<sup>13</sup> Elements of an ESP need not have the same assertibility conditions, but, if they do, they are discriminated anyway.

This definition requires that all the ESPs have elements which differ in their truth conditions and which are accordingly discriminated by the firm examples of TISCs. By the nature of the

<sup>12</sup> Where the regularities are very close to invariable association of state with utterance, the utterance that attributes the state to oneself and the original utterance will have very nearly identical assertibility conditions. Where there are divergences, as with the attribution of belief states, assertibility conditions will exhibit similar divergence.

<sup>13</sup> In generalizing to multi-place functors we will identify ESPs by requiring that there be ways of filling all but one of the places of the functor so that, when the elements of the pair are sequentially substituted into the remaining place, different assertibility conditions result,

case I cannot survey all the TISCs and ESPs of English to demonstrate that these conditions are met without serious counterexample.<sup>14</sup> By way of persuasion, however, we may consider a type of ESP very different from those we have attended to thus far:

- (15) Is Waldo going to the library?
- (16) I am asking whether Waldo is going to the library.
- (17) Waldo, open the door!
- (18) I am commanding Waldo to open the door.

The pairs (15), (16) and (17), (18) are ESPs, for the second element of each pair attributes to the speaker that state of asking or commanding which is expressed by the first element. The first element does not yield a grammatical sentence when embedded in our paradigm TISCs, but the second does:

- (19) Wanda believes is Waldo going to the library.
- (20) Wanda believes I am asking whether Waldo is going to the library.
- (21) If Waldo, open the door, then the door will be opened.
- (22) If I am commanding Waldo to open the door, then the door will be opened.

The first elements of these pairs have, roughly, no assertibility conditions at all, but the second elements do. The TISCs thus discriminate all the ESPs appropriately. But notice further that we can explain the deviance of (19) and (21) intuitively by the fact that (15) and (17) have no truth conditions, where (16) and (18) do. The difference in assertibility conditions of the compounds is plausibly attributed to the difference in truth conditions, just as our theory says it ought (even though this situation is very different from those we began with). And this would still be true if (15) and (16), or (17) and (18) had identical assertibility conditions. According to the view I am urging, of course, the anomalous behavior of (15) and (16) as components of TISCs is the reason they have no truth conditions.

#### IV

The results we have arrived at concern the relation of a study of the truth conditions of sentences to a more general investigation of language use. We thus consider only that aspect of the ordinary

<sup>14</sup> I believe, though it is no part of my present project to argue for the claim, that *every* sentential compounding device of English is a TISC. This would have the important result that the *only* auxiliary device needed to explicate sentential compounding is truth. That this is not the only coherent possibility is clear from fn 7 above.

notion of truth which is relevant for a particular sort of technical project. It is worth pointing out, then, that the notion of truth that results from a consideration of ESPs and TISCs has an intuitive connection with traditional views about the nature of truth. Representationalists like Russell, arguing for the necessity of a language-transcendent notion of truth, have claimed as against truth-as-assertibility theorists like Dewey that the very essence of the notion of truth lies in the contrast it enables and enforces between how things are and how they are thought to be, believed to be, or desired to be by any person or group of people. If you have this distinction, you have a notion of truth: if you fail to make this distinction, you are simply talking about something else.<sup>15</sup> Although the primary orientation of this paper has been squarely within the language-as-social-practice tradition of those who give pride of place to assertibility, we have seized on just that distinction which according to the representationalists generates the notion of truth. For on our account it is precisely the explication of compounds (TISCs) that systematically discriminate between the content of an utterance (how it says things are) and any state of the utterer (what he is entitled to say, what he believes or desires) that may be associated with it, which requires the introduction of truth as an auxiliary notion in carrying forward the project of generating assertibility conditions describing the use of the language. A leading idea of the traditional view of truth is thus incorporated in our assertibility-generated treatment of truth.

We have presented an account of what facts it is about the use of a language in virtue of which the sentences of that language have a *content* distinct from the set of circumstances under which they may be appropriately used. For the purposes of semantics, whatever auxiliary notion explicates the TISCs is the truth concept of the language and assigns to each sentence of the language that can appear in the appropriate sort of compound a set: the truth conditions of that sentence. The theory then provides, for each sort of compounding device, a uniform way of generating the assertibility conditions of the compound sentences from the assertibility conditions and the truth conditions of its components. The contemporary discipline of semantics takes only part of this generation as its project, namely, the construction of truth conditions for all

<sup>15</sup> Indeed, thinking about this contrast is supposed to lead one to think of language as *re-presenting* the way things are. See pp. 145–154 in Schilpp, *op. cit.*, and ch. 23 of Russell's *Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (New York: Norton, 1962).



the sentences of the language and the generation of the truth conditions of compound sentences from the truth conditions of their embedded components. Since in natural languages multiple nesting of sentential operators is common, the primary project (from our point of view) of generating assertibility conditions will require for multiply compound sentences that the truth conditions of embedded compounds be generated (as in formula F5 above). Semantics as such never considers the final step of generating assertibility conditions, given the truth conditions of components. For some sorts of compounding devices—the conditional, negation, tensing, modal operators, and some others—it happens to be possible to generate the truth conditions of compounds from the truth conditions of components in relatively simple ways, as formal semantics has shown us. For other sorts of compounds, notoriously for analogues of “Waldo believes that . . .,” it appears that not only the truth conditions of components are needed, but also the assertibility conditions. If so, then the theory of truth conditions will not be able to insulate itself as a self-contained part of the project of giving assertibility conditions in treating these compounds.<sup>16</sup> Be this as it may, we see from our account both how semantics can be a semi-autonomous discipline, abstracting from the more immediate concern with assertibility, and also how that semi-autonomous discipline serves a useful purpose in a general theory of how languages work.

It is clear from our previous discussion that the role we have ascribed to the notion of truth in a theory of the use of a language underdetermines the actual truth conditions of sentences. There may be many candidate sets of truth conditions which result in the same assertibility conditions for compound sentences. In theorizing about the use of some language we will pick among rival

<sup>16</sup> It is interesting to note that Quine's suggestion that we restrict ourselves to extensional constructions in order to make truth conditions behave is undercut by this approach. According to our definition, the second element of an ESP attributes a state to a speaker on the basis of his utterance and its circumstances. We should not be surprised, therefore, that all the ESPs we have identified above involve nonextensional constructions. For the state-attributing construction of the second element of an ESP to be extensional would be for the attribution of the state to depend only on the truth value of the utterance which is the first element. The only states like *that* are “speaking truly,” “speaking falsely,” and their trivial variants (like “speaking truly and not being a neutrino”). And we may not simply restrict ourselves to these ESPs in defining TISCs on pain of circularity. It follows that the existence of nonextensional constructions in a language is a necessary condition for the employment of truth conditions as auxiliaries in an account of the use of the language.

forms of truth conditions by considering the resulting theory with regard to all the mundane criteria applicable anywhere else in science—ease of coupling with other theories (particularly psychological and physiological theories about how human beings work), power, elegance, intuitive acceptability, exhibition of general principles, and so on. Our approach prepares us to discover that, even within a single language, in view of the *very* different sorts of things that would count as ESPs, for example, in mathematical talk, fictional talk, and ethical talk, different sorts of things might best be taken to be truth conditions of sentences of the different kinds of discourse. From the point of view of the technical project of generating assertibility conditions, the notions of truth and of truth conditions are theoretical auxiliaries, to be cut and pasted in whatever ways give us the nicest account of the assertibility conditions.

It is a striking fact that, as we have seen, we can be fairly precise about the *point* of a theory of truth conditions for a certain kind of theory of the use of language before we know the details of the best theory of any language. As our treatment of the various examples shows, we have pretty good intuitions concerning the role of truth in explicating the assertibility conditions of compounds in English even though we know nothing about such crucial matters as what sort of thing the elements of sets of assertibility conditions or truth conditions are best taken to be and even though we can exhibit no single example of a sentence for which we can write down assertibility conditions. The explicatory task that we have attributed to truth conditions arises equally for languages that contain no analogue of a truth predicate as for those languages, like English, which do (so long as the language is not assertibility-explicable in the sense of F1, and has TISCs). Nonetheless, the way in which we employed our intuitions concerning the everyday notion of truth at key places in the development of our characterization of that explicatory role shows that the ordinary English notion of truth in fact plays that role. We began by asking what point the notion of truth has for understanding the use of a language, since it seemed that everything we could be interested in about the use of a language could be accounted for solely in terms of assertibility. We have answered that question by showing that the association of truth conditions with sentences performs an essential function in characterizing the use of any language that meets a few easily specifiable conditions. To show the point of the ordinary no-

tion of truth for a certain technical project is not, however, to show the point of the notion of truth as such. We saw above that the technical purpose of generating assertibility conditions could in principle be fulfilled by many alternative "truth notions" (choices of specific sets as truth conditions). In view of the many and various projects that have enlisted the aid of the word 'true' and its cognates in the history of thought, we should not expect that *every* role played by that notion would be equally well played by any concept that happened to suffice for the generation of the assertibility conditions of certain compound sentence types. The aspect of the ordinary notion of truth which we have exhibited, however, is of great importance for the appreciation of the *point* of the study of semantics, and provides a general framework within which specific proposals and disputes may be placed and evaluated.

ROBERT BRANDOM

Princeton University

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Logic and Arithmetic*. DAVID BOSTOCK. New York: Oxford, 1974. vii, 216 p. \$19.25.

Legend has it that logicism foundered on the question "What counts as logic?" and on various technical difficulties with proposed reductions of mathematics to logic. This book tries to salvage the wreck with a reformulation of the philosophy and new technical machinery for the reduction. Logic is taken to investigate the relation between the structure of propositions and their truth values. Numbers are construed as quantifiers. Along lines developed by Ludwig Borkowski,<sup>1</sup> the author constructs a formal system accommodating quantification over quantifiers and delivering at least Peano arithmetic. His presentation is marred by frequent elementary confusions (of quotation with quasi-quotation, schematic constants with variables) and obscuring informality (an interpretation of the formal language is never presented). The philosophical motives behind the work remain nebulous. It offers us arithmetic served in a novel way, adding to the previous embeddings of that science in set theory, type theory, combinatorial logic, infinitary logic, and modal logic.

<sup>1</sup> "Reduction of Arithmetic to Logic Based on the Theory of Types without the Axioms of Infinity and the Typical Ambiguity of Arithmetic Constants," *Studia Logica*, VIII (1958): 283-295.

# Pragmatism, Phenomenalism, and Truth Talk

ROBERT BRANDOM

This essay offers a rational reconstruction of the career of a certain heroic approach to truth—the approach whose leading idea is that the special linguistic roles of truth ascriptions are to be explained in terms of features of the ascriptions of truth, rather than of what is ascribed. The explanatory emphasis placed on the *act* of calling something true, as opposed to its descriptive content, qualifies theories displaying this sort of strategic commitment as ‘pragmatic’ theories of truth, by contrast to ‘semantic’ ones. The starting point is an articulation of a central insight of the classical pragmatist theories of truth espoused in different versions by James and Dewey. Developing this insight in response to various objections yields a sequence of positions ending in contemporary anaphoric semantics: prosentential theories of ‘true’ and pronominal theories of ‘refers’. These theories articulate an antirealist position about truth and reference, of the sort here called ‘phenomenalist’. Insofar as theories of this sort offer adequate accounts of the phenomena they address, they assert relatively narrow and clearly defined limits to the explanatory ambitions of theories couched in traditional semantic vocabularies.

## I

The popular conception of the theory of truth of classical pragmatism is summed up in the slogan ‘The truth is what works.’ According to this view, the pragmatists were trying to give a theory of truth in the sense of offering necessary and sufficient conditions for possession of that property. Their innovation is then seen to consist in taking the possession of this property by a belief to consist in a relation not simply to what is believed, but also to what is desired. Working, or being satisfactory, in-

volves a further argument place beyond the standard representational or correspondence notion, for it is relative to preferences, purposes, interests, needs, or some such satisfiable states. A theory of truth, according to this line of thought, is generically a pragmatic one if it treats truth as the property of conducing to the satisfaction of some state associated with the believer, paradigmatically, desire. Specific versions of this genus of explanation will be distinguished by how they understand the state, its subject, and the sort of satisfactoriness. Thus, within the pragmatic genus, truth might be identified with properties as various as evolutionary adaptiveness for a species and optimality for felt-preference maximization by a time-slice of an individual agent.

This sort of understanding of truth as a property of utility for some end, a matter of how useful, in some sense, it is to hold the belief that is a candidate for truth, may be called 'stereotypical pragmatism'. It is important to notice what sort of a theory it is. Pointing out the apparent appropriateness of questions such as 'I believe that the theory works (for instance, makes correct predictions), but how do I know it is true?' already shows that this sort of pragmatism is very implausible if it is conceived as elucidating our concept of truth.<sup>1</sup> As Dewey was well aware, views of this stripe can best be maintained as revisionary proposals—not as accounts of what we mean by 'true', but suggestions that we stop using that concept and get along instead with the pragmatist's notion of utility. Any assessment of the merits of such a proposal depends on an account of what the role of our present concept of truth is, what explanatory uses we currently put the property of truth to. For only in that context can it be argued that some utility notion better serves those ends or plays that role. It is from their contribution to that antecedent question, of what work is done by our truth concept, that the significance of the classical pragmatists in the present story derives. Although their account of the role of truth talk cannot, as we shall see, in the end be counted as correct, it nevertheless provides the central idea around which an adequate account can be constructed. The answer that eventually emerges regarding the role of 'true' will make it difficult to see how stereotypical pragmatism, even as revisionary proposal, can be anything other than changing the subject, sharing only a homonym with ordinary truth talk.

There is no question that the classical American pragmatists at times commit themselves to what I have called 'stereotypical pragmatism about truth'. But there is a deeper and more interesting explanatory strategy that the pragmatists pursued as well. According to this way of setting out their account, concern for what 'works' or is satisfactory is only the final move in an innovative rethinking of the nature of truth and belief. We can and should be interested in the early moves, even if the final one does not seem satisfactory. The essential point of a theory such as James's is to treat calling something true as doing something more like praising it than like describing it.<sup>2</sup> Five separable theses can be distinguished in the elaboration of this approach. First is the performative, antidescriptive strategy, emphasizing the *act* of calling something true rather than the descriptive content one thereby associates with what is called true. Next is an account of that act as the personal taking up of a certain

sort of normative stance or attitude. Taking some claim to be true is endorsing it or committing oneself to it. Third is a particular understanding of that stance or attitude. Endorsing a claim is understood as adopting it as a guide to action, where this, in turn, is understood in terms of the role the endorsed claim plays in practical inference, both in first-person deliberation and in third-person appraisal. Fourth, and least important, is the view that an advantage of understanding the appropriateness or correctness of adopting an attitude of endorsement in terms of its role in guiding action consists in the possibility for some sort of not merely subjective measure of that appropriateness, namely, the success of the actions it leads to. This is the only strand of the argument acknowledged or embraced by stereotypical pragmatism.

Finally, and I want to argue, most significantly, the theory claims that once one has understood acts of *taking-true* according to this four-part model, one has understood all there is to understand about truth. Truth is treated, not as a property independent of our attitudes, to which they must eventually answer, but rather as a creature of taking-true and treating-as-true. The central theoretical focus is on what one is doing when one takes something to be true, that is, our *use* of 'true', the acts and practices of taking things to be true that collectively constitute the use we make of this expression. It is then denied that there is more to the phenomenon of truth than the proprieties of such takings. I call theories of this general sort 'phenomenalist', in recognition of the analogy with the paradigmatic subjective phenomenalism concerning physical objects, whose slogan was "esse est percipi." We consider these five theory-features seriatim.

The pragmatists start with the idea that in calling something true one is *doing* something, rather than, or in addition to, *saying* something. Instead of asking what property it is that we are describing a belief or claim as having when we say that it is true, they ask about the practical significance of the act we are performing in attributing that property. We accomplish many things by talking, and not all of them are happily assimilated to describing how things are. One ought not to conclude that because truth ascriptions are expressed in the same subject-predicate grammar as descriptions, they must for that reason be understood to function as descriptions. The pragmatic approach, centering on the act of calling something true rather than the content one thereby characterizes it as displaying, has much to recommend it. It has been seized upon by a number of authors who would not go on to accept the account of the act in question that the pragmatists offer. For, stripped of those further commitments, the recommendation is for a *performative* analysis of truth talk. In Fregean terms it is the suggestion that 'true' is a force-indicating, rather than a sense-expressing, locution.

Wittgenstein notoriously warned against thoughtless assimilation of sentence-use to fact-stating, and of term-use to referring. In the wake of Austin's discussions, theorists such as Strawson offered accounts of 'true' as a performative.<sup>3</sup> Its use was to be assimilated to other sorts of commitment-undertaking, in a way parallel to that expressed by the explicit performative 'I promise . . .'. In the same spirit, other contemporary accounts were offered of 'good' as expressing a kind of commenda-

tion, as taking up an attitude or expressing one's own relation to something, rather than as describing it by attributing some objective property. This is the sort of assimilation James had been urging in saying that truth is 'what is good in the way of belief'. Such remarks are often misinterpreted as claiming descriptive equivalence, or coextensiveness of the predicates 'true' and 'what it is good for us to believe'. On such a reading, the allegedly uncontroversial claim 'It is good for us to believe the truth', that is, the truth is among the things it is good for us to believe, is turned on its head. Necessary conditions are treated as sufficient, and truth is defined as *whatever* it is good for us to believe. James's intent was, rather, to mark off 'true', like 'good', as a term whose use involves the taking up of a nondescriptive stance, the undertaking of a commitment that has eventual significance for action.

What motivates such a performative analysis, for the pragmatists no less than for later theorists, is the special relation that obtains between the force or practical significance of an act of taking-true (which we might, before the performative possibility has been broached, uncritically have called an act of 'describing as' true) and the force or significance of a straightforward assertion. In asserting 'It is true that p', one asserts that p, and vice versa. The force or significance of the two claims is the same. On the face of it, this redundancy or transparency of force, the fact that adding the operator 'It is true that . . . .' to what one is going to assert does not change the force or significance of that assertion, might be explained in either of two ways. One might take it that the content expressed in a truth ascription is special, and that the redundancy of force of truth claims arises out of features of the property a claim or belief is said to exhibit when it is described as true. One must then offer an account of why attributing that property has the consequences that it does for the force of one's attribution. Compare treating claims using 'good' or 'ought' as describing properties of actions, and then needing a theory to explain the special motivational role that attributions of these properties must be taken to have for the attributor. The pragmatic theories being considered adopt the more direct path of taking the transmitted force of truth claims as the central phenomenon, one that is merely obscured by the misleading grammar of property ascription. Dewey's assertibilist theory of truth develops these ideas along explicitly performative lines using the model of utterances of 'I claim (or assert) that p'.<sup>4</sup> The claim that the force of freestanding utterances of this type and of 'It is true that p', are equivalent is especially liable to misinterpretation as the claim that the contents expressed by these utterances are the same. As will be seen, it is easy to show that that is not so. In any case, as a revisionist, Dewey did not even claim equivalence of force, though that was the dimension along which he assessed the relationship between his views and the tradition. Accordingly, he has often been 'refuted' on the basis of misunderstandings of theories that he did not subscribe to in the first place.

To this performative, antidescriptive explanatory commitment, the pragmatists add a particular sort of account of the act of taking-true as adopting a normative stance toward the claim or belief. In treating something as true, one is praising it in a special way—endorsing it or committing oneself to it. The stance is normative

in involving what the claim to which one has taken up a truth-attitude is *good* for, or *appropriately* used for. For treating something as the truth is plighting one's troth to it, not just acknowledging that it has some property. Truth undertakings are taken to be personal in that the proprieties of conduct one thereby commits oneself to depend on one's other commitments—commitments to choose (representing preference, desire, interest, need, and so on) as well as commitments to say (assert and believe). One is expressing or establishing one's own relation to a claim, in taking it to be true, rather than recognizing some independent property that claim already had. Again, the model of promising is important. This important emphasis on the normative character of cognitive undertakings was a central Kantian legacy (rejuvenated for us by Wittgenstein). Its expression is often obscured (Peirce is, as so often, an exception) by the pragmatists' further commitment to the sort of naturalism about the norms involved that gives rise to the attribution to them of stereotypical pragmatism.

Their understanding is that the commitment undertaken in taking-true is to rely on the belief or claim in question in guiding practical activity. This in turn is understood as a commitment to using the claim as a premise in practical inferences. These are inferences whose conclusions are not further claims, but actions, that is, performances under a description that is privileged by its relation to deliberation and appraisal. Relative to the truth-taking commitment, one ought to reason practically in one way rather than another. The proprieties of practical inference concerning whether to bring an umbrella are different for one who takes-true the claim that it is raining than for one who does not. The force of such proprieties is normative, in that although they may be ignored, the significance or force of the agent's commitment is to the effect that they *ought* not to be. It is these prudential 'oughts' that appraisal of actions assesses. The stance or attitude that one adopts in treating something as true is to be understood by its role in orienting action when activated by a contextualized attempt to satisfy the desires, preferences, and so on, that the agent exhibits.

## II

Pragmatism in the stereotypical sense becomes relevant when one conjoins the ideas of a performative analysis of taking-true, of the relevant performance as undertaking a personal commitment, and of the commitment as specifying the appropriate role of a claim in action-orienting deliberation, with the further idea that the measure of the correctness of the stance undertaken by a truth-attributor is the success of the actions it guides. The explanatory role played by this most notorious of the pragmatists' tenets ought to be understood in the light of the larger strategy for relating the concepts of truth and belief that it subserves. From a methodological point of view, perhaps the most interesting feature of the pragmatic approach is its commitment to phenomenalism about truth. Only in the context of a phenomenalist explanatory strategy can commitments of the first three sorts be seen as illuminating the no-



tion of truth. For what they really supply is a theory of **taking-true**. It is in the overarching commitment to the effect that once one understands what it is to take or treat something as true, one will have understood as well the concept of truth that the phenomenalism of this strategy consists. The force-redundancy approach to truth emphasizes the practical equivalence of taking something to be true and believing it, so another way of putting it is this: Instead of starting with a metaphysical account of truth, such as that of the correspondence theorists by opposition to which the pragmatists defined themselves, and employing that in one's account of beliefs, which are then conceived as representations that could be true, that is, have the property previously defined, the pragmatists go the other way around. They offer an account of believing or taking-true, characterized by the three sorts of commitments already canvassed, that does not appeal to any notion of truth. Being true is then to be understood as *being properly taken-true (believed)*.

What I find of most interest about the classical pragmatist stories is not stereotypical pragmatism, but the dual commitment to a normative account of claiming or believing that does not lean on a supposedly explanatory antecedent notion of truth, and the suggestion that truth can then be understood phenomenalistically, in terms of features of these independently characterized takings-true. The sort of explanatory strategies here called 'phenomenalist' in a broad sense treat the subject matter about which one adopts a phenomenalistic view as **supervening** on something else. Their paradigm is classical sensationalist phenomenalism about physical objects. The slogan of this narrower class of paradigmatically phenomenalistic views is that to be is to be perceived. The characteristic shift of explanatory attention enforced by these approaches is from what is represented to representings of it. The representeds are explained in terms of the representings, instead of the other way around. Talk ostensibly about objects and their objective properties is understood as a code for talk about representings that are interrelated in complicated but regular ways. What the naive conservatism implicit in unreflective practice understands as objects and properties independent of our perceptual takings of them now becomes radically and explicitly construed as structures of or constructions out of those takings. Attributed existence, independence, and exhibition of properties are all to be seen as features of attributings of them.

The general structure exhibited by this sort of account is that the facts about **having** physical properties are taken to supervene on the facts about *seeming* to have such properties. Or, in the vocabulary to be preferred here, the facts about what things are Ks, for a specified sortal K, supervene on the facts about what things are **taken** to be Ks. According to such an explanatory strategy, one must offer first an independent account of the takings—one that does not appeal in any way to what it is to be a K in order to explain what it is to take something to be one. Thus, classical phenomenalism concerning physical properties such as *red* found itself obliged to account for states of the attributing subject in which things *look-red* or *seem-red* without invoking the redness that is attributed in such takings. Once that obligation is satisfied, it can further be claimed that there are no facts about what things are

red, or what it is for things to be red, over and above all the (possible) facts about what things look or seem red.

Classical subjective phenomenalism regarding physical objects and properties notoriously failed in both component explanatory tasks. Cartesian mental acts seemed ideal candidates for the takings in question. This ontological category had been given an epistemic definition in terms of the privileged access (in the sense of transparency and incorrigibility) subjects have to the class of takings that includes perceptual seemings. That something could not seem red to a subject who did not by virtue of that very taking know that it seemed red, and that something could not merely seem to seem red without really seeming red, made this class of takings appear well suited to provide the independently characterized base of a supervenience relation. Their special epistemic status seemed to guarantee for these subjective takings or attributings the possibility of a characterization independent of what they take or attribute. For one knows all about these states just by having or being in them, apart from any relation to anything but the knowing subject and the known mental state. But this is a mistake. As various authors have shown (the locus classicus is Sellars's "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind"),<sup>5</sup> 'looks'-talk does not form an autonomous stratum of language, a game one could play though one played no other. When one understands properly how the 'seems' operator functions, one sees that the incorrigibility of such claims essentially arises from their withholding of the endorsements involved in unqualified claims about how things actually are. The very incorrigibility that recommended them as a basis in terms of which everything epistemically less certain could be understood turns out to be an expression of the parasitic relation that these withholdings of endorsement have to the risky practices of endorsement from which they derive their meaning, and by contrast to which they exhibit their special status. Whatever their role may be in the order of justification, in the order of understanding *seems-red* presupposes *is-red*.

For these reasons the classical phenomenalist basis of takings as subjectively certified seemings could not be secured with the autonomy from the properties taken to be exhibited, which is requisite for the subsequent framing of phenomenalist supervenience explanations. Those explanations had troubles apart from those regarding their basis, however. Generic phenomenalism has been characterized here in terms of supervenience. The sense intended is that one vocabulary supervenes on another just in case there could not be two situations in which true claims (that is, facts) formulable in the supervening vocabulary differed, and the true claims formulable in the vocabulary supervened on do not differ. More neutrally put, once it is settled what one is committed to as expressed in the one vocabulary, then it is settled what one is committed to as expressed in the other. Classical subjective phenomenalism about physical objects and properties typically made stronger, reductionist claims that involve further commitments beyond supervenience. These regarded the equivalence of sentences, or in the most committive cases, individual terms and predicates, in physical-object talk to sentences or terms and predicates constructible in the language of takings-as-seemings. Again, the equivalence in question might

vary from the extreme of definitional and translational equivalence to mere coextensiveness. In none of these forms are phenomenalist claims of this reductionist variety plausible today (see, for instance, Quine's "Epistemology Naturalized").<sup>6</sup> Attempts to work out these reductive phenomenalist strategies have shown that the conditions under which there are reliable connections between how things seem perceptually and how they are can themselves be stated only in terms of how things are. The inference from things seeming red to their being red depends on there being *in fact* no filters, strange lights, retina-altering drugs, and so on. That there not *seem* to be such is far from sufficient.

These explanatory failures of phenomenism in the narrow sense ought not to be taken to impugn the prospects of phenomenist strategies in the broad sense. For those difficulties arise from the way its general phenomenist commitments are specialized: in applying to perceivable physical properties, in offering an account of the relevant sort of takings as incorrigible, subjective perceptual seemings, and in insisting on reduction rather than just supervenience as the relation between them. Phenomenism, in general, is a structure that antirealist accounts of many different subject matters may exhibit. It elaborates one way of taking seriously what Dummett calls the issue of 'recognition transcendence'. To detail a specific version of this sort, one must specify three things: what it is that one is taking a phenomenist approach to (for example, physical objects, mental activity, semantic properties, the past, and so on), how one conceives the takings or attributions on which talk of such things is taken to supervene, and how in particular the supervenience relation is conceived. Corresponding to each specific phenomenist claim will be a class of claims that qualify as realist in the sense of denying the phenomenist's "nothing but" account of the subject matter in question. For the classical pragmatist, the facts about what is true supervene on the facts about taking-true, that is, on the actual action-guiding roles of beliefs. In order to appreciate the significance of the pragmatists' phenomenist strategy, one must first consider the development of the basic idea that truth locutions are force-indicating, rather than content-specifying. We will reconstruct the subsequent trajectory of this idea, and then return to the issue of phenomenism about truth.

Before we go on to see what is wrong with pragmatic phenomenism about truth, it is worthwhile to indicate briefly what can make it attractive. Consider the account of knowledge that this sort of approach makes available. Phenomenism about truth permits phenomenism about knowledge as well. So the primary interest is not in knowledge itself, but in attributions of knowledge. The pragmatist must ask: What are we *doing* when we say that someone knows something? According to a phenomenist reconstruction of the classic justified-true-belief account of knowledge, in taking someone to know something, one first of all *attributes a commitment*, that is, takes someone to believe. One further *attributes entitlement* to that commitment, that is, takes the committed subject to be justified. What is the function of the truth condition on knowledge, then? Conventionally, taking the claim that the subject is committed to as true is understood as attributing some property to it, charac-

terizing it or describing it. But as we have seen, the pragmatist's account of taking the claim to be true is *undertaking a commitment* to it. The truth condition does not qualify the entitled commitment that is attributed, but simply undertakes it on the part of the attributor. Knowledge claims have their central linguistic status because in them commitment to a claim is both attributed and undertaken. This phenomenalist distinction of social perspective, between the act of attributing and the act of undertaking a commitment, is what is *mistaken* for the attribution of a descriptive property (for which an otiose metaphysics can appear to be required). A pragmatic phenomenalist account of knowledge will accordingly investigate the social and normative significance of acts of attributing knowledge. The account of taking-true being considered is what makes possible such a way of thinking about knowledge claims.<sup>7</sup>

### III

On the pragmatic line being considered, it is the practical significance or force of asserting that defines taking-true, and this sense of taking-true accounts for our use of 'true'. In spite of all there is to recommend such a hypothesis, this conjunctive thesis cannot be correct. A familiar point of Frege's shows the inadequacy of the basic pragmatic claim. Truth talk cannot be given a purely pragmatic rendering, because not all uses of ' . . . is true' have assertoric or judgmental force. The force-based approach can at most account for a subset of our uses of truth-locutions. Frege drew attention to the use of sentences as components of other sentences. Assertion of a sentence containing another sentence as a component is not, in general, assertion of the embedded sentence. That is, the embedded sentence does not occur with assertional force, does not express something the assertor of the containing sentence is thereby committed to. Thus, as the antecedent of a conditional, for instance, 'It is true that  $p$ ' cannot have the significance of taking-true if that is understood as the expressing of assertional force. In this sense one does not take-true the claim that  $p$  in asserting 'if it is true that  $p$ , then it is true that  $q$ '.

The pragmatic approach, then, offers an account only of the freestanding uses of sentences formed with ' . . . is true', not the embedded ones. This is the same rock on which, as Geach<sup>8</sup> has shown, performative accounts of the use of 'good' have foundered. It is precisely because one cannot embed, say, questions and imperatives as antecedents of well-formed conditionals, in which they would occur without their characteristic force, that their significance as askings and commandings is associated with their force, and not to be understood as features of the descriptive content they express. If the essence of calling something good consisted in doing something rather than saying something, then it should not be possible to say things like 'if that is good, then one ought to do it'. That one can sensibly say things like this shows that 'good' has descriptive content that survives the stripping away by embedding of the force associated with freestanding describings. Thus, an embedding test can be treated as criterial for broadly descriptive occurrences of expressions. According to this test,

'It is true that  $p$ ' has nonperformative uses that the pragmatists' approach does not account for. And it is not open to the pragmatist simply to distinguish two senses of truth claims, one freestanding and the other embedded, and proceed from ambiguity. For then one would be equivocating in inferring from the freestanding 'It is true that  $p$ ' and the conditional 'If it is true that  $p$  then it is true that  $q$ ', in which it occurs embedded, that it is true that  $q$ , by detachment. So the pragmatic theory must be rejected and the phenomena it points to otherwise explained.

This sort of objection surfaces in many forms. Those who incorrectly take Dewey to have offered an analysis of 'true', rather than a candidate replacement notion, must thereby treat his assertibilism as the assertion of an equivalence of content between the sentence 'It is true that  $p$ ' and the explicit performative 'I (hereby) claim that  $p$ '. The most such a made-up thinker would be entitled to claim is that the *force* of the freestanding utterance of these sentences is the same. The stronger theory is refuted by noticing that 'It is true that  $p$ ' and 'I claim that  $p$ ' behave differently as embedded components. For instance, they are not intersubstitutable as the antecedents of conditionals, saving the inferential role of the resulting compound. Thus, an account such as is often attributed to Dewey is subject (as Putnam<sup>9</sup> has pointed out in different terms) to a version of Moore's naturalistic fallacy argument. Not everyone who is committed to the conditional 'If it is true that  $p$ , then it is true that  $p$ ' is committed also to the conditional 'If I claim that  $p$ , then it is true that  $p$ '. If we like, we can put this point by saying that there is nothing self-contradictory about the claim 'It is possible that I claim that  $p$  and it is not true that  $p$ '. The naturalistic fallacy point is thus just another way of putting the objection from embedding.

#### IV

Pointing to the sentential embedded uses of '. . . is true,' shows the inadequacy of the pragmatists' attempt to make do with a notion of taking-true as asserting. Analyzing and identifying uses of truth locutions by means of *redundancy of force*, that is, by a formal property of the pragmatic significance of acts of asserting freestanding truth claims, is not a sufficient explanatory strategy. It is not that freestanding force redundancy is not a central phenomenon of truth talk. But not all uses of truth locutions take this form. The pragmatic account cannot, for this reason, be the whole truth. Rather than simply discarding that approach, it is possible to amend it to retain the pragmatic account for the freestanding uses to which it properly applies. For there is a more general redundancy view that has the force-redundancy of freestanding truth-takings as a consequence. Embedded uses can be explained by a notion of *redundancy of content* according to which (apart from niceties having to do with type/token ambiguities) even in embedded contexts 'It is true that  $p$ ' is equivalent to  $p$ . For even their embedded occurrences are equivalent as antecedents of conditionals, in the sense that anyone who is committed to 'If it is true that  $p$  then  $q$ ' is thereby committed to 'If  $p$  then  $q$ ', and vice versa. Furthermore, intersubstitutability of 'It is true that  $p$ ' and  $p$  in *all* occurrences, embedded or not, is

sufficient to yield force redundancy in freestanding uses as a consequence. If two asserted contents are the same, then the significance of asserting them in the same pragmatic context should be the same. According to such a content redundancy view, the pragmatists have simply mistaken a part for a whole.

Redundancy views such as Ramsey's accordingly provide a generalization of the pragmatist's point, one that permits an answer to the otherwise decisive refutation offered by the embedding objection. Accounts that generalize to the intersubstitutability of 'Snow is white' and 'It is true that snow is white' are clearly on the right track. They show what is needed to supplement the pragmatists' account, in order to deal with some embedded occurrences. But they do not yet account for all the contexts in which the taking-true locution ' . . . is true' occurs. Such simple redundancy accounts will not offer a correct reading of sentences like 'Goldbach's conjecture is true'. For this sentence is not interchangeable with 'Goldbach's conjecture'. For instance, the former, but not the latter, appears as the antecedent of well-formed and significant conditionals. So content redundancy, though relaxing the limitations constraining the original pragmatic account, will not apply correctly in all the contexts in which truth locutions occur.

Such cases show that the content-redundancy view must, in turn, be revised to include the operation of some sort of disquotation or unnominalizing operator. In the cases to which the simple content-redundancy theory applies, the additional operation will be transparent. But in the case of sentences such as 'Goldbach's conjecture is true', the claim with respect to which the truth-taking is content redundant must be determined by a two-stage process. First, a sentence nominalization is discerned. This may be a description, such as 'Goldbach's conjecture', a quote-name, such as 'Snow is white', a 'that'-clause sortal such as 'the claim that snow is white', or some other sort of nominalization. Next, a sentence is produced that is nominalized by the locution picked out in the first stage. This is a sentence expressing Goldbach's conjecture, named by the quote name, one that says *that* snow is white, and so on. It is this sentence that is then treated by theory as intersubstitutable with the truth-attributing sentence, whether occurring embedded or freestanding.

A content redundancy account with disquotation or unnominalization is more satisfactory and deals with more cases than does a simple content-redundancy account, just as content-redundancy accounts represent improvements of theories acknowledging only redundancy of force. But even disquotational views will not account for all the uses of ' . . . is true' that might be important. They will not deal correctly, for instance, with occurrences such as 'Everything the policeman said is true', in which a *quantified* sentence nominalization is employed. For here what is nominalized is a whole *set* of sentences, and there need, in general, be no single sentence that is equivalent to all of them. A further refinement of content-redundancy accounts is required if they are to deal with this range of cases.

## V

The most sophisticated version of the redundancy theory, one capable of handling quantificational truth idioms, is the remarkable anaphoric analysis undertaken by Grover, Camp, and Belnap in their essay "A Prosentential Theory of Truth."<sup>10</sup> For the original redundancy and disquotational theories, each use of ' . . . is true' is associated with some sentence on which it is redundant, or with which it shares its content. Whatever else this may mean, it at least includes a commitment that the intersubstitution of the sentence containing 'true' and its nonsemantic equivalent, in some privileged range of contexts, preserves assertional and inferential commitments. The difficulty in extending this intersubstitutional account to the quantificational case is that there the use of the sentence containing 'true' is determined not by a single sentence, but by a whole *set* of sentences, those expressing whatever the policeman has said. Of course, disquotation or unnominalization may produce sets of sentences as well, as more than one sentence may express Goldbach's conjecture. In such cases, the sentences must all share a content or be redundant on each other, that is, must be intersubstitutable with each other in the relevant contexts, whereas there is no requirement that any two sentences that express things the policeman has said be in any other way equivalent. So what is it that the sentence containing 'true' shares its content with, or is redundant upon, in the sense of intersubstitutability? What is distinctive of the anaphoric development of redundancy theories is its use of the model of *pronouns* to show how, in spite of this difficulty, the quantificational cases can be treated as *both* redundant in the same way nonquantificational cases are, *and* as deriving their content from a whole *set* of nonintersubstitutable sentences.

It has been noticed that pronouns serve two purposes.<sup>11</sup> In their *lazy* use, as in 'If Mary wants to arrive on time, she should leave now', they are replaceable by their antecedents, serving merely to avoid repetition. In the *quantificational* use of pronouns, as in 'Any positive integer is such that if it is even, adding it to one yields an odd number', such replacement clearly would change the sense. 'If any positive number is even, adding any positive number to one yields an odd number' is not a consequence one becomes committed to by undertaking the original claim. In such cases, the semantic role of the pronoun is determined by a *set* of admissible substituents, which is in turn fixed by the grammatical antecedent (here 'Any positive number'). In virtue of uttering the original sentence, one is committed to *each* of the results of replacing the pronoun 'it' in some occurrence by some admissible substituent, that is, some expression that refers to a positive number.

The prosentential theory of truth is what results if one decides to treat ' . . . is true' as a syncategorematic fragment of *prosentences*, and then understands this new category by semantic analogy to other proforms, in particular to pronouns functioning as just described. So 'Snow is white is true' is read as a pro-sentence of laziness, having the same semantic content as its anaphoric antecedent, perhaps the token of 'Snow is white' that it contains. The pro-sentence differs from its antecedent in explicitly acknowledging its dependence upon an antecedent, as 'She

stopped' differs from 'Mary stopped', when the pronoun has some token of the type 'Mary' as its antecedent. Otherwise, the lazy uses are purely redundant. The advance on earlier conceptions lies in the availability on this model of *quantificational* uses of prosentences containing 'true'. Thus 'Everything he said is true' is construed as containing a quantificational prosentence, which picks up from its anaphoric antecedent a set of admissible substituends (things he said). Expanding the claim in the usual way, to 'For anything one can say, if the policeman said it, then it is true', exhibits 'it is true' as the quantificationally dependent prosentence. Each quantificational instance of this quantificational claim can be understood in terms of the lazy functioning of prosentences, and the quantificational claim is related to those instances in the usual conjunctive way.

By analogy to pronouns, prosentences are defined by four conditions:<sup>12</sup>

- (1) They occupy all grammatical positions that can be occupied by declarative sentences, whether freestanding or embedded.
- (2) They are generic, in that *any* declarative sentence can be the antecedent of some prosentence.<sup>13</sup>
- (3) They can be used anaphorically either in the lazy way or in the quantificational way.
- (4) In each use, a prosentence will have an anaphoric antecedent that determines a class of admissible sentential substituends for the prosentence (in the lazy case, a singleton). This class of substituends determines the significance of the prosentence associated with it.

There are many philosophical virtues to explicating each occurrence of 'true' as marking the occurrence of a prosentence in this sense. Quite varied uses, including embedded ones, of expressions involving 'true' in English are accounted for by means of a unified model. That model is in turn explicated by appeal to the familiar, and closely analogous, pronominal anaphoric reference relation. Not only is the semantics of such uses explained, but their pragmatic features as well—acknowledgment of an antecedent and the use of truth locutions to endorse or adopt someone else's claim. Tarski's biconditionals are appropriately underwritten, so the necessary condition of adequacy for theories of truth that he establishes is satisfied. A feature dear to the hearts of the prosententialists is the metaphysical parsimony of the theory. For what in the past were explained as attributions of a special and mysterious *property*, truth, to equally mysterious bearers of truth, namely, propositions, are exhibited instead as uses of grammatical proforms anaphorically referring only to the sentence tokenings that are their antecedents. A further virtue of the prosentential account is that anaphora is a relation between linguistic expression *tokenings*. Consequently, the use of tokenings of types such as 'That is true' as a response to a tokening of 'I am hungry' is construed correctly, just as 'he' can have 'I' as its antecedent without thereby referring to whoever uttered 'he'. An incautiously stated, content redundancy theory would get these indexical cases wrong. Finally, the uses of 'true' falling under the elegant, anaphorically unified treatment include quantificational ones such



as 'Everything the oracle says is true,' which are recalcitrant to more primitive redundancy and disquotational approaches.

The pragmatists' insistence that in calling something true one is not describing or characterizing it is respected. For one does not describe a cat when one refers to it pronominally by means of an 'it'. This point is further broadened to accommodate embedded uses where the account of the describing alternative as endorsing does not, as we saw, apply. 'True' functions anaphorically and not descriptively even in such cases. And anaphoric inheritance of content explains equally why freestanding or force-bearing uses of 'It is true that *p*' have the pragmatic significance of endorsements of the claim that *p*. The prosentential account shows how the pragmatists' insights can be preserved, while accounting for the uses of 'true' that cause difficulties for their original formulation. It is thus a way of working out the content-redundancy rescue strategy.

## VI

The treatment of quantificational prosentences represents an advance over previous redundancy theories. As the theory is originally presented, however, the treatment of lazy prosentences in some ways retreats from the ground gained by disquotational developments of redundancy theories. The explanatory costs associated with the original theory arise because it treats *most* occurrences of 'true' as quantificational. Thus, the official version of 'The first sentence Bismarck uttered in 1865 is true' construes it as a quantified conditional of the form 'For any sentence, if it is the first sentence Bismarck uttered in 1865, then it is true', in which 'it is true' is a prosentence of quantification. Now, one of the strengths of the prosentential account is its capacity to use the logical structure of quantification to explain the use of complicated sentences such as 'Something John said is either true or has been said by George'. There should be no quarrel with the author's treatment of these sentences that "wear their quantifiers on their sleeves." And it is clear that any sentence that has the surface form of a predication of truth of some sentence nominalization can be construed as a conditional propositional quantification. But it is not clear that it is a good idea to assimilate what look like straightforward predications of truth to this quantificational model. To do so is to reject the disquotational treatment of these lazy prosentences, which has no greater ontological commitments and stays closer to the apparent form of such sentences. Otherwise, almost all sentences involving 'true' must be seen as radically misleading in terms of their underlying logical form. The account of truth talk should bear the weight of such divergence of logical from grammatical form only if no similarly adequate account can be constructed that lacks this feature. It would be preferable to follow the treatment of sentence nominalizations suggested by disquotational generalizations of redundancy theories.

In fact, there is no barrier to doing so. The original motivations and advantages of the prosentential account carry over directly to a disquotational or unnominalizing variant. According to such an account, 'The first sentence Bismarck uttered in 1865'

is a sentence nominalization, a term that picks out a sentence tokening. In this case it describes the sentence, but it could be a quote-name, demonstrative, that-clause sortal, or any sort of nominalization. Its function is just to pick out the antecedent on which the whole prosentence formed using 'true' is anaphorically dependent, and from which it accordingly inherits its content. Ontological commitment is only to sentence tokens and to anaphoric dependence, which prosententialists require in any case.

A brief rehearsal of the considerations leading the authors of the prosentential theory to do things otherwise will show that their reasons ought not to discourage us from adopting a disquotational variant of the prosentential account. They say:

This account differs radically from the standard one since on (what we have called) the subject-predicate account 'that' in 'that is true' is always treated separately as referring by itself to some bearer of truth, whether it be a sentence, proposition, or statement. On our account cross-referencing—without separate reference of 'that'—happens between the *whole* expression 'that is true' and its antecedent.<sup>14</sup>

Another way to put this point is that, where the classical account takes a subpart of the sentence as a referring term, and ' . . . is true' as a predicate that forms a sentence from that term by characterizing its referent, according to the prosentential theory the only expression standing in a referential relation is the whole sentence, which refers anaphorically to an antecedent. There are accordingly *two* innovations put forth concerning reference in sentences like 'That is true'. The sentence is seen as an anaphoric proform, *and* 'that' is no longer seen as a referring term. We are told:

Reference can involve either (or both) anaphoric reference or independent reference, and since people have not seriously considered the former, the possibility that the relation between 'that is true' and its antecedent may be that of anaphoric reference has not occurred to them. In ignoring anaphoric reference philosophers have assumed that the reference involved in 'that is true' is, through 'that', like that between a pronoun (say 'she' used independently) and its referent (say Mary). Once this picture dominates, the need for bearers of truth begins to be felt, and it is then but a small step to the claim that in using 'is true' we are characterizing those entities. [emphasis added]<sup>15</sup>

But why should we think that we have to choose between treating the whole expression 'that is true' as a prosentence anaphorically referring to a sentence tokening from which it inherits its content and treating 'that' as a referring expression, in particular a sentence nominalization, that picks out the tokening on which the whole prosentence depends? Instead of seeing ' . . . is true' as a syncategorematic fragment of a semantically atomic generic prosentence 'that is true', we can see it as a *prosentence forming operator*. It applies to a term that is a sentence nominalization or that refers to or picks out a sentence tokening. It yields a prosentence that has that tokening as its anaphoric antecedent. To understand things this way is not to fall back into a

subject-predicate picture, for there is all the difference in the world between a prosentence-forming operator and the predicates that form ordinary sentences. Nor does it commit us to bearers of truth, apart from the sentential antecedents without which no anaphoric account can do.

There is a further reason to prefer the account that treats ' . . . is true' as a prosentence-forming operator as recommended here, rather than as a fragment of the single prosentence recognized, 'that is true', functioning almost always quantificationally, as the original theory has it. For conceived in the former way, the treatment of 'true' has an exact parallel in the treatment of 'refers'. Elsewhere<sup>16</sup> I have argued in detail that 'refers' can be understood as a pronoun-forming operator. Its basic employment is in the construction of what may be called **anaphorically indirect** definite descriptions. These are expressions such as 'the one Kissinger referred to [or described] as "almost a third-rate intellect," understood as a pronoun whose anaphoric antecedent is some utterance by Kissinger. A full-fledged pronominal or anaphoric theory of 'refers' talk is generated by first showing how other uses of 'refers' and its cognates can be paraphrased so that 'refers' appears only inside indirect descriptions, and then explaining the use of these descriptions as pronouns formed by applying the 'refers' operator to some antecedent-specifying locution. Treating 'true' as an operator that applies to a sentence nominalization and produces a prosentence anaphorically dependent on the nominalized sentence token, and 'refers' as an operator that applies to an expression picking out a term tokening and produces a pronoun anaphorically dependent on it, permits a single theory form to explain the use of all legitimate semantic talk about truth *and* reference in purely anaphoric terms.

## VII

To sum up: The pragmatists' approach to truth introduces a bold phenomenalist strategy – to take as immediate explanatory target the practical proprieties of *taking-true*, and to understand the concept of truth as consisting in this use that is made of a class of expressions, rather than starting with a truth property and then seeing what it is for us to express a concept that attributes that property. Their implementation of this strategy is flawed in its exclusive attention to taking-true as a variety of force, as a doing, specifically an asserting of something. For 'true' is used in other contexts, for instance, embedded in the antecedent of a conditional, and what it expresses is not exhausted by freestanding assertional uses. We have seen how content-redundancy theories can incorporate the insights of these force-redundancy accounts, and in their most sophisticated, anaphoric form account for the wider variety of uses of 'true'. Indeed, starting with an analogous pronominal account of 'refers' or 'denotes', it is possible to generate Tarski-wise the truth-equivalences that jointly express the content redundancy of ' . . . is true'. The pragmatists' strategy has been vindicated at least this far: It is possible to account for truth talk without invoking a property of truth that such talk must be understood as answering to.

Anaphoric semantics gives aid and comfort to semantic phenomenologists. Although the possibility of such an account does not enforce or entail phenomenalism about truth and reference, it enables such a view. It is tempting to conclude, in line with such a phenomenalism, that there are no semantic facts. Facts are simply true claims (and the prosententialist knows how to talk noncommittally about *these*). What look like semantic claims are assertions whose function, though complex, we can now see how to specify. When that is done, we see that these utterances ought not to be assimilated to property ascriptions, and so the temptation to look for a property of truth corresponding to 'true' talk, and a relation of reference corresponding to 'refers' talk, is seen to be misbegotten—one more disreputable metaphysical urge better outgrown than indulged. This is a view one can be entitled to only by possession of an adequate account of the use of the expressions involved. Although such an account is necessary for phenomenalism, it is not sufficient.

There are two related reasons for caution in adopting phenomenalism of an anaphoric sort about truth talk. To begin with, it is not quite true that all sorts of truth talk are recoverable by such theories. Specifically, talk in which the substantive 'truth' appears in a way not easily eliminable in favor of 'true' will receive no construal by such theories. Philosophers do say things like 'Truth is one, beliefs are many' and 'Truth is a property definable in the vocabulary of some eventual physics', which are illegitimate according to the account of 'true' offered here. The phenomenologist is not permitted to say things like this, denies that ordinary people do, and so counts it no defect of the account that it fails to generate readings for this sort of fundamentally confused remark. But this is hardly decisive. At most, the phenomenologist is entitled to claim that the burden of proof has shifted to the antiphenomenologist, to show that this kind of 'truth' talk has anything other than its sound in common with the expression that is given a use by everyday linguistic practice.

This brings us to the second reason for according a limited significance to the possibility of a phenomenologically acceptable account of ordinary truth talk, namely, that the motivation for a realistic approach to truth may not be part of a project of reconstructing ordinary usage, but rather part of a theoretical explanatory effort. Truth is not, as it were, a property confronted in everyday discourse, but rather one that must be postulated by an explanation of certain features of that discourse that are not exhausted by talk *about* truth. For instance, a phenomenologist who offers a content-redundancy account of truth talk is obviously barred from an explication of the sort of content involved that appeals to a notion of *truth conditions*. The phenomenologist may be right in claiming that it is only by misunderstanding the role of 'true' that one could have been misled into thinking that explanatory ground could be gained by such an appeal, but this is not established simply by showing that one *can* understand truth talk in a way that condemns such talk as confused. One must show that the explanatory tasks that truth properties and reference relations have been invoked to help with are better served by other explanatory primitives.

The phenomenologist's claim is always of the "nothing-but" variety; the opposing realist insists that something more is needed. It seems good Popperian methodology

to adopt the most easily falsifiable of these strategies. Methodological phenomenalism about truth would not be an ontological position, but a revisable commitment adopted for its salutary effects on the course of inquiry. On those adopting such a commitment, it imposes the task of explaining in phenomenally acceptable terms whatever linguistic phenomena a realistic theory claims require the invocation of taking-transcendent properties and relations. One might offer an inferential account of sentential contents,<sup>17</sup> and a substitutional account of what it is for such a content to purport to represent a state of affairs. Providing such a substantive account is the real work of the phenomenalist program – not criticizing realists, but providing detailed nothing-but theses for realists to respond to and discover the specific inadequacies of. Semantic phenomenists must show how to do without truth and reference in theoretical explanation, as well as in casual discourse. This cannot be accomplished by studying the grammar of ‘true’. It requires a full-blown account of linguistic practices.

Such a methodological stance leaves the realist an equally important task. Antiphenomenalists about truth, those who claim that there is more to truth than its appearance in truth talk, not only must show what is left out by a phenomenalist account, how truth transcends proprieties of taking-true, that is, show the crucial explanatory work done by the notion in some substantive theory; they must also show how that theoretical concept is related to the ordinary use of ‘true’ that is capturable in anaphoric terms. Only so can they vindicate their use of words that already have familiar uses, to express theoretical constructs that outrun everyday talk. For it would not suffice to settle this dispute about truth or reference to show that physical properties and relations need to be invoked to account for the use of linguistic expressions such as ‘red’ or ‘This stone has a mass of one gram’. (In any case, surely no one could deny this much.) The challenge presented by a phenomenalist account such as the anaphoric one whose antecedents have been traced here is to connect the theoretical concepts with our ordinary takings. Phenomenalist and antiphenomenalist each owe theories of discursive practice, which either show how to do without taking-transcendent notions of truth and reference, or show how essential these are. The anaphoric account of ‘true’ and ‘refers’ confers on the latter the additional responsibility of showing how that theory in some way elaborates on ordinary practices of taking-true. To that extent, and insofar as it is acceptable to apply here a legal concept born of a practical necessity philosophers ought not admit, namely, the necessity that all deliberations conclude with a verdict, the anaphoric account shifts the burden of proof to the antiphenomenalist camp. But what is important in the end is not what ‘true’ means, but how language works.

#### Notes

1. The point here does not concern merely the senses of the contrasted expressions, but the extensions they determine. The appropriateness of this question would have to be defended by adducing cases in which a belief apparently “worked” and was not true, or vice versa. Such cases are not far to seek. This sort of argument is considered more carefully in what follows.

2. *Pragmatism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), bound with its sequel, *The Meaning of Truth*, which as here interpreted ought to be titled "The Meaning of Taking-True." For an important assessment on a larger scale, see R. Rorty's "Pragmatism, Davidson, and Truth," in *Philosophy of Donald Davidson: A Perspective on Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, edited by E. LePore (Oxford, 1986), to which this essay is a tangential response.
3. For instance, in "Truth", reprinted in *Truth*, edited by G. Pitcher, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1964), 32–53. Strawson's view is often also referred to as a 'redundancy account,' in the sense of an account focusing on redundancy of *force*.
4. *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (New York, 1938).
5. Reprinted in Sellars, *Science, Perception, and Reality* (London and New York, 1963).
6. In Quine, *Ontological Relativity and other essays* (New York, 1969).
7. For some further prerequisites, see my "Asserting", *Nous* 17, no. 4 (November 1983): 637–50.
8. "Ascriptivism" and "Assertion," reprinted in Geach's *Logic Matters* (Berkeley, 1972), 250–53 and 254–69.
9. "Reference and Understanding," in *Meaning and the Moral Sciences* (London, 1978), 108.
10. Grover, Camp, and Belnap, "A Prosentential Theory of Truth," *Philosophical Studies* 27 (1975): 73–125.
11. See P. Geach, *Reference and Generality* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1962), 124–43. For some complications, see B. Partee, "Opacity, Coreference, and Pronouns," in *Semantics of Natural Language* edited by Harman and Davidson (Dordrecht, 1972), 415–41.
12. "Prosentential Theory of Truth," 87.
13. The authors of the original theory may believe that for any syntactic presentence type (paradigmatically 'That is true') and any declarative sentence tokening, there is potentially an anaphorically dependent presentence tokening of that type that has the declarative tokening as its antecedent. On the disquotational account of lazy presentences offered in emendation below, that formulation would not hold.
14. "Prosentential Theory of Truth," 91.
15. "Prosentential Theory of Truth," 109.
16. "Reference Explained Away," *Journal of Philosophy* (September 1984).
17. For a general discussion and a particular example, see the author's "Varieties of Understanding," in *Reason and Rationality in Natural Science*, edited by N. Rescher (Lanham, Md., 1985) 27–51.

# Adequacy and the Individuation of Ideas In Spinoza's Ethics

ROBERT BRANDOM

IN THIS PAPER\* I will argue that Spinoza's theory of knowledge is best understood as based on a reduction of intentional relations to causal relations. It follows from two of Spinoza's basic theses that some detailed account of intentionality is necessary to his project: that the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of extended things, and that universal causal determinism governs the relations of extended things. We shall see that the concept of adequate ideas on which Spinoza bases his theory of knowledge requires intentional notions such as that some mind has an idea of (or representing) some thing. Spinoza must accordingly give an account of such relations which allow them to be translated into assertions of necessary causal relations between extended things. I explicate this reduction of intentionality using two guiding ideas—a novel interpretation of the individuation of extended modes (carried over to the attribute of thought by the psycho-physical parallelism) and an expanded version of the definition of the adequacy of ideas given by Radnor.<sup>1</sup> Providing such a framework enables me to interpret coherently the *conatus* (Spinoza's mysterious individuating principle), the three levels of knowledge, and the relation between this ontological principle of individuation and the epistemological notion of the adequacy of ideas. Elaborating this relation culminates, in the final section, in an explication of Spinoza's doctrine of intuitive self-consciousness.

I. The central notion around which Spinoza weaves his theory of knowledge is that of the adequacy of an idea to the thing of which it is the idea. The definition of an adequate idea is an idea "which, insofar as it is considered in itself, without relation to the object, has all the properties or intrinsic marks of a true idea."<sup>2</sup> An interpretation of this concept must account for the fact that it is vital to Spinoza's purpose that all ideas be adequate in the divine mind, while many are inadequate in the human mind.<sup>3</sup> The notions of error and evil, and the coherence of Spinoza's treatment of finitude depend on distinguishing adequate from inadequate ideas and explicating the relativity of that distinction to context (the mind of which the idea is a part). Considered as a problem of individuation, the adequacy of ideas will require interpretation by means of two principles. First, Spinoza must offer some principle which will tell us when we are confronted with two ideas and when we are confronted with only one (a use of "same idea"

---

\* I would like to thank Margaret Wilson, Arthur Szathmari, and Bruce Kuklick for their comments on earlier versions of this paper.

<sup>1</sup> Daisy Radnor, "Spinoza's Theory of Ideas," *Philosophical Review* (July, 1971), 338-359.

<sup>2</sup> Eth. ii, Def. 4. All citations are from: Benedict De Spinoza, *Ethica Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (New York, 1960), except as otherwise noted.

<sup>3</sup> Eth. ii, 28, Dem.

which disregards context). Second, he must offer some principle whereby we can distinguish the various contexts of a single idea in which it is adequate or inadequate. This principle would individuate more finely than the first, making distinctions ignored by that principle (distinguishing ideas-in-a-context, rather than ideas simpliciter). Nevertheless, it is clear that we cannot determine the circumstances under which an idea is adequate unless we can distinguish one idea from a group of related ones.

Ideas are modes of substance conceived under the attribute of thought,<sup>4</sup> and are hence identical with their objects, which are those same modes, conceived under the attribute of extension. Spinoza individuates substance into modes which may then be conceived under any of an infinite number of attributes (though only thought and extension are available to human beings). Each extended thing is thus the object of an idea. It is clear that this line of thought offers no convenient handle by which we may grasp the stricter individuation according to adequacy (describing the conditions under which one and the same idea can be adequate or inadequate to that thing "of" which it is the idea).<sup>5</sup> Knowing the object of an idea does not tell us anything about its adequacy. Spinoza does say that<sup>6</sup>

we clearly understand what is the difference between the idea, say, of Peter, which constitutes the essence of Peter's mind, and the idea of the said Peter, which is in another man, say, Paul. The former directly answers to the essence of Peter's own body . . . ; the latter indicates rather the disposition of Paul's body than the nature of Peter. . . . The modifications of the human body, of which the ideas represent external bodies as present to us, we call the images of things. . . .

Radnor<sup>7</sup> argues persuasively that only according to such a distinction between the object of an idea and the thing represented by that idea can we make sense of Spinoza's epistemology, since humans can have ideas "of," e.g., the sun, but never have an idea whose object is the sun.

Presupposing such a notion of representation, Radnor further suggests that "adequate idea of X" (representing X) be glossed as "an idea which represents X and whose object includes X."<sup>8</sup> We will develop this suggestion, adopting provisionally the following definition of adequacy: An idea I which represents an extended thing X is an adequate idea of X just in case the idea whose object is X is deducible from the idea I. The relation of adequacy so defined is "intrinsic" in Spinoza's sense, concerning only what ideas are deducible from an idea, and not whether the idea "conforms" to the thing it represents. Thus an idea which represents the sun will be adequate only if the idea whose object is the sun is deducible from the initial idea. We may notice both that this is a plausible thing to mean by "an adequate idea of the sun" (one from which could be deduced that complete idea which is identical to the sun, though conceived in the attribute of thought) and that we would not expect Spinoza to claim that humans can have such an idea of the sun. Spinoza does tell us that we have adequate ideas of "those things which are common to all bodies,"<sup>9</sup> such as motion, presumably because we can

<sup>4</sup> Eth. ii, 7, Scholium.

<sup>5</sup> In the first half of Radnor's article (see note 1) she chronicles the difficulties various commentators have been led to by attempting to carry this project through.

<sup>6</sup> Eth. ii, 17, Scholium to Corollary.

<sup>7</sup> "Spinoza's Theory of Ideas."

<sup>8</sup> Actually, Radnor's arguments only require the weaker condition that the thing represented by an idea be *deducible* from the object of the idea.

<sup>9</sup> Eth. ii, 38.



infer an idea whose object is one of those common things from any idea whose object has motion, be it part of the human body or not. Since one and the same idea can be adequate in the mind of God and inadequate in a human mind, according to our interpretation of adequacy that idea must be able to represent one thing to God and another thing to a human being (the other *prima facie* possibility, that deductive relations themselves are context-relative, will turn out to be either inconsistent with God's infinite inclusiveness, or equivalent to the relativity of the representation relation according to the definition we will offer below). We must be able to determine the conditions of this relativity of the representation relation to the context of a mind in order to settle specific questions concerning adequacy.

II. The suggestion concerning the notion of the adequacy of ideas enlightens us only to the extent to which we can determine the principles of individuation of the objects of ideas, the things represented by ideas, the minds containing various ideas, and the relations of deducibility and causation between ideas and bodies respectively. Spinoza has given us a much more detailed discussion of extended individuals than he ever does of thought or thinking ones, so we will approach the issue of individuation from that direction. Spinoza begins with the "*corpora simplicissima*." Only states of motion-and-rest distinguish these simplest bodies, which move sometimes more quickly and sometimes more slowly.<sup>10</sup> "A body in motion or at rest must be determined to motion or rest by another body," which was similarly determined, and "a body in motion will continue in motion until it be determined to a state of rest by another body."<sup>11</sup> Spinoza thus sets out to exhibit a world of ideally elastic<sup>12</sup> "billiard balls" of microscopic size. This world is layered, consisting of individuals of many degrees of complexity, all ultimately constructed out of the *corpora simplicissima*. The following definition elaborates:<sup>13</sup>

When a number of bodies of the same or of different magnitudes are pressed together by others, so that they lie one upon the other, or if they are in motion with the same or with different degrees of speed, so that they communicate their motion to one another in a certain fixed proportion [*ratione*]*—*these bodies are said to be mutually united, and taken together they are said to compose one body or individual, which is distinguished from other bodies by this union of bodies.

If a number of *corpora simplicissima* are kept in contact with one another they are treated as a single composite individual. This definition clearly holds good even if the composite individual so formed is in motion relative to its surroundings, so long as the relative motions of the constituents are slight enough that they maintain mutual contact. In the second clause of the definition Spinoza allows a more complicated sort of relative motion as well. The parts of an individual must communicate their motions to one another according to some fixed ratio or proportion definitional of the complex individual. In a series of explanatory lemmas<sup>14</sup> Spinoza indicates that other parts "of the same nature" may replace the parts of such a composite individual without damage to the identity of the whole. Similarly, all the parts may "become greater or less propor-

<sup>10</sup> See discussion after the fourth axiom after Prop. 13; also Axioms 1 and 2.

<sup>11</sup> Lemma 3 after Prop. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Axiom 2 after Prop. 13.

<sup>13</sup> Def. after Ax. 2 after Eth. ii, 13 (White-Stirling translation); cf. also Lemma 7.

<sup>14</sup> 4–7 after the second axiom after Eth. ii, 13.

tionately" within a single individual. More importantly, any number of constituents may be forced to change the direction of their motion so long as they continue to communicate those motions in the same proportion as before, without destroying the individual. It is difficult to see what all of this comes to in detail, though the outlines are clear. Spinoza calls a system of the simplest bodies an individual just in case it exhibits a certain sort of stability. One instance of that stability is the maintenance of a fixed set of spatial relations. A system whose components are in relative motion may also be stable, however, provided that a change of motion in one part is communicated to the others according to a fixed rule. The parts of such a composite individual thus adjust themselves to changes within certain limits. An uncomplicated composite individual like a stone may react to a collision of one of its parts by a coherent change in the motion of all of its parts, that is, by moving as a whole. If it does not, it breaks up into non-communicating pieces and is destroyed.

We can define more complicated individuals made up of first-order individuals. Again we require only that changes in the motions of the parts be communicated to the other parts by a fixed rule. In continuing the hierarchy so as to include the whole universe, Spinoza emphasizes again his conception of stability through change:<sup>15</sup>

If we now imagine a third kind of individual composed of those of the second kind, we shall discover that it can be affected in many other ways without any change of form. Thus, if we advance *ad infinitum*, we may easily conceive the whole of nature to be one individual, whose parts, that is to say, all bodies, differ in infinite ways without any change of the whole individual.

The corpora simplicissima maintain their state of motion and rest until disturbed, but any collision alters them. We distinguish composite individuals from one another by the proportion which must be maintained in the communication of motions of the parts. Higher order individuals can remain identical through much greater changes than can the lower ones. The infinite individual preserves the communication of its parts under all circumstances (there is no external motive for change of any sort) and is thus immutable, while its parts change constantly.

This vision of an infinite sequence of ever more inclusive individuals with ever greater ability to resist destructive change offers some help in the interpretation of the "proportion of communicated motion" criterion of identity and individuation for the middle-sized individuals we are directly acquainted with. We may take the immutability of the infinite extended individual—an individual we can hardly help identifying with the "face of the whole universe, which, although it varies in infinite modes, yet remains always the same"<sup>16</sup>—as an expression of the conservation of momentum. A particle colliding with another "communicates its motion" with the final velocities being related according to a fixed proportion, namely the inverse ratio of the masses of the colliding particles. Spinoza has not mentioned the masses, merely the fixed ratio which results, but in this he is a good Cartesian. Since this result is due to a law of nature, as we would have it, the communication of motion according to fixed proportions cannot fail in the universe as a whole. It can fail in any finite individual simply because momentum need not be conserved in finite systems.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Sch. to Lemma 7 after Eth. ii, 13.

<sup>16</sup> Epistle 64. This and all subsequent references to Spinoza's correspondence are to the Wolf translation, as included in John Wild, ed., *Spinoza Selections* (New York, 1930), pp. 401-479.

<sup>17</sup> Talk of momentum here may not be quite right, since it is not clear what Spinoza's view on the *directions* of motions is, but this does not affect our discussion.

III. In order to appreciate the difficulties of this layered scheme of individuals, we must examine the parallel attribute of thought, and consider how, according to the account of adequacy sketched in Part I, we might come to know individuals constructed as suggested by this scheme. We do not yet have a good enough grasp of individuation in the *Ethics* to redeem our promissory note concerning the notion of representation. Spinoza's initial use of the term and his general theory of perception give us enough information to show that perception must lead to inadequate ideas, however. According to the definition we gave earlier, confused cognition (inadequate ideas) will arise just in case an idea representing something is such that its object is not an adequate cause of the thing represented (or equivalently, the idea of the thing represented is not deducible from the representing idea). It might seem that no perception could lead to adequate knowledge for Spinoza. For perception is a cognition corresponding to a bodily state which is caused at least in part by the impingement of an external body on the soft sensory surfaces of the human body.<sup>18</sup> In the passage introducing representation cited above, Spinoza talks of the bodily objects of the ideas representing things as "images." When I catch a ball, the ball is a proximate cause of an impression which its round shape makes on my hand. Such perception representing the ball would be adequate just in case the idea whose object is the ball could be validly inferred from the representing idea, namely the idea whose object is the image of the ball. This is not the case, since at most the outline of the ball is impressed on my body. Thus something other than that particular ball could have caused the bodily image, and consequently the idea whose object is the ball cannot be deducible from the idea whose object is the image we have taken as representing the ball.

This argument does not imply that no adequate ideas are to be had about the bodies which impinge in perception. Spinoza points out<sup>19</sup> that external bodies and those which comprise the human body have many properties in common. All such common notions must be conceived adequately, for they are deducible alike from the bodily correlate of an idea and any external body.<sup>20</sup> All bodies have in common their attribute of extension, their common timeless generation from the immediate infinite mode of extension—motion and rest—and the mediate infinite mode—the face of the whole universe, the infinite immutable extended individual.<sup>21</sup> Since these *notiones communes* must be conceived adequately, rational mechanics, an adequate notion of motion and rest, is possible. This is the "second kind of knowledge," called *Ratio*.<sup>22</sup> (The "first kind of knowledge" is confused or inadequate knowledge. Only the second and third kinds are adequate.)

Spinoza says that this kind of knowledge treats particular things as mere instances of general properties (e.g., of motion and rest) so that we cannot know individuals by it.<sup>23</sup> We discussed the various orders of extended individuals in Section II from the universal point of view of *Ratio*, following Spinoza's own treatment. We did not, then, touch on the essence of any individuals in that discussion, but offered merely a general characterization of the property of *individuality* insofar as it is common to all bodies. We defined

<sup>18</sup> Eth. ii, 13, Postulate 5.

<sup>19</sup> Eth. ii, 38.

<sup>20</sup> Spinoza argues at Eth. ii, 37 that none of these "*notiones communes*" can constitute the essence of any particular thing, since his definition of essence requires that such an essence be inconceivable apart from the thing of which it is the essence. Thus such an essence could not be common to all things.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Eth. i, 21–23; Epistle 64.

<sup>22</sup> Eth. ii, 40, Sch.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

a system of bodies as an individual just in case a certain sort of stability of contact and the ordered communication of motions among the parts is maintained. Our earlier discussion did not offer reasons for the achievement and maintenance of a particular configuration. Yet surely accidentally stable systems cannot constitute all the particular enduring things we see around us. Some account must be given of the amount of stability we find around us, for it is far in excess of what is plausible if the account of Ratio is the whole story. When I catch a ball, why do I not fly apart at the contact like the set at the beginning of a game of pool? There is nothing in Spinoza's billiard parlor world resembling friction among the parts of the solid which are in contact, nor are there circular motions or fields of force. Spinoza has an appropriate rule for changes of direction in collisions,<sup>24</sup> which should make my bodily parts respond the way the massed billiard balls do to an impact. We can say what sort of imperviousness to disintegration by external influence is required for individuality using the mechanics of Ratio. We cannot explain why there should be any. Spinoza's solution of this difficulty is the doctrine of the conatus, the effort an individual expends to maintain itself. This doctrine cannot be approached on the level of Ratio, but only by the third kind of knowledge, *Scientia Intuitiva*, which is founded on the knowledge achieved by Ratio.

From the point of view of Spinoza's total project, the prime positive result of the investigation of common properties by Ratio is an adequate idea of God. We have seen how an adequate idea of the immediate infinite mode of extension is possible in the second kind of knowledge. But by the definition of a mode, any mode can only be conceived through substance,<sup>25</sup> which must accordingly be conceived adequately if any mode, infinite or not, is so conceived. We can restate this argument: since motion-and-rest are caused immediately by God, and knowledge of an effect depends upon and involves knowledge of the cause, the adequate knowledge of motion-and-rest Ratio assures us of involves adequate knowledge of God.<sup>26</sup> This is essentially the argument of *Eth. ii*, 45–47. Ratio provides an adequate idea of God's essence, and hence sets the stage for intuition to reverse the direction of inquiry, beginning with God and proceeding down to finite individual essences.

Spinoza introduces the principle of individuation we are to achieve by intuitive knowledge in this way:<sup>27</sup> "The effort (conatus) by which each thing, insofar as it is in itself, endeavors to persevere in its own being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing itself." The mind has such a conatus, of which it is conscious.<sup>28</sup> Spinoza calls the conatus of that mode which is both the human mind and its body "appetite." This statement only gives notice that there is some principle other than chance to account for the observed stability of things. An *effort* which they expend to persevere timelessly individuates particular things—the effort helps them maintain a stable configuration. The only help Spinoza gives us with this difficult concept is in the proof of Proposition 6, where he deduces the existence of the conatus from the fact that each particular thing expresses in a determinate manner the power of God, by which he is and acts.<sup>29</sup> Our adequate idea of God thus entails in some fashion an adequate idea of the various individuating "efforts," but it is unclear in what fashion.

<sup>24</sup> Ax. 2 after Lemma 3 after *Eth. ii*, 13.

<sup>25</sup> *Eth. i*, Def. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Definition of infinite modes, *Eth. i*, 23, Epistle 64; *Eth. i*, Ax. 4; *Eth. ii*, 37–38.

<sup>27</sup> *Eth. iii*, 6 and 7.

<sup>28</sup> *Eth. ii*, 9.

<sup>29</sup> *Eth. i*, 34.

IV. Epistle 32, where Spinoza elucidates his use of the terms 'whole' and 'part' is the key to understanding the progression by *Scientia Intuitiva* from an adequate idea of God's essence to an adequate idea of the essences of individual things:

I consider things as parts of some whole, insofar as their natures are mutually adapted so that they are in accord among themselves as much as possible; but insofar as things differ among themselves each . . . is considered to be a whole, not a part.

Spinoza's example is blood, composed of different particles of lymph and chyle. We say that to the extent to which they are mutually adapted to form a single fluid, they are parts of a whole, while to the extent to which they differ, opposing one another, each is a whole itself. The relative nature of the notions of whole and part is obvious. Spinoza imagines a tiny worm living in the blood, discerning and understanding the collisions and rebounds of the particles:

That worm would live in this blood as we live in this part of the universe, and he would consider each particle of blood to be a whole, and not a part. *And he could not know how all the parts are controlled by the universal nature of the blood, and are forced, as the universal nature of the blood demands, to adapt themselves to one another, so as to harmonize with one another in a certain way.* (Emphasis mine)

There are three premises here: first, that there is a conditioning of parts by the whole they are included in. That this determination is active in some sense (an effort) seems an unavoidable conclusion from the terms 'forced' and 'controlled by'. Second, he asserts that the worm, who is in full possession of a history of collisions and communications of motion could never discern the action of the whole on its parts. Third, Spinoza claims that we are in the same situation in our part of the universe as the worm is in the blood: we also observe motions of bodies, but cannot discover the control of these bodies by the wholes they comprise.

The comparison of this situation with the one confronting us when we consider the individuation of extended bodies according to the second kind of knowledge is obvious. Like the worm, we can in principle know everything about the laws governing motion and rest. That knowledge was sufficient to allow us to recognize individuals, but not sufficient to account for their existence. The universal knowledge of Ratio cannot comprehend why there should be such stable systems. The principles of rational mechanics thus underdetermine individuation. In this letter Spinoza asserts that there is a whole-part determination which "mutually adapts" the parts of a whole, and which cannot be determined by a consideration of the motions involved. Such a holistic determination is just what we need to occupy the place of the *conatus* which Spinoza has described elsewhere as the individuating principle available only to the third kind of knowledge.

Spinoza justifies his assertion of the merely rational worm's inability to discern the whole-part determination with two claims. First:

For if we imagine that there are no causes outside the blood and no other bodies to which the particles of blood could transfer their motion, it is certain that the blood would remain always in its state . . . and so blood would always have to be considered a whole and not a part.

Spinoza thus believes that individuals, if unperturbed by external influences will be per-

fectly stable, as the face of the whole universe is, since motion would always be transferred to another part of the whole. He makes this same claim more opaquely in the *Ethics*:<sup>30</sup> "A thing cannot be destroyed except by an external cause." The rest of Spinoza's justification takes us beyond the idealized situation of isolated individuals, qualifying the first statement:

But, since there are very many other causes which in a certain way control the laws of the nature of blood, and are in turn controlled by the blood, hence it comes about that other motions and other changes take place in the blood, which result not only from the mere relation of its parts to one another, but from the relation of the motion of the blood and also of the external causes to one another; in this way blood has the character of a part and not a whole.

Spinoza thus makes the fact that the blood is only a relative whole crucial to justifying the inability of the rational worm to distinguish the force which the blood's universal nature exerts upon its parts. The reason the worm cannot (and we, living in our portion of the universe cannot) distinguish the controlling operation of a relative whole on its parts is that that determination can always be attributed to the external causes impinging on the relative whole. If the blood were an absolute whole, we would be forced to recognize the unity which an individual imposes on its parts, as we were in fact led to do in the case of the conservation of momentum (motion-and-rest) in the maximal extended individual. Spinoza goes on to say that all finite wholes are only relative wholes.

Consider the emerging picture of rational mechanical inquiry. Beginning with whatever level of bodies we can observe most easily, we may chart the mutual communications of motions. Upon analyzing these data according to the mechanical principles sketched in Part II of the *Ethics*, we would discover that we cannot fully account for the motions of the observed bodies on the basis of those physical principles applied just to the system under observation. The stage is set for the discovery of the whole-part determination, and indeed Spinoza claims that that discovery would be made by Physics—if only the system under observation were an absolute, and not merely a relative whole. But since the system we observe shares with all other finite systems its function as a part of a more inclusive whole, it is a whole only relatively. Consequently the possibilities for the application of our physical principles have not been exhausted. The system under observation was not isolated, and was perturbed by collisions from the outside, as we see when we widen the scope of our observation to include a larger whole whose parts interact with our initial system. We should thus not have expected our principles to have accounted for the motions of the initial system solely on the basis of the observations of that system, for external causes were involved. We must extend the observations and attempted explanations to the next most inclusive whole, and then to the next after that, with no complete account of any of the motions along the way (because no awareness of the control by wholes of their parts) until we reach an absolute whole. Of course, since Spinoza has shown in the opening arguments of the *Ethics* that there is only one absolute whole in this (or any) attribute, and that this whole is infinite, it will never be reached by such a progression. Consequently the worm, functioning merely at the level of Ratio, will never know the determination of blood particles by blood's universal nature, and we can't know about a similar determination in our part of the universe by our rational mechanics.

<sup>30</sup> Eth. iii, 4.

These failures, however, are failures of Ratio, which, while it cannot reach God by analyzing the motions of finite extended systems directly can, as we have shown, achieve adequate knowledge of his essence by another means. Spinoza tells us that this opens the way for *Scientia Intuitiva*, the third kind of knowledge, to reverse the vicious ascent in search of *conatus* by Ratio, and “proceed” down from an adequate knowledge of the infinite modes to an adequate knowledge of some finite, relative wholes. Ratio could not discover these essences, because the effects of the whole-part determination (the mutual adaptation of parts which is the *conatus* and hence the essence of individual things) cannot be separated from the effects of membership in a more inclusive whole without prior knowledge of the essence of that larger whole. Only intuitive knowledge, proceeding from the essences of the more inclusive to the less inclusive wholes can make the required distinction and discern the essence which individuates. Spinoza refers to the whole-part determination which intuition follows as the expression of God’s power by finite things.<sup>31</sup> He also refers to the conditioning of finite parts by infinite wholes as ‘immanent causation’, thereby contrasting it with the mutual causal conditioning of two bodies which interact as (relative) wholes.<sup>32</sup> Intuitive knowledge is said to follow the course of atemporal emanation of essences.

The descent of intuition from the essence of God to the essences of particular things must be different in kind from the step-by-step analysis by which Ratio proceeds, for there is no next smaller whole after the “face of the whole universe.” There would thus be an infinite number of “steps” for reason to go through to get to any particular individual. But Spinoza’s sole non-metaphysical example of the different kinds of knowledge contrasts the step-by-step figuring of a proportion by Ratio to “just seeing it” by immediate intuition,<sup>33</sup> so this is an expected difference. It also suggests that we must not expect a discursive explication of intuition, and Spinoza’s own efforts at presentation of the notion reinforce this. Since Spinoza specifically denies that all particular extended modes can be deduced from an adequate idea of extension, yet affirms that we can have adequate ideas of the essences of particular things,<sup>34</sup> it must be either that the essence of any particular thing (but not all together) can be intuited by a finite mind, or that there is a distinguished class of particular things any one of which may be intuited, while others cannot. My interpretation of intuition will entail the second alternative, but Spinoza offers no direct pronouncement on this issue. He does say we can have intuitive knowledge of our own minds and their modifications.<sup>35</sup> We shall concentrate on this example and not consider intuitive knowledge in other cases. We have sketched the rational mechanics which is the object of the second kind of knowledge, and we have seen that the essences which individuate things are not approached on that level of knowledge. We have characterized those essences as principles of stability exhibited in the mutual adaptation of parts according to the whole they constitute. We have remaining to us the problem of individuating ideas in a human mind, in order to complete the characterization of the representation relation, and hence the notion of adequacy. Accordingly, we move to the parallel attribute of thought, and apply the insights gleaned during our sojourn in the realm of extension, with the goal of describing a framework within which we may discover what an adequate idea of a particular thing, namely the human mind, consists in.

<sup>31</sup> Eth. i, 34; Eth. i, 36, Dem.

<sup>32</sup> Eth. i, 18.

<sup>33</sup> Eth. ii, 40, Sch.

<sup>34</sup> Epistle 83; Eth. ii, 40, Sch.

<sup>35</sup> Eth. v, 4; Eth. v, 4, Sch.; Eth. v, 31, Dem.

V. The analysis of the individuation of extended things began with the *notio communis* of motion-and-rest, the immediate infinite mode of extension. The corresponding immediate infinite mode of thought is understanding.<sup>36</sup> We must assume that we can conceive ideas as layered stable systems of simpler ideas corresponding to the scheme for extended individuals, for the "order and connection" of the two systems is identical. But Spinoza has not offered us a rational psychology relating the "states of understanding" associated with ideas in the way in which he sketched a rational mechanics relating the states of motion-and-rest of extended things. The parallelism of ideas and bodies, however, allows us to draw some inferences, as we will see below. In particular, there must be some causal analogue of the intentionality of ideas—the fact that ideas can represent things, be ideas of things. All ideas in the human mind have as their objects affections of the human body (states of motion-and-rest of constituent systems of the body). Yet some of these ideas are "taken as images" of external bodies by a particular mind. Further, we argued in Part I that what a particular mind takes an idea to represent depends on what mind is considered, as well as what idea is considered. Let us then take the context of an idea in a particular mind as the criterion for determining what that mind takes the idea to represent. In particular, consider the mind as the correlate in the attribute of thought in a chain of causal influences whose links are the complex extended individual corresponding to the human body in different states of motion-and-rest. We will consider the idea(s) immediately following the idea we are interested in as determining what that idea is "taken" to represent.<sup>37</sup> Thus, each idea I is a proximate cause<sup>38</sup> of some effect E in the mind in question.<sup>39</sup> E in turn has an adequate cause C (which includes I). We say that I represents the object C' of C and, derivatively, any part of C'. The strategy and motivation of such a functional definition should be clear. The only relation available to reconstruct the intentionality of representation by relating something inside the mind to something outside it is the relation of

<sup>36</sup> Epistle 64.

<sup>37</sup> If we view the causal commerce of the modes of extension sub specie aeternitatis, it will appear as a net, rather than as a chain, of individuals with particular states of motion-and-rest. The appearance of time is simply a confused idea due to one's identification with his own body as a standpoint. In our scheme this means that a direction is induced into the infinite net by following the career of a few individuals (the bodily parts) through all their changes of motion until the dissolution of the whole they constitute, and thereby picking out a chain such that the mind associated with that body may order things according to the order in which they (arbitrarily, from the divine point of view) impinge on the privileged dimension of the chain. This ordering may not represent the causal relations which actually obtain. It is, I think, clear how a systematically confused ordering of events could be constructed by taking a one-dimensional ordering abstracted out of a two-or-more-dimensional matrix and projecting all the events onto that ordering. Spinoza might even take a hint like this from Galileo's treatment of time as a geometrical dimension, seeing causal events in four-space under the aspect of eternity. Spinoza's doctrine of temporality as confusion due to limited perspective would in that case foreshadow the relativistic notion of local times. But all of his interpretation follows only if we allow some sort of directedness among the causal relations of states of individuals which are nodes of the initial net. This notion is consistent with his paradigm case of logical relations in the parallel attribute of thought. For deductive relations are assymetric (directed) but do not form a total ordering. On this view, then, time is a confused perception because I choose to order my experience according to the order in which things affect me, rather than according to the much more complex order which obtains in nature.

<sup>38</sup> Spinoza uses the notion of a *proximate cause* (the last cause in a chain before the effect in question) in several places, e.g., at Eth. ii, 3, Dem.

<sup>39</sup> Eth. i, Ax. 3: if there is no effect in the mind in question, then the motion in the parts of the body which are the objects of the ideas of the mind in question is not being communicated, and that body and mind are destroyed.



causation. If we wish to retain a Radnor-type analysis of adequacy, we may not take what a thing represents as determined by the causal *antecedents* of I. For the conjunction of these two moves would entail that the object of and thing represented by an adequate idea are mutually deducible from each other, which is clearly false to Spinoza's usage.

The justification of the definition must come from its plausibility for interpreting the ways in which Spinoza uses representation. Consider first ordinary perception, which Spinoza tells us will present only a confused idea "of" an external individual.<sup>40</sup> We suppose that I have a bodily state which the incidence of sunlight on my eye causes. According to our definition, what, if anything, the idea whose object is that state represents (is an idea "of") depends upon what ideas follow it in my mind. Suppose further, then, that the idea whose object is a state of my eye is a proximate cause of an idea whose object is the bodily state of my larynx forming the word "sun." Spinoza's discussion of a similar case of ideas related according to idiosyncratic associations rather than universal logical relations within a given mind<sup>41</sup> indicates what relations he conceives as relevant. My speech depends upon the fact that "if the human body has once been affected by two or more bodies at the same time, when the mind afterwards imagines any of them, it will straightway remember the others also."<sup>42</sup> The adequate cause of my pronunciation of the word "sun" thus includes the past impingement of sunlight and my verbalization elicited somehow in the process of learning English, as well as the immediate impingement of sunlight which initiates the associative pattern on this occasion. The idea whose object is the state of my eye as sunlight affects it represents both the sun and an incident in my past, according to our definition. This idea will be an adequate idea of the sun just in case the idea whose object is the sun is deducible from it. Since an arc-lamp could have induced the same bodily state of my eye, no such deduction is valid. Similarly, the idea will be an adequate idea of the origin of my association just in case that association is deducible from the idea in question (that is, if from the idea whose object is the state of my eye one could validly deduce that that state had in the past been contemporaneous with another, corresponding to a movement of my larynx). That no such deduction is permissible is just the meaning of the idiosyncratic nature of such associations, depending as they do, not simply upon universal logical relations, but also upon the arbitrary (from a logical point of view) boundaries of finite individuals.

The only examples we have so far of adequate ideas are ideas which represent *notiones communes*, such as extension or motion-and-rest. Let us suppose that I have an idea whose object is a state of my arm muscles resulting from the impact of a ball I have just caught. There are many ideas which might follow such a one according to various associations of mine. Spinoza assures us nonetheless that *notiones communes* "will be represented by an adequate idea in the mind," and "cannot be conceived except adequately."<sup>43</sup> It must be that some idea which in fact follows the one in question follows in virtue of universal logical relations. This would be the case if the next idea has as its object the bodily state of my muscles slightly further along my arm, where the

<sup>40</sup> E.g., Eth. ii, 41.

<sup>41</sup> Spinoza's discussion is at Eth. ii, 18, Sch. Ultimately, of course, all relations of ideas are universal logical relations. If we restrict our attention to those which take place within a single finite individual, however, an idiosyncratic abstraction from the universal relations may be made by the boundary of that individual. This arbitrary limitation of viewpoint is the source of confused ideas, and hence of error and evil.

<sup>42</sup> Eth. ii, 18.

<sup>43</sup> Eth. ii, 38, 39.

momentum of the catch is “communicated” according to physical necessity. In that case the adequate cause of the idea of which the representing idea is the proximate cause would include both the representing idea and the universal properties of motion-and-rest corresponding to the conservation of momentum. By our definition the original idea would thus be “of” this *notio communis*. It would be an adequate idea, since from the initial bodily state one may validly deduce the appropriate general properties “common to all bodies.”<sup>44</sup>

We next proceed to consider the *conatus* in the attribute of thought, and then to the only example Spinoza ever offers of a particular thing which may be known adequately (by the third kind of knowledge)—the human mind in its self-awareness.

VI. The principle or “effort” of *conatus* which timelessly individuates modes under the attribute of extension manifests itself as a control or force exerted on parts by the whole they comprise. Since the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of extended things, a similar control must constitute the *conatus* in the attribute of thought. Spinoza’s analysis of the *conatus* for ideas is more complicated than that for extended things, however, as the notion of the *activity* of a complex idea (mind) links the adequacy of ideas to the individuating *conatus*. Spinoza says<sup>45</sup> that the *conatus* when applied to the mind alone is called will (*voluntas*). He also says that “there is in the mind no volition or affirmation and negation save that which an idea, inasmuch as it is an idea, involves.”<sup>46</sup> In proving this proposition, Spinoza argues that a particular affirmation (or will) is the essence of each idea. He claims that this demonstration justifies his comment after the definition of an idea as a mental conception that he chose the term ‘conception’ to indicate the *activity* of the mind.<sup>47</sup> It is not clear why the claim that a particular affirmation (*conatus*) is the essence of each idea should entail that the mind is active. Considering the definition of activity in this context we find a further notion linked to the individuation of ideas:<sup>48</sup>

I say that we *act* when anything takes place either within us or external to us, whereof we are the adequate cause, that is, when through our nature something takes place within us or externally to us, which can through our nature alone be clearly and distinctly understood.

Reading this definition into the claim above, we find that Spinoza is claiming that ideas are activities of the mind containing them (inasmuch as it is a mind, i.e., a whole, that is, relatively), which by his definition means that the mind is the adequate cause of its own modifications, since the essences of ideas are particular affirmations.

On the model of our previous discussion of whole-part determination in extended individuals, there are three sorts of relations of importance for the notion of activity:

<sup>44</sup> These claims are puzzling in terms of our actual experience, for we are surely not in general aware of such ideas. Spinoza may well have no idea corresponding to mental contents of which we are unaware. On the other hand, it seems to me that he has the resources for such a doctrine in the contrast between ideas as enduring individuals and ideas as “states of understanding” of such individuals, and the different ways these two categories behave in the mind. We shall not try to develop such an account here, however.

<sup>45</sup> Eth. iii, 9, Sch.

<sup>46</sup> Eth. ii, 49.

<sup>47</sup> Eth. ii, Def. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Eth. iii, Def. 2.

that of part to part within the relative whole being considered, that of a whole to its parts, and that of the parts of a more inclusive whole to the parts of the included whole (we will ignore higher-order effects). The mirroring of extended connections demands that a mind counterfactually isolated from external forces (that is, an absolute whole, in which relations of the third sort were missing) would be the adequate cause of all its own modifications (the states of "understanding" of its ideas, paralleling the states of motion-and-rest of their objects). A mind is thus active just insofar as it is a relative whole and not a relative part of some more inclusive whole. Since every finite complex is a whole only relatively, however, a human mind will never be the adequate cause of all its modifications. In view of the definition of activity, we can restate this result by saying that the power (conatus, activity) of external things surpasses that of the human mind: "It is impossible that man should not be a part of nature or that he should be capable of undergoing no changes save such as can be understood through his nature alone."<sup>49</sup> If some state of ideas in a mind is the effect of the action of the whole mind and the states of the other parts, then the mind is an adequate cause of that modification of the mind, and is active with respect to it. The essence of the mind in question then "affirms" that modification.

Spinoza establishes the connection of the individuation of ideas (via the conatus, the determination of parts by the wholes containing them which is activity) to the theory of knowledge and the notion of adequate ideas as follows: "The activities of the mind arise solely from adequate ideas; the passive states of the mind depend solely on inadequate ideas."<sup>50</sup> This proposition follows from the interpretations we have offered of the adequacy of ideas and the activity of minds. Thinking of the mind as a system of ideas with logical relations between them corresponding to the causal relations between the bodies of an extended system, we find three cases exemplifying the causes of a modification of a mind. First, a single idea, constituting a part of the mind and itself modified by its presence in that whole, may be the adequate cause of some internal modification in the mind. Second, several such parts could together constitute the adequate cause of a modification. Finally, the adequate cause of such a modification could include things external to the mind. In the third case the mind is not active but passive, since the mind in question does not include the adequate cause of the modification. In this case none of the ideas inside the mind (which are partial causes of the modification) are adequate, for each is a proximate cause of the modification whose adequate cause includes the external thing, and could not be adequate unless the external thing were deducible from their objects. If that were the case, however, we could consider the situation as an example of the second case, since we could comprehend the modification in terms of the internal causes, which are accordingly adequate by the definition. In the first case the situation is as clear, for the mind is active just in virtue of one idea's being an adequate cause of its changes of state, and in that case the idea is adequate—it represents only what follows from its object.

But what of the second case? In this situation the mind is active; no external causes figure in its internal modification. Yet it seems that no individual idea is adequate, for only the conjunction is an adequate cause of the modification, so that each one represents things not deducible from *its* object, although deducible from the conjoined objects. In this one case, Spinoza seems to rest the mind's activity on inadequate ideas, contrary to his assertion above. Spinoza holds, however, that "if several individual

<sup>49</sup> Eth. iv, 4.

<sup>50</sup> Eth. iii, 3.

things concur in one action, so as all to be simultaneously the cause of one effect, I consider them all, so far, as one particular thing."<sup>51</sup> The second case thus reduces to the first, and Spinoza establishes the correlation of the mind's activity with its possession of adequate ideas, according to the interpretations I have offered for those terms. Of course, by the same principle we ought to restate the third case, for it is not accurate to speak of the collaboration of internal and external causes. There is one individual which causes any given modification. From the perspective of the finite mind of God, all such ideas are adequate, representing only what follows from their objects.<sup>52</sup> They can be inadequate only with respect to a finite mind, just in case the individual which is an adequate cause of a modification is not a part of (an idea in) that mind. The individuation of minds by their activity is thus dependent upon the epistemological categorization of adequate ideas. Individuation of complex ideas of all levels according to their conatus (whole-part determination) called "affirmation" for simpler ideas and "activity" for those complex enough to be considered minds depends on separating the effects of inclusion in a larger whole from the effects of parts external to such a whole, just as in extended systems.

VII. We now know something about the individuation of modes of either attribute by the conatus which mutually adapts the parts so as to form a whole recognizable by the general principles of Ratio. We have yet to account for the adequate knowledge of particular essences which Spinoza claims a third kind of knowledge, *Scientia Intuitiva*, achieves. Our final consideration of the doctrine of "ideas of ideas" or *idea ideae* in the *Ethics* will bring together three more or less separate issues left by our previous discussion. First, the doctrine of *idea ideae* includes the statement that these ideas are "of" other ideas in the sense in which the mind is "of" the body, namely identity. This doctrine as it stands explicitly contradicts the reading of "idea of X" as "idea representing X" which we borrowed from Radnor in Part I.<sup>53</sup> Second, the human mind (and its modifications) is the only finite individual Spinoza ever instances as an object of intuitive knowledge (by an *idea ideae* "of" the mind), so it offers the only opportunity to interpret the possibility of adequate knowledge of the individuating conatus. Finally, there is Spinoza's contention that the human mind is self-conscious in knowing its own conatus.<sup>54</sup>

The difficulty with respect to the first issue is not just that the interpretation I have suggested demands that ideas be "of" the things they represent if we are to make sense of the notion of adequate ideas (although this is certainly true). On Spinoza's own terms we cannot in general read "an idea of X" as "an idea whose object is X." When we have our adequate idea of God, surely God is not the *object* of the idea (else that idea would simply be the divine mind). Similarly for the adequate ideas of "common notions": how could motion-and-rest be the object of an idea in the human mind? Yet Spinoza introduces his discussion of the *idea ideae* with an argument from Proposition 21: "The idea of the mind is united to the mind in the same way as the mind is united to the body."<sup>55</sup> This claims that ideas of ideas are identical with their object ideas since, like mind and body they characterize a single mode and lack even the distinction of

<sup>51</sup> I have corrected Elwes' erroneous translation of *Eth. ii, Def. 7*; Spinoza's comment to this definition is also relevant.

<sup>52</sup> *Eth. ii, 32*.

<sup>53</sup> Radnor never takes up the issue of *idea ideae*.

<sup>54</sup> *Eth. iii, 9*.

<sup>55</sup> *Eth. ii, 21, Sch.*

attributes existing in the mind-body case. The apparent inconsistency of this doctrine with our interpretation of representation derives from that reading's faithful rendering of Spinoza's own principles, rather than from a failure to do so. Indeed, since the point of this series of propositions is to show that in the absence of intuition we have only an inadequate idea of the human mind, what sense could Spinoza attribute to this claim if that idea is in fact *identical* with the mind? My analysis resolves this difficulty for the representation interpretation, and hence for Spinoza. In doing so it tries to make sense of the possibility of both adequate and confused ideas of the human mind. The adequate idea involves activity on the part of the mind, as our discussion of individuation and intuition requires. My discussion points to a plausible doctrine of self-consciousness by viewing the idea *ideae* as instances of representing ideas as previously discussed.

The most desirable state of affairs would be that in which we were allowed to interpret ideas as representing other ideas. In that case consciousness of self would be assimilated as an instance to the general scheme of consciousness "of" X, namely an idea representing X. Further, it would be clear how there could be inadequate ideas of the mind, namely in any case in which the represented idea (the mind) is not deducible from the object of the representing idea (e.g., if the representing idea is a proper part of the whole mind, excluding parts relatively independent of itself). Again, by our definition of representation, an idea adequately representing the human mind would have two characteristics: it would be a proximate cause of a state of "understanding" whose adequate cause is the whole mind, and the whole mind thus represented would be deducible from the representing idea. The adequacy of the idea of the mind would be equivalent to the activity or freedom of the mind, just as in Spinoza's view, for it is only when the mind is an adequate cause of its own states that those states represent that mind in the sense already explicated. Finally, the mind functioning as the adequate cause of its own modifications is just the whole-part determination (immanent causation, mutual adaptation of parts, etc.) which we have identified with the *conatus* or individual essence of the mind. Consciousness of the self (having an adequate idea of the mind) is thus consciousness of the activity of the mind, and hence of its individuating essence. Subject to the condition of being able to justify allowing one idea to represent another, then, a plausible doctrine of self-consciousness as adequate knowledge of the individual essence or activity of the human mind is an immediate result of the interpretation we have offered of adequacy and individuation.

This happy conclusion is still only hypothetical. Our definition of the thing an idea represents is "the object of the adequate cause of the subsequent ideas" (those ideas of which the representing idea is a proximate cause). The thing represented is the *object* of some idea, and hence not itself an idea. The possibility of knowing extended modes requires the passage to objects in framing this definition. We could take ideas as representing other ideas on the basis of the definition of representation only if it is possible for one idea to be the object of another. But this is just the doctrine which Spinoza put forth in Eth. ii, 21–29 and which we found so mysterious and unmotivated: The point of the scholium to Proposition 21 is the reminder that the definition of an object of X for Spinoza would be "the mode exhibited in one attribute by X, as exhibited in any attribute." Of course Spinoza never gives the definition of "object" explicitly in these terms (we were led to believe that the object was always the mode exhibited in the other<sup>56</sup> attribute) but the latter rendering is quite consistent with what went before, and is even given some justification in the Letters.<sup>57</sup> The notion that an idea can be related

<sup>56</sup> Only two attributes could be involved, according to Ep. 66.

<sup>57</sup> See Ep. 63–66, 70, 72.

to an idea in the same way in which the mind is related to the body, which seemed to be an unintelligible basis for a doctrine of self-consciousness is precisely what the most natural doctrine requires according to the interpretations I have offered in this paper. The idea A represents idea B just in case the object of B, which is B itself (of course B has an extended object as well), is the adequate cause of the ideas of which A is a proximate cause. A will then be an *adequate* idea of B just in case B is deducible from A.<sup>58</sup> Thus if A is an adequate cause of the idea in a mind of which it is a proximate cause (if the ideas follow logically from A), then A will be an adequate idea of itself. In general, A will be an adequate cause of B just in case the adequate cause of the idea of which A is a proximate cause (namely B) is deducible from A, that is, just in case A is itself such an adequate cause, which is just in case the mind is active. The more inclusive idea, the human mind, can adequately represent itself and its parts in the same fashion. It is then aware of itself in just the same way in which it can be aware of the sun, or of motion—namely, by representation. Further, just insofar as an idea in the mind adequately represents that mind (the mind is active and free) the whole mind is an adequate cause of the states of its parts, which is the correlate in the attribute of thought of the whole-part determination constituting the essence of that particular mind.

Since this immanent causation of the states of the parts by the state of the whole constitutes the essence of the human mind, it is our essence to be free and active (insofar as our mind is “in itself,” i.e., is a relative whole and not a relative part), it is of the essence of the human mind to conceive things, in particular itself, adequately. It succeeds to the extent to which it is a relative whole determining its parts, and fails so far as it is a relative part superceded by other finite things whose power exceeds that of the human mind.

The way in which we know our own minds adequately differs from that in which we know the notions communes, for the particular essence individuating the object of our knowledge, the activity of the mind, constitutes both the thing known and the knowing of it. Intuitive knowledge is thus immediate and simple. The complexity of the other kinds of knowledge is the result of a finite limitation, and we can discard them when we know as God knows, intuitively. Intuitive knowledge proceeds according to the descending order of whole-part determination. It is knowledge of that adequate causation of the states of the idea-parts by the mind-whole (so far as the individual is determined by its own essence; that is, so far as it is a relative whole) which is the conatus and essence of the individual.

In this paper I have offered interpretations of some of the central notions of Spinoza's *Ethics*. Spinoza uses the concepts of activity, freedom, and intuitive adequate knowledge of the individual essence of the human mind as the basic tools with which his ethical project is to be carried out in the final portions of his great work. It is to be hoped that the elucidation of these notions which is offered here can be of help in our attempts to understand those further doctrines which give Spinoza's project its name.

*Princeton University*

<sup>58</sup> Thus any idea in a mind which follows logically from the previous idea in that mind is itself conceived adequately by that mind. This, I assert, is the basis for Spinoza's claim at *Eth.* ii, 40 that any idea which logically follows from an adequate idea is itself adequate. If we do not read this proposition in this way, it is inconsistent with the interpretation of adequacy I have presented (since nothing can be known of what the idea following the adequate idea is taken by the mind to represent until we see the ideas of which it is proximate cause).

# Leibniz and Degrees of Perception

ROBERT B. BRANDOM

THE CONCEPT OF REPRESENTATION is at the center not only of seventeenth-century theories of knowledge but of their corresponding ontologies as well. Descartes was impressed and illuminated by mathematical innovations that enabled, on the one hand, a precise geometrical account of the optical transformations of figures and images in vision and, on the other, the formally adequate representation of such geometrical situations by nonspatial, discursive expressions in coordinate algebras. God aside, the real was for him accordingly divided into the purely geometrical realm of extension and the realm of thought (taking algebra as its model), which represents what is extended. Leibniz, with a reservation of profound consequence for subsequent German idealism, would deny metaphysical reality to what is representable but not itself a representing. Defining perception as the representation or expression of the many in the one,<sup>1</sup> Leibniz adumbrates a metaphysical system whose primary features follow from the doctrine that to be is to perceive. Put in his inherited terminology, monads alone are true sub-

---

#### Abbreviations

- D "Discourse on Metaphysics," in *G*, 4:422–63. Translations herein are from *G. W. Leibniz: Philosophical Papers and Letters*, trans. L. E. Loemker, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1969); cited by section numbers.
- G *Die philosophischen Schriften von G. W. Leibniz*, ed. C. I. Gerhardt, 7 vols. (Berlin, 1875–90).
- GM *Die mathematischen Schriften von G. W. Leibniz*, ed. C. I. Gerhardt, 7 vols. (Berlin and Halle, 1849–63).
- M "Monadology," in *G*, 6:607–23 (translations herein from Loemker); cited by sec. nos.
- NE *New Essays concerning Human Understanding*, trans. A. G. Langley, 3rd ed. (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1949); I have emended the translation herein where necessary; cited by sec. and p. nos.
- PNG "Principles of Nature and Grace," in *G*, 6:598–606 (translations herein from Loemker); cited by sec. nos.

<sup>1</sup> *G*, 2:121, 311; 3:69, 574; 6:598, 608; 7:317, 529.

stances, and perception is their fundamental attribute. Perceivings, the modifications of substances in that attribute,<sup>2</sup> are monadic properties. Relations, for example, spatial ones, cannot *be* perceivings, but are rather merely perceivable, as features of the multiplicity that is unified in a single perception. As nonperceiving creatures of perception, space, time, and matter—no less than color and odor—are relegated to the second-class metaphysical status of “true phenomena.”<sup>3</sup>

To understand Leibniz’s version of reality as a privileged class of representings<sup>4</sup> we must understand four features of his account of perception. First, the genus of which perception is a species is that of *expression* or representation. Leibniz says generally, “One thing expresses another . . . when there is a constant and regulated relation between what can be said of the one and of the other.”<sup>5</sup> Favorite examples are the relations between a map and the corresponding geographical region and between a miniature model of a machine and the machine itself. Second, as noted above, the specific difference defining *perceptual* representations is that in perception a multiplicity is expressed in a unity. Third, each monad (indeed, each set of contemporaneous perceptions of any monad) expresses its whole world<sup>6</sup>—the “flower in the crannied wall” doctrine occasionally glossed by the claim that a perfect intelligence could deduce every feature of the universe from the consideration of the perceptions of a single monad. Fourth, perception comes in *degrees*, variously referred to as degrees of perfection or distinctness.

The last of these features is of cardinal metaphysical importance, since it is explanatorily responsible both for the diversity of points of view of the monads and for the preestablished harmony between them that is Leibniz’s systematic synthesis of the principles of unity and of maximal multiplicity. Leibniz explains the relation between the diversity of monadic perspectives and the expression by each of its whole world in the *Monadology*:

[A] The nature of the monad being to represent, nothing can limit it to representing only a part of things, though it is true that its representation is merely confused as to the details of the whole universe, and can be distinct for a small part of things only,

<sup>2</sup> I ignore here appetitions, which while also modifications of the attribute of perception, as differentials of perceivings (their tendencies to give rise to one another) are in a double sense *derivative* modifications.

<sup>3</sup> See J. Earman, “Perceptions and Relations in the Monadology,” *Studia Leibnitiana* 9, no. 2 (1977):212–30.

<sup>4</sup> This characterization does not shortchange the individuality of monads, for that individuality is expressed by an individual concept or law, which is just a representing from which all the representings “belonging” to a monad can be inferred.

<sup>5</sup> G, 2:112, a letter to Arnauld. See also M. Kulstad, “Leibniz’ Concept of Expression,” *Studia Leibnitiana* 9, no. 2 (1977):55–76.

<sup>6</sup> D, 9; M, 62.



that is, for those which are the nearest or the greatest in relation to each individual monad. Otherwise each monad would be a divinity. It is not in the object but in the modification of their knowledge of the object that the monads are limited. They all move confusedly toward the infinite, toward the whole, but they are limited and distinguished from each other by the degrees of their distinct perceptions.<sup>7</sup>

In this passage, the metaphysical differentiation of the monads is displayed as rooted in *epistemic* differences between perceptions, ranged along a dimension from “distinct” to “confused.” The same doctrine is put in slightly different terminology in the *Discourse*, twenty-eight years earlier:

[B] Thus a substance, which is of an infinite extension insofar as it expresses all, becomes limited in proportion to its more or less perfect manner of expression.<sup>8</sup>

In Leibniz’s discussion of causal action and passion we meet a more specific application of the principle that monads are distinguished from one another not by what they express or perceive but by how perfectly or distinctly they do so. In strict metaphysical terms, monads cannot affect one another. Rather, each derives its current perceptions from those immediately past according to its own internal principle or individual concept. So a special account must be offered of the *appearance* of interaction between disparate substances, which is their mutual harmony in all forming a *world* together. In the *Discourse* Leibniz explains:

[C] The action of one finite substance upon another consists only in the increase in the degrees of expression of the first, combined with a decrease in that of the second. . . . When . . . a change occurs by which several substances are affected (in fact every change affects them all) I think we may say that those substances which by this change pass immediately to a greater degree of perfection or to a more perfect expression, exert power and act, while those which pass to a lesser degree disclose their weakness and suffer.<sup>9</sup>

In the *Monadology*, the point is put like this, identifying the idiom of perfection with that of distinctness of perception:

[D] The created being is said to act outwardly insofar as it has perfection and to *suffer* from another insofar as it is imperfect. Thus *action* is attributed to a monad insofar as it has distinct perceptions, and *passion* insofar as it has confused ones.<sup>10</sup>

The crucial explanatory role played in Leibniz’s metaphysics by the various degrees of perception thus lends urgency to the question of how we are to understand the dimension along which quantitative comparisons of “per-

<sup>7</sup> *M*, 60.

<sup>8</sup> *D*, 15.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *M*, 49.

fection" or "distinctness" can be made. In Part 2, below, an account of perception will be developed which seeks to answer this question, presenting an integrated treatment of the four primary features of Leibniz's notion of perception, as indicated above. Part 1 will be devoted to formulating criteria of adequacy for such an account by delineating difficulties that any explication of the doctrine of degrees of perception must face and assembling the basic textual claims that must be reconciled and adjudicated. In particular, the concept of *awareness* (Leibniz's "apperception") will emerge as what we must get clear about in order to appreciate the order of perfection of perceptions. The conclusion of the analysis of Part 2 will be a reading in terms of which Leibniz's rationalism is seen to consist in the dependence, in the order of explanation, of the concepts of awareness and representation on the concept of inference (even for monads incapable of thought).

## I

The best account we have of degrees of perception is due to Montgomery Furth. The *awareness* substances have of their perceptions comes in degrees, according to Leibniz, ranging from the conscious, inferentially articulated recognition of a sample of gold by an assayer, down through the "minute perception" of each ocean wave breaking against the shore, which though individually indiscriminable, nevertheless contributes to the sound a soul with the proper organs is aware of the surf as producing. In an important paper, Furth has shown how sense can be made of the occupation of a perspective or point of view by primordially nonspatial monads, provided that the grades of distinctness of perception (or degrees of perfection of expression) that individuate those monads are identified with different distributions of the intensity of consciousness attending each monad's expressively complete set of perceptions of its world. Furth concludes:

[E] It seems that the numerical diversity of harmonious monads can reside only in differences in the clearness [*sic*] or degree of consciousness with which they experience various portions of their universe(s); if Leibniz's talk of "perspective" comes to anything, it must come to this.<sup>11</sup>

According to this view, degrees of perception are really degrees of apperception. Furth supports this reading by showing how differences in visual perspective and phenomena such as the occlusion of our view of a distant object by a nearer one can be analyzed in terms of differences in degree of awareness of different regions of space. Although the textual basis he presents is thin (passage A above is the only ground he offers), evidence for the

<sup>11</sup> "Monadology," *Philosophical Review* 76 (1967), reprinted in H. G. Frankfort, ed., *Leibniz: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1972), p. 129.

thesis that distinctness or perfection of perception is consciousness of it can be found:

[F] But a soul can read within itself only what it represents distinctly; it cannot all at once develop all that is enfolded within it, for this reaches to infinity.<sup>12</sup>

[G] The soul itself does not know the things which it perceives until it has perceptions which are distinct and heightened. And it has perfection in proportion to the distinctness of its perceptions.<sup>13</sup>

[H] We are never without *perceptions*, but we are necessarily often without *apperceptions*, viz.: when there are no distinct perceptions.<sup>14</sup>

(Only the first of these passages is from the work Furth was considering.) We can certainly conclude that distinctness of perception is a *necessary* condition for apperception. Nowhere does Leibniz identify apperception with the occurrence of distinct perceptions, but the burden of proof should rest with those who would deny the sufficiency of distinctness, to say what else is required for awareness.

Yet there are some difficulties attendant on the identification. Since for Furth monads are distinguished from one another by the degrees of their perceptions rather than by the objects of those perceptions (which would be the same for all the monads in a world), it follows that there can be at most one monad so “bare” that it is without even the dullest consciousness of its perceptions. Leibniz is clearly committed to the compossibility of a multiplicity of bare monads—those lowest on the scale of perfection of perception. But these are defined as endowed with perception but not *sensation* or *sentience*,<sup>15</sup> which is reserved to animal souls. These terms in turn occur in different texts both in a wide sense—sensation defined as perception accompanied by memory, which as we shall see is equivalent to apperception for Leibniz—and in a narrow sense in which sensation is enabled by association with a particular kind of organic body possessing sense organs. In the narrow sense, which is how I will use the term “sensation,” there is no reason to suppose that all apperception is comprised and hence that mere entelechies are excluded from some form of indistinct consciousness (=apperception). On the other hand, in the *Monadology* we read that “if we had nothing distinctive [*rien de distingué*] in our perceptions, and nothing heightened [*relevé*] so to speak, and of a higher flavor, we should always be in a state of stupor. This is the state of the naked monads. We see too that nature has given heightened perceptions to animals by the care she has taken to provide

<sup>12</sup> *M*, 61.

<sup>13</sup> *PNG*, 13.

<sup>14</sup> *NE*, 2, 19, p. 166.

<sup>15</sup> *G*, 7:529.

them with organs which gather numerous light rays. . . .”<sup>16</sup> If we may take “distingué” to be synonymous with “distincte,” which Leibniz used in the passages quoted above, then it seems that we cannot distinguish between stuporous monads by their distinguished perceptions. It is in keeping with the general strategies of Leibniz’s thought that consciousness be seen as occurring in even the least of substances—if perception goes all the way down, why not apperception? On the other hand, if this is his doctrine, one would expect Leibniz to say so. He tells us that all monads perceive, but never that they all apperceive.<sup>17</sup> In Part 2 we will see how Furth’s main insight can be rescued from the consequence that all monads are conscious to some degree.

More serious difficulties arise when we consider the consequences of Furth’s account of degrees of perception for monads advanced enough to be associated with animal bodies, however. The trouble is that Leibniz holds that “although each created monad represents the whole universe, it represents more distinctly the body which is particularly affected by it and of which it is the entelechy.”<sup>18</sup> Or, in the terminology of the *Discourse*: all the soul’s perceptions “correspond of themselves to that which happens in the universe at large, but more particularly and more perfectly to that which happens in the body associated with it, because it is in a particular way and only for a certain time according to the relation of other bodies to its own body that the soul expresses the state of the universe.”<sup>19</sup> If degrees of distinctness of perception (perfection of expression) are interpreted as degrees of awareness, it follows that we must be more intensely aware of anything that is happening in our bodies than of anything external to them. On this view, if on a certain occasion I am more aware of the moon I gaze at than of the eye employed, then the moon has become part of my body, or the eye has ceased to be such a part, or both. We should treat this unwelcome implication not as simply one among many difficulties or incoherences in Leibniz’s account of mind-body relations, but as evidence against the outright identification of degrees of awareness and degrees of perception. For Leibniz himself often uses examples<sup>20</sup> concerning bodily processes such as digestion of which we are less aware than of external happenings such as the burning of a neighbor’s barn. Leibniz simply does not hold that our bodies are that portion of the world of which we are most *aware*, as the “clearest is nearest” doctrine endorsed by Furth must claim. Nor could it be argued that what I am *really* aware of when my neighbor’s barn burns is

<sup>16</sup> *M*, 24, 25.

<sup>17</sup> See passage *G*.

<sup>18</sup> *M*, 62.

<sup>19</sup> *D*, 33.

<sup>20</sup> E.g., in *NE*.

the state of my sense organs produced (in the vulgar, not the metaphysical, sense) by the conflagration.<sup>21</sup> For even if such a confining restriction of possible objects of awareness could be included in a plausible reinterpretation of the rest of Leibniz's thought, a distinction would still be required between the sense in which I am aware of my retina *as* expressing or representing flames and the sense in which I am *not* aware of the lining of my stomach as representing the digestive processes it partakes in. And this distinction will still not coincide, either on the side of representing or of represented, with the distinction between my body and the rest of the world. Furth's detailed reconstruction of spatial perspective in terms of differential awareness involves only objects *external* to our bodies and cannot be extended to those bodies themselves.

These specific difficulties with Furth's suggestion will be reexamined in Part 2 below, as an interpretive strategy which avoids them is developed. First, however, we must look a little more closely at Leibniz's terminology. When introduced in the *Discourse*, perceptual degrees are referred to as arrayed along a dimension of greater and lesser *perfection*. This usage is not surrendered, persisting in later works in such passages as *D* above. In later works, though, the preferred and official portrayal of perceptual degrees is in terms of a range from *distinct* to *confused* perceptual expression (which are terms used only occasionally in this sense in the *Discourse*).<sup>22</sup> A common mistake among commentators on the doctrine of degrees of perception, which seems to stem historically from Russell's loose paraphrases in his classic work, is to talk instead about degrees of *clarity* of perception. Leibniz is, uncharacteristically, careful not to do so himself. (Furth falls victim to this error in passage *D* already quoted, as does Kneale in her article cited in the discussion of action below. Popular histories such as Copleston's repeat this mistaken diction.)<sup>23</sup> There is good reason for his care on this point since the centerpiece of Leibniz's epistemology is a set of technical definitions of what it is in virtue of which an idea may be called *clear*, rather than obscure, and *distinct*, rather than confused. These definitions (intended to improve what Leibniz saw as uncritical Cartesian usage) were formulated in Leibniz's first mature work<sup>24</sup> and endorsed by him until the end of his life, being either repeated or cited in every major work. That the same terms should be chosen (sometimes in Latin, sometimes in French) for the polar opposites, allowing us to speak both of distinct and confused *perceptions* and of distinct

<sup>21</sup> *NE*, 2, 21, p. 178.

<sup>22</sup> *D*, 16.

<sup>23</sup> *A History of Philosophy*, 8 vols. (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1963), 4:318ff.

<sup>24</sup> *G*, 4:422–26.

and confused *ideas*, is clearly a datum of the first importance for understanding degrees of perception, a datum obscured by mistaking degrees of distinctness for degrees of clarity. The significance for our interpretive task of Leibniz's choice of identical technical terms in discussing perceptions and ideas is enhanced by the fact that Leibniz *defines* "distinct" and "confused" as they apply to ideas, as he does *not* in their application to perceptions.

Ideas for Leibniz are dispositions, habits, or capacities to have certain kinds of perceptions, including in some cases thoughts. When concerned with discussions of innateness, Leibniz distinguished further between ideas and concepts or notions, the latter being actually formed dispositions, the former being higher-order capacities to have concepts,<sup>25</sup> but elsewhere he is not careful about this distinction, as we shall not be. Ideas are sorted into clear or obscure depending upon whether or not they enable *recognition* of the object of the idea, as my idea of sweetness does but my idea of this morning's substitute bus-driver does not.

Clear knowledge, in turn, is either confused or distinct. It is confused when I cannot enumerate one by one the marks which are sufficient to distinguish the thing from others, even though the thing may in truth have such marks and constituents into which its concept can be resolved. Thus we know colors, odors, flavors, and other particular objects of the senses clearly enough and discern them from each other but only by the simple evidence of the senses and not by marks that can be expressed.<sup>26</sup>

The corresponding passage in the *Discourse*—"When I am able to recognize a thing among others, without being able to say in what its differences or characteristics consist, the knowledge is confused"<sup>27</sup>—makes it clear that it is *discursiveness* that is the essential difference between distinct and confused (*clair-confus*) concepts. The passage continues:

It is when I am able to explain the peculiarities which a thing has that the knowledge is called distinct. Such is the knowledge of an assayer who discerns the true gold from the false by means of certain proofs or marks which make up the definition of gold. But distinct knowledge has degrees, because ordinarily the conceptions which enter into the definitions will themselves have need of definition, and are only known confusedly.

Talk of distinctness of knowledge, ideas, and concepts is all explicitly made subject to these definitions. As we shall see, it is not uncommon for Leibniz to invoke the degrees of distinctness of ideas and the degrees of distinctness of perceptions in a single passage, and references of both sorts occur in all the major works (e.g., *Discourse* 23). It is therefore tempting to identify these uses,

<sup>25</sup> *D*, 27.

<sup>26</sup> *G*, 4:422.

<sup>27</sup> *D*, 24.

taking distinct perceptions as the acts which realize the dispositions that are distinct ideas (and similarly for confused ones), particularly in the light of the following remark: "Just as being is revealed through a distinct concept, however, so existence is revealed through a distinct perception"<sup>28</sup> (where being is the order of possibility, and existence that of actuality). I take it that this identification has been implicitly endorsed by most commentators, insofar as they recognize the two uses of "distincte" at all.<sup>29</sup> But we have seen that awareness or apperception presupposes distinct perceptions, and we know that not only rational spirits like humans, but all animal souls have apperception. Yet the beasts of the field, though they have sensation and hence awareness, cannot formulate definitions, enumerate marks, or in general *explain* their cognitive capacities as required for the possession of distinct ideas. The doctrine of degrees of perception requires that *all* monads have perceptions that are distinct to some degree. Yet possession of an idea distinct to *any* degree requires reason, which only those monads that are spirits possess. Nonrational animals cannot have distinct ideas, but must have distinct perceptions. It follows that we must give different accounts of these two notions and cannot take them to be related as potency to act. For the division of substances into bare monads with perception only, souls adding apperception, and spirits adding thought, is fundamental to Leibniz's metaphysics.

The claim that we must distinguish the distinctness of ideas from the distinctness of perceptions is clearly an important one, so let us examine it a little more closely. Leibniz's most complete and systematic treatment of epistemological issues is in the *New Essays*, which discusses both distinct perceptions and distinct ideas extensively. We find there fairly direct statements to the effect that the capacity to reason is presupposed by the possession of distinct ideas of knowledge: "The true mark of a clear and distinct notion of an object is the means we have of knowing therein many truths by a priori proofs. . . ."<sup>30</sup> So it is sufficient for the distinctness of an idea that it be inferentially developable ("a priori" being for Leibniz a mark of what pertains to reason, inference, and thought). Distinctness of an idea is also a necessary condition for intellectual analysis, as we see in a discussion of empirical cognitive capacities: "But this *clear image* or this feeling which we may have of a regular decagon or of a weight of ninety nine pounds consists only in a *confused idea* since it is of no avail in discovering the nature and

<sup>28</sup> *G*, 7:319.

<sup>29</sup> For instance, see R. McRae, *Leibniz: Perception, Apperception, and Thought* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), chap. 5—certainly the fullest and most thoughtful treatment of these general issues we have. McRae is particularly helpful on the relations between sensibility and understanding.

<sup>30</sup> *NE*, 2, 23, p. 227; see also 2, 29, p. 274.

properties of this weight or of this regular decagon, which demands a distinct idea."<sup>31</sup> Again we read that "ideas, when reason cannot judge of their compatibility or connection, are confused."<sup>32</sup> The same conclusion concerning the difference between distinctness of perceptions and of ideas can be reached by three lines of argument from less directly relevant texts.

First, one doctrine concerning distinct ideas is that "the soul is a little world, in which distinct ideas are a representation of God, and in which confused ideas are a representation of the universe."<sup>33</sup> This thesis is an obvious reflection of the earlier *Discourse* claim that "the spirits express God rather than the world, while other simple substances express the world rather than God," where spirits have just been defined as intelligent or reasoning souls.<sup>34</sup> This difference is explained as stemming from the fact that spirits can understand necessary truths, and hence are like God, as cannot those natures which are either "brutish and incapable of recognizing truths [animals], or are wholly destitute of sensation and knowledge [bare monads without the capacity to recognize and hence to have clear ideas, the lowest grade of knowledge]." Together, these passages limit distinct ideas to intelligent souls, excluding the merely sentient beasts.

Second, notice that the difference between distinct and confused *ideas* is a qualitative one, whereas that between distinct and confused *perceptions* must be a quantitative one. Distinct ideas do come in degrees (of adequacy), but the basic notion is an all-or-one, according to whether recognition actualizing some clear idea is performed by recognizing certain enumerable *marks* or not.

I have sometimes defined an adequate idea as that which is so distinct that all of its ingredients are distinct, and such is nearly the idea of number. But when an idea is distinct and contains the definition or the reciprocal marks of the object it may be inadequate, viz.: when these marks or these ingredients are not also all distinctly known; for example, gold is a metal which resists the cupel and aqua fortis; it is a distinct idea, for it gives the marks or the definition of gold; but it is not perfect, for the nature of cupellation and the working of aqua fortis is not sufficiently known to us.<sup>35</sup>

Here, as elsewhere<sup>36</sup> we can ask of each component mark whether it is distinct or not. A distinct idea all of whose marks are also distinct is *more* distinct than one whose marks are merely clear ideas. Confused ideas are

<sup>31</sup> *NE*, 2, 29, p. 274.

<sup>32</sup> *NE*, 4, p. 446.

<sup>33</sup> *NE*, 2, 1, p. 109.

<sup>34</sup> *D*, 35.

<sup>35</sup> *NE*, 2, 31, pp. 278–79.

<sup>36</sup> *NE*, 2, 29, p. 267; *D*, 24; *G*, 4:423–24.



thus *not* a limiting case of distinct ones. A sharp boundary exists between these two kinds of ideas, depending upon whether or not the idea is a *definition* of the object, expressed as a set of “reciprocal marks” (necessary and sufficient conditions). Definition is of course a function of reason. But even if the sharp distinction were not made in this way, its very existence undercuts the identification of the sense of “distinct-confused” which applies to ideas with that which applies to perceptions, since the latter requires confused perceptions to be limiting cases of distinct ones. This point is important insofar as it is widely believed that Leibniz envisages a continuum of representation, of which the conceptual is the distinct pole and the sensual the confused pole. Such a view results from running together the doctrine of degrees of perception, which do form such a continuum but do not correlate directly with intelligibility and sensibility, and the distinctness and confusion of *ideas*, which while not forming such a continuum, do capture the differences between ideas of reason and those of sense. Thought is perception inferentially articulated in that it occurs in accordance with distinct ideas and necessary truths. Sensation is subject not to inference but only to imaginative association. Between these there are no intermediate degrees.

A third consideration is that *clear* ideas that are merely confused require the capacity to recognize objects and thus require apperception. For if recognition did not require consciousness, then any unconscious perception that expressed a certain object would be a recognition of it and would demonstrate the existence of a clear idea. So every monad would have clear ideas of everything in its universe. But Leibniz certainly held that even spirits have many obscure ideas. So only souls, which have apperception, can have clear ideas. Recognition is the basic act of awareness, and so a soul which had *only* clear ideas would be aware. But we saw earlier that awareness presupposes the possession of *distinct* perceptions (see passage *F* above). It follows that clear ideas presuppose distinct perceptions. Thus distinct perceptions cannot be the actualizations of distinct ideas, for the actualizations of clear ideas (what would correspond, were the identification in question correct, to “clear perceptions”) are recognitions—that is, perceptions that are noticed or apperceived, that require distinct perceptions although no distinct ideas are involved. Put another way, we can pair each element of the three metaphysical levels of being (bare monad, sentient soul, sapient spirit) with a corresponding element of the epistemological levels of knowledge (obscure ideas, clear but confused ideas, distinct ideas), but we *cannot* match this latter hierarchy of potencies to one of acts, of the form: perception, apperception, distinct perception. It is *thought* which belongs in the final place as actualizing distinct ideas. But then how are we to understand the doctrine of degrees of perception?

Perhaps we are reading the definition of distinct ideas too literally and hence are putting too much emphasis on the discursiveness of distinct ideas. The basic difference between clear-but-confused ideas and distinct ones is that between mere recognition and recognition by marks. It may be possible for an animal to have the capacity to recognize something by its marks, while being incapable of expressing that idea in the form of a nominal definition. It will not suffice for this that an animal which reliably recognizes a particular kind of berry as edible do so as a matter of causal-perceptual fact because of some feature such as its shape. For perception of that feature may be causally necessary and sufficient for recognition of the kind of berry in question without the organism being aware of the shape, without his having a clear idea of the mark he is in some sense using. And the component marks comprising a distinct idea must at least be clear. So to follow out this line of thought will be to fill in the notion of being aware of a mark as a mark. Each distinct idea codifies an *inference*, for example, from attribution of *resistance to a cupel and to aqua fortis* to characterization as *gold*. Perceptions which play inferential roles are *thoughts*, and only spirits have them. But beasts have what Leibniz calls "consecutions," which he says are "a shadow of reasoning." For habit may induce in beasts (or, as he says in more than one place, empiricists) sequences of perceptions based merely on association of ideas or even images connected by the imagination guided solely by particular instances, and with no idea of the reasons involved, as when a dog fears a stick he has been beaten with. Perhaps we can construct a "shadow" of distinct ideas, which is to them as the consecutions of the beasts are to thought, and which will justify attributing distinct *perceptions* to the brutes in some sense as the actualization of those ideas.

These various lines of thought about distinct ideas and distinct perceptions cannot be reconciled without some strains. But in Part 2, I will put forward an account according to which the beasts' shadow of reasoning gives them also a shadow of distinct ideas, which in the weak sense will not require understanding (though modelled on it), while in the full sense being joined with the power of reflection. It is at any rate clear that we may not assume that we understand the use of "distinct" and "confused" as they apply to perceptions just because we understand them as they apply to ideas, although the use of the same paired opposites strongly argues for a connection. Although distinct perceptions are somehow related to apperception, we do not know how. And yet until we understand the notion of distinct perceptions we cannot interpret the most basic features of Leibniz's metaphysics: the levels of being, monadic perspectives, and action and passion, or indeed perception itself. The task of Part 2 is the construction of a detailed

interpretation of these matters that does justice to the difficult notion of distinctness of perception.

Leibniz sometimes seems to suggest that such interpretative effort is unnecessary, for “there is much that is innate in our mind, since we are innate, so to speak, in ourselves. There is in us: being, unity, substance, duration, change, action, perception, pleasure, and a thousand other intellectual ideas . . . immediate to our understanding. . . .”<sup>37</sup> Thus Descartes is chided for failing to add to the immediacy of my knowledge that I think, my knowledge that I who am one have different thoughts, can will, and so on. At most it is claimed that these are *clear* ideas, which make us capable of recognizing their objects when they occur in us. But adequate or complete chains of explications according to distinct ideas must resolve ultimately into clear primitive concepts which we are told are identical with God’s attributes. Being, unity, substance, and so on, are prime candidates for this status. Two things are strange about the inclusion of perception in this list of innate clear ideas. First, the idea of perception is described as an *intellectual* idea, although perception occurs in the beasts who have clear sensible ideas, but no intellectual ones at all. Second, our introspective, clear idea of perception is an idea of perceptions which we are aware of, which are apperceived. Strictly, what we have is a clear idea of apperception. We cannot say, “minute perceptions are just like the ones we are conscious of, only unconscious,” and claim thereby to have expressed an idea (clear or distinct) as one might say, “unobserved elephants are just like observed ones”; for, as Wittgenstein has pointed out, when mental states are at issue awareness is the only feature that matters (cf. “It’s five o’clock on the sun”). Leibniz is aware of this problem with his extension of the Cartesian notions of thought and perception to the unapperceived. He expended great efforts in the development of a theory of unconscious or “symbolic” thought (in which ideas are manipulated by marks of marks, corresponding to distinct ideas, but never clearly conceived),<sup>38</sup> in the guise of a theory of notation. We want a similar explication of the *intellectual* idea of perception,<sup>39</sup> which the brutes who cannot reason according to necessary truths do *not* have, although they are aware of some of their perceptions. The innateness doctrine does not discharge this explanatory responsibility, and it is clear that we cannot make the polar notion of unconscious perception distinct merely by invoking a plenum of degrees of perception intermediate between those of which we are aware and those of which we are not.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> *NE*, intro., p. 45. See also *NE*, 1, 1, p. 46; 1, 2, p. 111; 4, 2, p. 410; 4, 10, p. 499.

<sup>38</sup> *D*, 27.

<sup>39</sup> *NE*, 2, 1, p. 111.

<sup>40</sup> *NE*, 2, 13, p. 152.

## II

I wish to make a suggestion: the expressive or representative nature of perception consists in the fact that from the existence of the modification of some monad which is a perceiving can be *inferred* the existence of various *accidents* or facts pertaining to its own monad or to others. An accident is any property of a subject which is not a maximal property, in the sense that it does not contain or entail all of the properties of that subject that are comprised by its individual concept. It is one of Leibniz's principles that "every true predication has some basis in the nature of things."<sup>41</sup> The basis in reality for our ordinary predications is called an accident, officially defined as "a being the notion of which does not include all that can be attributed to the subject to which this notion is attributed."<sup>42</sup> The subjects of ordinary predications are typically multimonic aggregates. When we attribute sphericity to such an aggregate, for example, a billiard ball, the metaphysical basis in virtue of which this predication is true is a set of modifications of the monads which constitute the billiard ball. The impenetrability of the billiard ball will consist of a different selection of the modifications of those aggregated monads. One of the key features of the interpretation that follows is the claim that what is expressed by perceptions is a set of such accidents. This will allow an intensional reading of expression.

That the relation between expression and expressed is an inferential one is suggested by several of Leibniz's formulations, for instance, his earliest definition of mathematical expression: "What is common to all these expressions is that we can pass from a consideration of the relations in the expression to a knowledge of the corresponding properties of the thing expressed."<sup>43</sup> It is natural to take such "passage" from one consideration to knowledge of something else as inference. What is important about a map or a model is that we can make appropriate inferences concerning features of the mapped or modelled thing from observations concerning the features of the map and model. This reading is confirmed later in the same passage as we are told, "Similarly every entire effect represents the whole cause, for I can always pass from the knowledge of such an effect to a knowledge of its cause. . . . It may also happen that the effects which arise from the same cause express each other mutually in gesture and speech," since for Leibniz the cause of a phenomenon is its sufficient reason. Expression is here clearly a generally non-symmetric relation (as cause to effect or premise to conclusion), though cap-

---

<sup>41</sup> *D*, 8.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* On the logic of such accidents, see *G*, 7:236-47.

<sup>43</sup> *G*, 7:263.

able of symmetry in particular cases. Further evidence is supplied by the use of the notion of *perfection* throughout Leibniz's mature period (a notion that supplies a crucial link to a distinctness of perception). Immediately after passage *D* quoted above, the *Monadology* continues: "One created being is more perfect than another if one finds in it that which will supply a reason a priori for what happens in the other. And it is because of this that it is said to act upon the other." A similar definition is to be found in the *Discourse*,<sup>44</sup> where we recall that as elsewhere, "degrees of expression" is used interchangeably with "degrees of perfection" (e.g., in passages *C*, *D*, and *G* above, and in *Discourse* 15).

Mathematical expression corresponds to a particularly simple case of inferrability, namely where expressing features and expressed features stand in a one-to-one correspondance: "It suffices to the expression of one in another that there is a certain constant law of relations, by which the singulars in one can be referred to corresponding singulars in another,"<sup>45</sup> as each point of an ellipse can be projected onto a corresponding point of a circle. Notice that at this mathematical level expression is symmetric since one-to-one correspondances are. There seems no room for talk of "degrees of perfection" of correspondance. These facts become explicable if we read Leibniz's differentia for perceptual expression, as expression of the many in the one, as appealing to his conceptual containment account of inference. One clear sense borne by the many-in-one formula<sup>46</sup> is that many perceptual modifications are nonspatially included in each simple substance. That this inclusion is inferential is argued by Leibniz's claim that the individual concept of the substance includes every one of its modifications, or put another way, that everything that will happen to the substance can be deduced from that concept. The present suggestion is that the many-in-one formula bears a second, less obvious but equally important sense, according to which *each* perception itself enfolds a multitude (of accidents), its expressive *range*. On this view, the mathematical expression of a circle is an ellipse differs from perceptual expression *both* in that ellipses and circles are mere aggregates and not true unities (corresponding to the first sense of the formula) *and* in that each point of the circle expresses only a single point of the ellipse. Evidence for this double reading can be found in such pronouncements as that "we can define our essence or idea as that which includes everything which we express."<sup>47</sup> Given an individual concept, not only can we deduce all

<sup>44</sup> *D*, 6.

<sup>45</sup> *Opuscules et fragments inédits de Leibniz*, ed. L. Couturat (Paris, 1903), p. 15.

<sup>46</sup> *M*, 12, 13.

<sup>47</sup> *D*, 16.

of its modifications, but also everything expressed by them. Of course this will follow at once from the transitivity of deducibility if the expressive range of each perception is a set of accidents deducible from it, as I have suggested.

The claim then is that percepts have content in the same way in which concepts do, with each perception expressing a variety of facts about its universe. On this account, expressive content is an intrinsic feature of perceptions, each of which has its own content or set of attributes deducible from its occurrence. By contrast, the projected points of an ellipse that expresses a circle have their contents as extrinsic properties, acquired in virtue of their relations to other points on the ellipse. Deductive relationships in Leibniz's universe are always an expression of its fundamental lawfulness. Whenever an inference can be made, it is according to an underlying rule or regularity. For conic sections, laws of geometrical projection underwrite the inferences in virtue of which one expresses another. For perceptions, the preestablished harmony of the modifications of one monad with the modifications of others makes possible the inferences that give perceptions their expressive contents.

A perception provides its monad with information about the rest of the world only insofar as the preestablished harmony provides principles (laws of Nature) which permit inferences from the occurrence of this particular perception, rather than any other possible one, to conclusions about facts outside that monad. We are assured of the existence of such principles only by metaphysical reasoning. The form in which that harmony manifests itself in the experience of particular monads is the physical or phenomenal world. It is accordingly facts couched in the phenomenal terms of *this* world that are the informational contents of perceptions as experienced by the monads those perceptions modify. For the monad, its world is the world of physical, perceptible attributes. Leibniz's phenomenalism entails that the deductive relations between perceptions implied by the preestablished harmony are reflected by deductive relations between those perceptions and features of the phenomenal things which appear to the perceiving monad as their objects.

In what follows, the prime argument to be offered for this sense of "many-in-one" as inferential containment of many attributes in one perception is the explanatory power the hypothesis possesses regarding Leibniz's many doctrines about degrees of perception. Besides accounting for the asymmetry of expression involving modifications of true substances evident in the application to cause-effect relations above, this interpretation gives a natural sense to talk of degrees of expression. For if many accidents are expressed in one perception, it is possible for more or fewer of them to be

expressed by another perception. We may say that two perceptions differ in perceptual or expressive degree just in case the expressive range or content of one of them properly includes the range or content of the other.<sup>48</sup> Leibniz's standard definition of perfection is that that is most perfect which is "simplest in hypotheses and richest in phenomena."<sup>49</sup>

That is, one substance is more perfect than another if from fewer premises about it, more about its world can be deduced than is the case for the other. The "hypotheses" will be statements reporting the occurrence of a perception in some monad, and the "phenomena" deducible from them will be statements reporting on the inherence of an accident in some subject. Thus higher degrees of perfection of expression correspond to more inclusive sets of expressed (inferable) accidents. Consider three perceptions of a physical object. The first,  $p_1$ , represents it as red (its expressive range consists of a single accident),  $p_2$  represents it as cubical, and  $p_3$  represents it as red and cubical. Then  $p_3$  will be a more perfect expression of the object than  $p_1$  or  $p_2$ . Indeed, we can see why one might say that  $p_3$  is more *distinct* than  $p_1$  or  $p_2$ , and they more confused than it. For  $p_1$  cannot distinguish the object from a red sphere, while  $p_2$  cannot distinguish it from a green cube. Perception  $p_3$  is both more distinguishing and more specific than the others.

On this account, the degrees of perception are a consequence of the character of perceptions as representing many in one. A cardinal virtue of this approach is that it explains how two numerically distinct monads, individuated *only* by their perceptions, can nonetheless both express the whole world. For a monad to express the whole world is for the union of the expressive ranges of all of its component perceptions to include the complete set of accidents of that world, that is, those accidents whose joint occurrence determines every particular substantial modification in that world. Different monads simply divide up that complete set of accidents among the expressive ranges of contemporaneous perceptions in different ways. In a mini-world in which no modifications exist save those in virtue of which a particular cube is red, one substance (by hypothesis "part" of the cube, since the world contains nothing else) might express its whole world by having the single perception  $p_3$ , while another has  $p_1$  and  $p_2$  instead. These perceptions are distinguishable, since no two of them have the same expressive range. The monads these perceptions modify are accordingly distinguishable as well, since they are qualified by distinguishable modifications. Yet each monad expresses *every* feature of its world, since for each monad

<sup>48</sup> We cannot just compare numbers of accidents, since each perception may express an infinite number of them.

<sup>49</sup> *D*, 7. See *D*, 15 for talk of "more perfect expression of phenomena."

there is no accident not expressed by some one of its perceptions. Each complete set of monad's contemporary perceptions has the whole set of its world's real accidents as the union of the expressive ranges of its perceptions. But the distribution of more and less inclusive expressive ranges over that set of perceptions differs from monad to monad, and from time to time within a single monad (see passages *A* and *B* above). It is these differences in the distinctness (inferential potential) of the individual perceptions that jointly express the whole world which distinguish the various monads.

In order to follow out this suggestion for interpreting perceptual expression and its degrees as regards the notions of action and awareness explicated in terms of them, we must take note of one important respect in which Leibniz sharpened his views between 1687 and 1706. If we compare passages *C* and *D* above, we may notice that the first defines action in terms of an *increase* in the degrees of expression of a substance, while the second defines it in terms of having perceptions of a high degree, with changes in degree not mentioned. A prominent commentator<sup>50</sup> has argued that the earlier view is an "aberration" and that Leibniz himself did not believe its paradoxical consequences—the conclusion drawn in the *Discourse* after passage *C* that "every activity of substance which has perception implies some pleasure, and every passion some pain." The *Discourse* definition cannot be seen as merely aberrant, however, for throughout his career Leibniz held a doctrine of *development* of perception, enunciated in the same terms in the late (1714) "Principles of Nature and Grace" as in the epistemologically authoritative *New Essays*, as well as in the early *Discourse* and correspondence with Arnauld.<sup>51</sup>

A perception is said to "develop" or be "heightened" when it becomes more perfect or distinct, increasing its expressive degree. What happens is that where in the *Discourse* development is associated primarily with activity, and secondarily with awareness (since pleasure and pain are both apperceptive states for Leibniz), afterwards development is offered as part of the account of awareness alone (see passages *F* and *G* for instance). In the later view, awareness is a kind of activity, but not all activity is awareness. I will present detailed reconstructions of each of these notions. First I show how *differences* in degrees of expression can be seen as underwriting the attribution of cause-effect interaction between monads, without requiring the sort of active *change* of degree I will associate with awareness.

<sup>50</sup> M. Kneale, "Leibniz and Spinoza on Activity," in Frankfort, *Leibniz*, pp. 215–37.

<sup>51</sup> *PNG*, 4, 13. *NE*, intro., p. 51; 2, 9, p. 142; 2, 19, p. 166; 2, 21, pp. 178, 201, 219–20. See also *G*, 3:574; 4:522, 562–65; 6:500–501.



Kneale<sup>52</sup> is right to doubt the cogency of the claim that a pair of billiard balls engaged in a collision affect one another by causing apperceptive states of pain and pleasure, as the earlier view seemed to require. But it is not at all obvious that sense can be made of the later view either. For we know that monads are ranked by the degrees of their perceptions, with spirits ranked higher than brutes or bare monads. But then it seems we must deny that it is possible for a lower being, a stone, say, to cause pain to a brute, or for a chemical substance to put a rational being to sleep. Each of these would be action by a less perfectly expressive being upon one more so. Any view about Leibniz's account of activity must face this difficulty. The paradoxical conclusion can be avoided, however, by focussing on the differences in the degrees of perfection with which two apparently interacting substances express, not their whole world, but some particular occurrence. We can be a little more precise about how the partial ordering of perceptions into degrees by the inclusion relations among their expressive ranges can be extended to partially order the time-slices of monads in which those perceptions occur, as required by the theory of causation. Let  $a$  be any set of accidents (perhaps a temporal sequence of them forming the "change" of passage  $C$  above), and let  $m$  and  $m'$  be two different sets of co-monadic, contemporaneous sets of perceptions. We can say that  $m$  expresses  $a$  more perfectly than  $m'$  does if it is possible to select a nonempty subset  $k(m)$  of the perceptions in  $m$  such that (i)  $k(m)$  is a complete expression of  $a$ , that is, every accident in  $a$  is in the union of the expressive ranges of the elements of  $k(m)$ ; and (ii) for any subset  $k(m')$  which completely expresses  $a$ ,  $k(m)$  is inferentially stronger than  $k(m')$  in the sense that given any perception  $p' \in m'$ , there is some perception  $p \in m$  such that the expressive range of  $p'$  is a proper subset of the expressive range of  $p$ . This condition merely generalizes the example discussed making more perfect expression (higher degrees of perception) depend upon having perceptions which are richer and more specific in content.

I will justify this definition further below when I discuss the development of perception and awareness. Even at this point I can remark on a cardinal explanatory virtue of the definition, however. We saw above that Leibniz believes that a cause or activity provides a reason a priori for its effects.<sup>53</sup> Yet his *definition* of causation in its general form as action and passion (as presented in passages  $C$  and  $D$ , for instance) is in terms of differences of degree of expression. What is the relation between the definition and the claim that effects are deducible from their causes? Given our inferential reading of

<sup>52</sup> "Leibniz and Spinoza on Activity."

<sup>53</sup>  $M$ , 52.

expression and the account above, the deducibility claim *follows* from the definition of action and passion. For it follows directly from the account of more perfect expression above that everything deducible from the occurrence of  $m'$  is also deducible from the occurrence of  $m$ ; the content of the relevant passive monadic substate  $k(m')$  is part of the content of the relevant active monadic substate  $k(m)$ . If  $m'$  is involved in the change in question, that is, if the modifications in virtue of which the accidents in  $a$  characterize the world in question, then those modifications themselves will be part of the content of  $k(m)$ , that is, will be deducible from it. So insofar as we can justify reading high relative degrees of expressive perfection of monadic states as corresponding to having perceptions with richer and more specific expressive ranges as above, we can explain how the active state gives a reason for or allows us to deduce the corresponding passive one.

This much results from the three interpretive suggestions offered so far: taking the expression of many-in-one which is perception to apply each perception (as well as to the monad as a whole); taking the relevant sense of "in" to be explicated inferentially following the idiom of Leibniz's account of deducibility in terms of the containment relations of concepts; and taking degrees of perception to correspond to more-or-less-in-one, where again following Leibniz's intensional logic, increasing the number of accidents attributed to a subject amounts to specifying one's claim. My account also explains why mathematical expression, which is not a matter of many-in-one, does not come in degrees and seems to have nothing to do with activity and passivity. As Part 1 argues, however, the real test of any account of degrees of perception is its treatment of the problem of *distinctness* of perception. An acceptable account must explain both directions in which the use of this term pulls: one way toward awareness, the other toward distinct ideas. The existence of these two uses of "distinct" must be explained in the light of the sharp distinction in levels of being between those who have sensation but no more, and those who can think also and hence can have distinct ideas.<sup>54</sup> Even without this complication introduced by considering distinct ideas, the association between distinct perceptions and awareness causes trouble, as we have seen, since our bodies are defined as whatever we have the most distinct perceptions of (passage  $H$  above), and our bodies are not the exclusive or even the preeminent objects of our awareness. So let us consider awareness.

One of Leibniz's important doctrines about awareness is that apperception occurs when we not only have perceptions, but also perceive those perceptions. Three basic elements must accordingly be distinguished. First there is an apperceiving, which is a perception of an earlier perception. The

---

<sup>54</sup> *NE*, 4, 5, p. 448.

perception thus perceived is the immediate object of apperception—that in us to which we attend, as distinguished from the myriad of perceptions we ignore. Finally, there is that in the world, a table, perhaps, of which we are mediately aware in virtue of attending to or perceiving the immediate object of attention. There are two questions we should ask about awareness according to this structure: First, what is the relation between a perception that is an apperceiving and the perception that is its immediate object, in virtue of which we may say that awareness is occurring at all? (How is it “of” its internal object?) Second, what is the relation between this constellation of perceptions and that external object which they constitute an awareness of? In addressing this second question we will need to explain (*pace* the discussion of Part 1) how it is possible to be aware of anything except one’s own body. Each of these queries must be distinguished from the related question of what it is about a perception or a feature of the world which makes it liable or likely to become an object of apperception in either of these two senses. “Novelty” is a good response to the second kind of worry, but not to the first. Unfortunately Leibniz does not carefully separate these issues in the *New Essays* (our basic source on such matters), which has obscured what he has to say about the more basic questions (what the trick of awareness consists in or how it is brought off, rather than when it is likely to be performed).

Consider the first question. I referred above to the various pronouncements establishing that the expressive development of perception is a necessary condition for awareness. Insofar as the development of perceptions involves only the expressive or representative contents of the developed and developing perceptions, development as increasing distinctness or perfection of expression has been glossed as specification of that content, understood in turn by inclusion relations holding between the sets of accidents which are their expressive ranges. In order to arrive at necessary and sufficient conditions for the occurrence of apperception, we must consider also purely material features of perceivings as vehicles for expression, features arising out of the particular representings of expressive content as they occur in the career of individual monads. For illumination of this aspect we may look to the third class of definitional remarks about apperception (the first two being those talking about perception “of” perceptions, and development), namely, those concerning *memory*. In the same texts which make so much of development, “sentiment,” or feeling (the generic prereflexive apperceptive state), is defined as “perception accompanied by memory.”<sup>55</sup> We are also told that “all attention requires memory,”<sup>56</sup> with

<sup>55</sup> *PNG*, 4.

<sup>56</sup> *NE*, preface.

the acknowledged implication that strictly all we can be directly aware of is our immediately past perceptions.<sup>57</sup> My claim is that appeals to memory, development, and perception of earlier perceptions determine a single account of awareness, involving both material and expressive features, though each emphasizes one or the other sort.

Mere repetition of representative content is notoriously insufficient for memory. My awareness of the table today may have the same content as yours of yesterday, but it is not a memory of your experience. To be such requires beyond the repetition of content also that the memory be *produced* in the right way. For Leibniz this "production in the right way" is a matter not of causation of phenomenal interaction between monads, but of that genuine metaphysical activity whereby the perceptions modifying a monad at any given time produce their successors according to the law which is the concept of that individual, as expressed by a contemporaneous set of appetitions codifying particular tendencies of one set of perceptions to give rise to another. For  $p_2$  to be a memory of  $p_1$  requires not only a relation of their contents, but that  $p_2$  have been produced by  $p_1$ .

In general, perceptions will give rise to other perceptions whose expressive ranges bear little relation to those of their progenitors. But if  $p_1$  both gives rise to  $p_2$  and has its expressive content repeated or specified by  $p_2$ , then  $p_2$  is a perception, memory, development, that is to say an awareness of  $p_1$ . Awareness of or attention to a perception thus should be understood as the product of the two characteristics of metaphysical *production*<sup>58</sup> of the later perception by the earlier one and the expressive *specification* of the content of the first by the second, in that the expressive range of the first is a subset (proper or improper) of the expressive range of the later. In this way memory as requiring only repetition of content is assimilated as a limiting case to development of that content. Put another way, awareness occurs when one perception is "of" another in the dual sense of being produced *by* the first and expressing (at least) the content of the first. thus in the representative sense of what a perception is "of," discussed above, the second perception must be of the same content as the first, in that every fact (the occurrence of an accident) deducible from the first must likewise be deducible from the second. I have assumed that the representative content of a perception is an intrinsic feature of that perception—that a perception could not be just the modification it is without having just the content that it does—since appetitions are the differentials or tendencies on the part of perceptions to give

<sup>57</sup> *NE*, intro., pp. 45, 47; 2, 19, p. 165; 2, 22, p. 222; 2, 27, pp. 248, 250. *PNG*, 4; M, 19.

<sup>58</sup> On perceptions producing others, see *G*, 2:372; 4:523–24, 563–65; *NE*, intro., p. 49; 2, 1, p. 116; 2, 21, p. 211; 2, 33, pp. 283–84.

rise to other perceptions, that is to say, that awareness resides as a potential in special appetitions or developmental tendencies, which may or may not be realized by the succeeding crop of perceptions. (In fact, Leibniz's account of intentional action is couched in terms of *distinct appetitions* which reason develops so that we are aware of the inclinations which impel us.<sup>59</sup> The present analysis may be applied to the degrees and development of such appetitions at a higher level—with degrees of appetitions corresponding to the development which would result in the perceptions involved, and the development of appetitions corresponding to tendencies to increase development codified in higher-order appetitions governing the tendency of one appetite to give rise to another. The details of such an extension, involving as they do the perception of good and evil, lie beyond the scope of this work, however.)

So a straightforward answer to the first of our questions about apperception (about the relation between an apperceiving and the perception that is its immediate content) is available, which draws together the three sorts of locutions Leibniz uses to explain awareness. This account reflects, furthermore, the primary empirical datum that, to judge from the frequency with which examples are cited and the variety of theoretical insights he thinks can be gleaned therefrom, Leibniz took as the basic object of explanation and major confirmation of his account of awareness and unconscious perception—namely, that one may remember after the event an occurrence one did not notice at the time, but must in some sense have seen in order now to recall. On my account, all perceptions are intrinsically unconscious. But though a perception might have remained undeveloped and hence unnoticed for several generations of its perceptual progeny, this is consistent with eventual development (since “to produce” is transitive). Indeed, Leibniz holds that “nothing is for nothing,” that all perceptions will eventually be developed, that all monads will eventually be conscious of all that they have ever perceived. (Holding this doctrine does not, of course, defuse the objection made earlier concerning what is required to make intelligible what is meant by the notion of “unconscious” perception, as we still need to know what these are like *before* they are developed.)

I have already considered the sense of “distinct perception” as perception of high expressive degree that is relevant for the explanation of physical interaction. The current claim is that another sense of “distinct perception” occurs in passages such as *I* below, where awareness is at issue. In such passages, the question is how a particular set of perceptions becomes distinct in the sense of distinguished from the rest as the immediate objects of

---

<sup>59</sup> See *NE*, 2, 21, p. 201.

attention and are themselves perceived. My answer is that they are distinctive or remarkable in the measure of their development, that is, the *increase* in their expressive degrees. This second sense is thus defined in terms of the first. Given these two senses of “distinct” as applied to perceptions, we can easily resolve the issue raised earlier concerning bodily awareness. The body of a dominant monad is that which it perceives most distinctly in the first sense, that is, has the richest, most detailed and inferentially powerful perceptions of. This does not mean that those perceptions are the most developing, however. There need be no special correlation between those perceptions of highest expressive degree and those which give rise to *more* expressive specifications of themselves. It is these latter that matter for awareness. So we need not be more aware of our bodies than of anything in the rest of the world. Even if each bodily perception, with its inclusive expressive range, gives rise to a perception with an expressive range of similar size, if the content of the first is not included in that of the second, there is no awareness, regardless of the expressive degrees involved (see the discussion of the sensation below). It is for this reason that we can say that perceptions of our own bodies are confused.

My second question about apperception concerned the determination of the ultimate external objects of awareness. Clearly these are determined in some way by the expressive ranges of the “heightened” perceptions of which one is immediately aware. That some care is required in dealing with this issue, however, is indicated by Leibniz’s account of sensation. Two major features of that account yield interpretive puzzles. First, from 1684 on it is claimed that sensations are made of a myriad of “smaller” perceptions that are its “parts”: “When we perceive colors or odors we are having nothing but a perception of figures and motions, but of figures and motions so complex and minute that our mind in its present state is incapable of observing each distinctly and therefore fails to notice that its perception is compounded of single perceptions of exceedingly small figures and motions.”<sup>60</sup> How is one perception “compounded” out of others? How can those parts result in the apperception that is sensation without themselves being apperceived? Second, Leibniz holds that the phenomenal qualities that are the contents of states of sensory awareness are *phantasms* or phenomenal qualities that, while grounded in some sense in the figures and motions of the bodies they express, are not qualities to be found in the world represented but rather are artifacts of our representing those motions in apperception. Thus if we were able to distinguish further the perceptual parts comprised by our sensation of green, we would discover it to be a compound of blue and yellow.

<sup>60</sup> *G*, 4:426. See also *NE*, preface, p. 50; 2, 1, p. 118; 2, 9, p. 136.

These sensory phantoms would in turn disappear on further analysis; but as a result of the infinite divisibility (indeed infinite division) of matter, new phantoms will arise no matter how finely we divide our sensation.<sup>61</sup> Both doctrines are combined in Leibniz's likening of sensory phantasms to the artificial transparency of a toothed wheel or spoked cart-wheel as it rotates, in which the individual parts move too fast for us to distinguish. The doctrine of phantasms is puzzling because of its ambiguous status with respect to the metaphysical foundations of the possibility of *error*. For Leibniz's official view is that perception never errs, that it is only with judgment, at the level of reason, that error is possible.<sup>62</sup> Sensation as apperceptive is intermediate on the scale of being between mere perception and rational judgment. The phenomenal qualities of sense are somehow intermediate between the infallible representation of mere perception and the possibility of genuine error of discursive judgment. The difficulty of explicating this doctrine parallels and reproduces on the epistemological side the metaphysical embarrassment similarly arising concerning the status of space and time as "true phenomena" grounded in but in some ways misrepresenting the nature of individual substance. Sensations represent neither quite correctly nor quite incorrectly, but what sort of middle ground is envisaged here?

We need not address the question of how perceptions can be composed of or have as parts other perceptions in terms of a *spatial* notion of part-whole. Leibniz tells us that this is not the primary signification of talk of parts and wholes,<sup>63</sup> and it seems that he has in mind the logical relations of containment of *concepts* in one another as primitive. Following this line of thought suggests that it is the *expressive ranges* of petite perceptions which are included as parts in the expressive range of some perception which is a sensation. Suppose  $P$  to be an infinite set of perceptions which jointly give rise to  $p_1$ , whose expressive range is just the union of the ranges of the elements of  $P$ . Then  $p_1$  will count for us as developing those perceptions, and hence will be an apperceiving, as sensations are. If none of the elements of  $P$  is individually developed, that is, gives rise to a perception more distinct of it though not of its fellows, then on our account we would have no separate awareness of that perception and hence would be ignorant of its exact contribution to the corporate awareness of the infinite set  $P$ .

Why on Leibniz's account should we have such wholesale development in preference to development of individual perceptions? This can be seen as a

<sup>61</sup> *NE*, 2, 23, p. 228.

<sup>62</sup> *D*, 14. See also H. Ishiguro's response to Furth on this point, in "Leibniz' Theory of the Ideality of Relations," in Frankfort, *Leibniz*, pp. 191–213, esp. 210–13.

<sup>63</sup> *NE*, 1, 3, p. 102.

consequence of two general precepts. First, Leibniz holds a principle of *finiteness of apperception*, that our awareness at any given time comprises only a finite number of elements.<sup>64</sup> (Indeed, it is to this finiteness of apperception that the appearance of “leaps” in a continuous universe is due, according to Leibniz.)<sup>65</sup> Thus in the *New Essays* our ignorance of the minute perceptions making up sensations is attributed to their “infinite multitude, which keeps us from distinguishing them.”<sup>66</sup> Next, as a result of the principle of sufficient reason, if there were a multitude of petite perceptions which differed little from one another, there would need to be some *sufficient reason*, grounded in those perceptions themselves, why one and not another of them was developed. That the little perceptions differ only insensibly from one another is frequently invoked as a reason for our failure to distinguish them. If we take the finiteness of apperception to restrict a single field of awareness to a finite number of apperceivings (i.e., perceptions which are developings of others), and if we assume as a result of the constitution of bodies the presence of infinite sets of expressively similar perceptions ripe for development, the principle of sufficient reason *requires* that perceptions developing infinite sets of their ancestors arise. Since sensation, as perception of something external,<sup>67</sup> must involve perceptions expressing the infinitely intricate relations of material bodies actually divided to infinity, in virtue of the association of sensation with the material impressions of bodies on the organs of sense, we can be sure that infinite sets of insensibly different perceptions will occur.

But what of the content of these joint-stock developments of infinite sets of look-alike perceptions? Whence the phantasms? The key here may be taken to be the paired notions of artificiality and abstraction as they arise in the model of the disappearance of the spokes of a spinning wheel. Such transparency is an artifact of its means of production, arising only under specifiable circumstances. In such a way we could describe the expressive range of a perception which developed an infinite number of similar minute perceptions as “artificial” just in case no perception which does not arise in that way ever has that expressive range. That is, the expressive ranges of percepts which are sensations may be artifacts of the expressive combination of an infinite number of similar precursors. It would make a neater story if the status of the contents of sensations as phantasms could be accounted for just as expressive ranges artificially inclusive in this sense, but phantasms in

<sup>64</sup> *NE*, 2, 1, p. 113; 2, 13, p. 150; 2, 21, p. 187; 2, 23, p. 228; *G*, 4:557–59.

<sup>65</sup> *NE*, 2, 17, p. 160; 4, 16, p. 552; *G*, 4:555–56; Couturat, *Opuscules*, p. 523.

<sup>66</sup> *NE*, 4, 6, p. 459.

<sup>67</sup> So called at *NE*, 2, 19, p. 165.



this sense would not be “false” enough as expressions for what Leibniz says of them. Often it is suggested that what is apperceptive is what is *common* to the infinite number of petite perceptions which conspire to produce an effect (this seems to be a lesson of the discussions of how individually insensible increments in the intensity of a sound can awaken one from a sound sleep, for instance). Our failure to perceive the individuals is the failure to distinguish the unique contribution of each to the resulting awareness. Taking this strand of thought seriously, a set  $P$  of petite perceptions is taken as consisting of perceptions whose expressive ranges largely overlap, though each may contain a few distinguishing accidents. A perception metaphysically produced by all of them might be said to develop (in an attenuated sense) the *set*  $P$  if it expressed a superset of what is *common* to the expressive ranges of elements  $P$ , even though no element of  $P$  is developed in the strict sense. The common content thus apperceived is artificial in the above sense, and is false as representation in just the sense in which abstractions may be called “false” as overlooking distinguishing detail. The infinite descending hierarchy of phantasms is easily explained in these terms. If I become capable of greater discrimination concerning my sensation of green, more attentive to its origins and details—in short, more aware of the distinctions in expressive range in the collaborating petit perceptions—I may divide  $P$  into two subsets  $P'$  and  $P^*$  each of which boasts a larger common expressive core than  $P$  did, and which separately give rise to the sensations of blue and yellow. The resegregation of  $P$  into  $P'$  and  $P^*$  occurs only because more distinguishing accidents of its elements are taken account of, and the same process can in principle occur in  $P'$  or  $P^*$  since an infinite number of differentiating features of expression are abstracted from at each stage.

On this account, then, sensation occurs when what is developed is the common core of an infinite set of perceptions so similar to one another that there is not sufficient reason for individual elements or proper subsets to be picked out as distinguished and to be individually developed. All the minute perceptions which are in this sense included in a sensation contribute to a single undifferentiated episode of sensory awareness. “These sense-ideas are simple appearance, because, being confused, they do not give the mind the means of distinguishing their contents; . . . we treat these ideas as simple ideas because at least our apperception does not divide them,”<sup>68</sup> Leibniz says of the cognitive dispositions (clear but confused ideas) corresponding to sensations.

The final question we must consider is what sort of perceptual act, or form of apperception, if any, corresponds to distinct *ideas* as their realiza-

<sup>68</sup> *NE*, 2, 3, p. 120.

tion. The trouble with the ideas of sense is that “they are not distinct, because they are not distinguished by what they include. Thus we cannot give a definition of them.”<sup>69</sup>

Thus although in our view distinct ideas distinguish one object from another, nevertheless, as the ideas clear but confused in themselves do so also, we call *distinct* not all those which are very discriminating or which distinguish objects, but those which are well distinguished, i.e., which are distinct in themselves and distinguish in the object the marks which make it known, which an analysis or definition gives.<sup>70</sup>

“Distinct in itself” here may refer either to inclusiveness of expressive range or to development. The element in this account that goes beyond sensation is distinguishing within the object the marks by which it can be known. The simple recognition which actualizes clear ideas has been modelled by development of the content of a perception expressing some feature of the world. To recognize a feature is to be aware of it, to respond to one’s initial perception expressing that feature *as of* that feature, namely, by developing the original content. What is wanted now is a similar account of recognition by marks, which can apply to ideas more complicated than *red*. What is it to be aware of some feature *as* a mark of a particular object?

Leibniz recognizes that nonreasoning animals are capable of apperceptive association, as when noticing a stick he was once beaten with makes a dog fear another beating. This is not reasoning, since it depends not on conformity to necessary principles but on adventitious facts about one’s actual sensory career. But it is a “shadow of reasoning” that the brutes exhibit and that marks the limit of aspiration of empiricists.<sup>71</sup> Let us look more closely at what is required for such associative links to allow recognition by marks analogous to that enabled by distinct ideas. In the *New Essays* Leibniz offers an extended and surprisingly modern discussion of the recognition of natural kinds by their marks. In his early work, Leibniz took as the expression of a distinct idea in a nominal definition statements such as “gold is the most fixed metal.” This view was refined, however, as Leibniz sought to deal with a puzzle Locke raises. Locke had objected (Section 50 of “On the Names of Substances,” in the *Essay*) that with such a definition one could not without triviality assert that gold is fixed, whereas if we take the definition as shorthand merely for the assertion that gold is some internal essence and that being fixed is a consequence of that essence, then we are speaking of a wholly unknown essence. Leibniz’s reply is that “the body given by this internal constitution is designated by other external marks in which fixed-

<sup>69</sup> *NE*, 2, 29, p. 267.

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

<sup>71</sup> See *NE*, preface, pp. 44–45.

ness is not comprised, as if one said: the heaviest of all bodies is also one of the most fixed."<sup>72</sup> Here and elsewhere in this work (see especially p. 394 and below) Leibniz requires *two* sets of marks for recognition of an object according to a distinct idea. The problem is explicitly presented as arising from the necessity of explaining the informativeness of identity statements codifying such recognition. Thus malleability is indeed included in our complex idea of gold:

But in order to express its malleability without identity and without the defect of *coccyism* or repetition, we must recognize this thing by other qualities, as color and weight. And it is as if we said that a certain fusible body, yellow and very heavy, called gold, has a nature which gives it besides the quality of being very soft to the hammer and capable of being made very thin.<sup>73</sup>

Taking Leibniz's "it is as if one said" in these passages as indicating an analysis of the sense of what is said, this dual-marks requirement exactly coincides with Frege's demand that the expressions flanking an identity sign (what in the *Grundlagen* he called "recognition statements"—for him as for Leibniz all cognitive activity consists either of recognition or of inference) express different senses, if the identity is to count as expressing a recognition at all. Our problem is thus to say what it is according to Leibniz to *take* two sets of marks *as* marks of the *same* object (the apperceptive or recognitive status expressed discursively by reasoning beings in the form of identity statements).

The marks involved in distinct ideas may themselves be merely clear, so we may take the marks to be sensory complexes in the simplest cases. But we may not then identify recognition by marks simply with passage from one such complex to another, even if some repeatable kind of passage becomes habitual. For such passage may be no more than a shift of attention, as one might have the habit of conjuring up the smell of fresh cinnamon upon seeing a white picket fence (as the result of an early experience) without in any way confounding the objects. Not every reminder is a recognition. What is required is that two separate sets of marks be distinguished both *from* one another (as the minute perceptions which are in some sense "marks" for the awareness that is recognition of sensory qualia are not) and *as* characterizing a common object which exhibits all of the accidents expressed by either set of marks. For the significance of the recognition that  $a = b$  is that every accident of  $a$  is an accident of  $b$  and vice versa. Thus we are led to the following scenario for the advent of a perception which will be "distinct" in the third and strongest of our senses, namely, as the recognition by marks

<sup>72</sup> *NE*, 3, 4, p. 340.

<sup>73</sup> *NE*, 3, 10, p. 384.

enabled by distinct ideas—the sense in which distinct perceptions alone furnish “matter for reason.”<sup>74</sup> Let the first of our marks be the combination of accidents  $a_1$  and  $a_2$  that we suppose to be expressed by perception  $p_a$  occurring at time  $t_a$ , and let the second of our distinguishing marks be the combination of accidents  $a_3$  and  $a_4$  expressed by  $p_b$  occurring at a later time  $t_b$ . We may think of these as corresponding to the perception of an instance of the heaviest metal and of the most malleable yellow one respectively. The individual in question must be aware of each of these, and as distinct (i.e., discrete). So we presume that  $p_a$  is developed by a succeeding perception  $p_a'$  and  $p_b$  is developed by  $p_b'$ . To be aware of these properties as marks of one thing, then, will be for  $p_a'$  and  $p_b'$  to be jointly developed by a further perception  $p_c$ , produced by both and whose expressive range is a superset of the union of the expressive ranges of  $p_a'$  and  $p_b'$ .  $P_c$  is then a distinct recognition of gold. It is the occurrence of a common development of the contents of  $p_a'$  and  $p_b'$  that sets off awareness of them as marks of one thing from the mere associational passage from  $p_a'$  to  $p_b'$  (considered for the moment as repeatable types) that includes habitual shifts of attention. That the content of  $p_c$  may include more than is included in  $p_a'$  or  $p_b'$  allows a dog to take both the appearance of a certain stick and an expression of his master's as marks of an impending beating (and hence of each other) without being aware of the beating as consisting entirely in that association.

The difference between the way  $p_c$  develops the content of  $p_a$  and  $p_b$  and the way a sensation develops the contents of the multitude of minute perceptions it springs from is the difference between distinguishing component marks and confusing them. In distinct recognition the perceptions developed need have no overlap of expressive range. Even if they do have some accident as common content (e.g., *metallic*), it is the *differences* between those contents which makes distinct recognition possible. In sensation, only the *common* content is developed. Individual perceptions are not distinguished from one another, nor developed.  $P_a$  and  $p_b$  may themselves be sensations, of course, or more generally, their places may be taken by *sets* of sensations—the set associated with a heavy yellow metal sphere and that associated with a sphere of a malleable, fixed metal, for instance. In either case it seems clear that the beasts of the field could possess distinct recognitions ultimately based on their senses that differ from the inferential realization of distinct ideas *only* in that the development of expressive content essential to them is not underwritten by the necessary and general truths of reason, stemming rather from happy historical accident as regards the acquisition of developmental appetitions. Furthermore, some account along these lines will be

<sup>74</sup> *NE*, 3, 17, p. 570.

required if we are willing (as Leibniz seems to be) to attribute to brutes some differentiation of the field of awareness, not as regards intensity of attention (which we model by degree of development), but as awareness of a variety of objects. Only a mechanism like that suggested will allow the segregation of features in the world of which we are separately aware into coobjectual classes. Thus a brute aware of the smells of an apple and an orange, and of a red sphere and an orange one, can in virtue of the codevelopment of the perception of the red sphere and the apple smell on the one hand, and the orange sphere and the orange's smell on the other, be aware of two fruits as well as four features. Such partitioning of features into objects is also needed for association to work well, so that the apple smell will in future be associated only with apples, and not with oranges.

I have discerned three different but closely related senses in which Leibniz uses the concept of distinctness. The first and earliest use, in terms of which the hierarchy of perfection of monads and physical interaction are to be understood, corresponds to being of high *expressive* degree, that is, having a relatively inclusive expressive range. The next use, in terms of which awareness of apperception is to be explained, is one in which a perception is distinct (and hence noticed) to the extent to which it is *developed*, that is, gives rise to a perception whose expressive range is a superset of that of the original perception. The concept of development accordingly presupposes and builds upon the notion of expressive degree. The doctrine of finiteness of apperception, that only a finite number of the most developed perceptions are apperceived, together with considerations concerning the bodily origin of sensations and the principle of sufficient reason, enabled me to explain the occurrence of sensory phantasms in terms of development as well. Finally, I described a use which occurs only very late, which indeed appears to be developed in the *New Essays* in response to Locke's doctrines concerning the articulation of ideas, in which a perception is distinct just in case it constitutes recognition of some object by marks. This usage is explained by a two-stage sequence of development and is that intended when Leibniz talks of distinct perceptions as realizing distinct ideas, although strictly reason is not required for such recognition by marks.

[7] We apperceive many things within and without us which we do not understand, and we *understand* the, when we have distinct [*distinctes*] ideas of them, together with the power of reflection and of drawing from them necessary truths. Animals therefore have no understanding, at least in this sense, although they have the faculty of apperceiving impressions more remarkable and more distinguished [*plus distinguées*], as the boar is aware of a person who shouts at him, and goes straight for this person, of whom he had had before only a cloudy perception, but confused, as of all other

objects which fell under his eyes, and whose rays struck his crystalline humor. Thus in my view the *understanding* [when exercised] is called *intellection*, which is a [*distincte*] perception united with the faculty of reflection, which is not in animals. Every perception united with this faculty is thought, which I do not accord to animals any more than understanding, so that we may say there is intellection when thought is distinct [*distincte*].<sup>75</sup>

These three senses arrayed in roughly increasing order of strength and maturity of period of development enable one to explicate all of Leibniz's pronouncements concerning distinctness of perceptions or indeed appetitions.<sup>76</sup> One could hardly avoid discriminating the first two senses, since the tension between them appears even in the earliest work. The third might be discarded as unduly speculative, if one is willing to ignore various of Leibniz's late pronouncements.

The theoretical postulate which permits the detailed explication of these various phenomena of perception and apperception is the association with each perception of an *expressive range* consisting of those accidents or features of the world which are represented by that perception, that is, are deducible from its occurrence. This association of intensional content with each perception is motivated by consideration of the nature of perception and of expression according to Leibniz, in particular the need to differentiate perceptual from merely mathematical or symbolic expression in such a way as to permit the gradation into *degrees* of perceptual expression so crucial to the metaphysical role Leibniz assigns that notion. Using that hypothesis about the content of perceivings, it was possible to offer necessary and sufficient conditions for both the *occurrence* and the delimitation of *content* of *apperceivings*, including sensations.

It is important to notice that although the recognition by marks corresponding to distinct ideas is explicitly the model for the third sense of *distinct* as applied to perceptions, it is implicitly the model for the second sense as well. Development of a perception corresponds to passage from a mark or feature to a more inclusive delineation of an object. On the level of concepts, moving from the mark *heaviest metal* to the concept *gold* is moving to a concept that along with much else includes the designation *heaviest metal*. So my notion of awareness can be restated as what occurs when a perception is taken as a mark of another more expressively complete perception. When the mark is in addition apperceived *as* a mark, the third sense of distinctness arises. This observation is important for evaluating the theoretical role assigned to the notion of *inference* in the portions of Leibniz's epistemology

<sup>75</sup> *NE*, 2, 21, p. 178.

<sup>76</sup> See *NE*, 2, 21, p. 201.

and philosophy of mind which I have taken to be metaphysically fundamental. Inference is the primitive which anchors both ends of the foregoing explanatory structure. First, the basic theoretical auxiliary I introduced, the notion of an individual expressive range, is explicitly explained in terms of inference. The expressive range of a perception is that set of accidents (nonrepeatable occurrences of complex property-types) which may be inferred from the occurrence of that perception alone (i.e., if nothing else were known about its universe). It is only insofar as there are primitive inferential facts of this form that this explanatory scheme gets off the ground. At the other end, the model in terms of which awareness and recognition consciously by marks (the Fregean model of recognition) are explained is that of distinct *ideas*, which as we have seen are *inferentially* articulated ideas, which can be had only by beings capable of reason. These again I take for granted. One of Leibniz's primary methodological principles is that we should conceive those things of which we do *not* have distinct ideas on the model of those things of which we *do* have distinct ideas. This paper has suggested, in effect, that at least as regards perception and representation, he also conceives those things which are not distinct ideas (inferentially articulated) on the model of those things which are. Inference is the root notion in terms of which representation and its varieties are explained. It is this in which Leibniz's *rationalism* consists: that where empiricists begin with a primitive notion of *representation* and seek to ground in it whatever inferences are to be recognized (as Hume attempts to ground causal and inductive inference), he as rationalist begins with inference and then explains the notion of representation in terms of it. It is in this sense that percepts are assimilated to concepts (efficacious ideas), as modelled on them, though we have seen that in no way can the difference between them be described as merely one of "degree."<sup>77</sup>

*University of Pittsburgh*

---

<sup>77</sup> I would like to thank N. Rescher and M. Wilson for many useful conversations about Leibniz's thought.

## HEIDEGGER'S CATEGORIES IN *BEING AND TIME*

### 1. Introduction

In Division One of *Being and Time* Heidegger presents a novel categorization of what there is, and an original account of the project of ontology and consequently of the nature and genesis of those ontological categories. He officially recognizes two categories of Being: *Zuhandensein* (readiness-to-hand) and *Vorhandensein* (presence-at-hand). *Vorhandene* things are roughly the objective, person-independent, causally interacting subjects of natural scientific inquiry. *Zuhandene* things are those which a neo-Kantian would describe as having been imbued with human values and significances. In addition to these categories, there is human Being, or *Dasein*, in whose structure the origins of the two thing-ish categories are to be found. This essay concerns itself with three of Heidegger's conceptual innovations: his conceiving of ontology in terms of self-adjudicating anthropological categories, as summed up in the slogan that "fundamental ontology is the regional ontology of *Dasein*," his corresponding anti-traditional assertion of the ontological priority of the domain of the *Zuhandensein* to that of the *Vorhandensein*, which latter is seen as rooted in or precipitated out of that more basic (Heidegger says "primordial") world of human significances, and the non-Cartesian account of awareness and classificatory consciousness as social and practical.

Section I presents an interpretation of Heidegger's notion of fundamental ontology, and its relation to the "vulgar" ontology practiced by previous philosophers. Section II introduces *Zuhandendensein*—the world of equipment, each element of which is experienced *as* having some practically constituted role or significance. Section III offers a reading of *Mit-Dasein*, the social mode of Being which institutes the world of equipment. Finally, Section IV discusses the move from a world of equipment, about which there are no facts over and above how things are *taken* to be by all the bits of *Dasein* involved, to a realm of things which have properties not exhausted by their possible roles in *Dasein*'s practical dealings.<sup>1</sup>

### I

What is most striking thing about Heidegger's account of categories is his distinction between "vulgar" ontology and "fundamental" ontology, and



the co-ordinate claim that fundamental ontology is the regional ontology of Dasein (the kind of Being we have). Vulgar ontology is the cataloguing of the furniture of the universe. Fundamental ontology is said to be deeper and more difficult than the vulgar variety, requiring the investigation of the significance of ontological categorization. For vulgar ontology, in its most careful versions, whether we consider Leibniz, Hegel, Frege, or Quine, a specification of such general kinds takes the form of a specification of *criteria of identity* and *individuation* for entities of those kinds. As an ontologist in this tradition, Descartes inaugurated the modern era with a bold reincarnation of a Platonic idea: things are to be distinguished according to criteria of identity and individuation couched in terms of *epistemic* privilege. In particular, he invented a new kind of thing, according to the scheme: an event or object is *mental* (or subjective) just in case it is whatever it is taken to be by some individual.<sup>2</sup> The rest of the (nondivine) universe he relegated to the physical or objective realm. These were things which are what they are regardless of how any individual takes them to be.<sup>3</sup> The contribution of the nineteenth century to this scheme was Hegel's notion (see Section III) of a third category of *social* entities. What is at issue here is the domain of social *appropriateness* in which, as in etiquette, social practice is the highest court of appeal. Thus a group or community can be thought of as having the same sort of criterial dominion or authority over, and hence, privileged access to, social things that individuals have over subjective things.

Before describing how Heidegger develops this idea into a detailed model of social practice and significance in *Being and Time*, let's consider some consequences which adding such an ontological category to the Cartesian two-sorted ontology can have. In particular, we can ask the question of fundamental ontology: What is the ontological status of the distinction of entities into three kinds (subjective, social, and objective) based on the source of criterial authority for them? In particular, is the division of things into subjective, social, and objective a subjective distinction (as Berkeley would have it), a social distinction, or an objective one?<sup>4</sup> The conceptual status of such a question is unusual enough to warrant the citation of a few more familiar examples which exhibit the same structure.

First, consider the distinction between differences of *quality* and differences of *quantity*. Is this difference, we may ask, a qualitative or a quantitative one? Engels notoriously takes himself to have transformed the philosophical tradition by suggesting the latter response in place of the former. Whatever merit that suggestion may have, the issue it seeks to respond to seems to be perfectly intelligible.

Another example can be observed in the medieval notions of "*distinctio rationis*" and "*distinctio realis*." The distinction between form and matter is only a distinction of reason, for we can never have one without the other.

Only by, e.g., rationally considering the relations a bronze cube stands in to a bronze sphere and a marble cube can we "separate" its being bronze from its being a cube. Between a piece of bronze and a piece of marble, on the other hand, there exists a real distinction, for these can be nonmetaphorically separated without reliance on rational abstraction by comparison. But now we must ask, as did the scholastics, whether the distinction between rational and real distinctions is itself a rational or a real distinction. Although issues of great moment for the debate about the ontological and epistemological status of universals turn on the answer to this question, our concern is with the structure of the question rather than with the plausibility of various answers to it.

A final example should make clear the phenomenon being pointed out. The U.S. constitution gives the three broad branches of the Federal government distinct responsibilities and jurisdictions. As part of the relations of authority and responsibility which exist between the branches (the 'checks and balances' which regulate their interaction), the judiciary is given the authority and responsibility to interpret the proper region of authority and responsibility of *each* branch, itself included. In matters of constitutional import, we may say, the judiciary is given the authority to draw the boundaries between its own authority and that of the executive and legislative branches.

It is not easy to describe the structure which these examples share. In each case a family of concepts pertaining to identity and individuation is examined, and the root of the identity and individuation of those concepts is found to reside in one of them. (In the last example, instead of a concept with an extension including various things, we have a social institution with a jurisdiction including various things.) In each case the question can be raised whether one of those concepts (institutions) is *self-adjudging* in the sense that it applies to the sort of identity and individuation which distinguishes it from the other concepts or institutions in that family. To raise this second-order sort of question about a scheme of ontological categories is to engage in fundamental ontology. And Heidegger's claim that fundamental ontology is the regional ontology of Dasein is the claim that Dasein-in-the-world-of-the-ready-to-hand is ontologically self-adjudging in this sense. Not only is the distinction between the ontological categories of the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand intelligible only in terms of the sort of Being that Dasein has, but the difference between Dasein's sort of being and readiness-to- and presentness-at-hand must itself be understood in terms of Dasein. It is this central feature of his early work which led the later Heidegger to dismiss *Being and Time* as "merely anthropological."

The ontological primacy of the social can be justified by appeal to a more specific thesis, pragmatism concerning *authority*. This is the claim that all matters of authority or privilege, in particular *epistemic* authority, are

matters of social practice, and not objective matters of fact.<sup>5</sup> The pragmatist about authority will take the criterial distinctions between ontological categories to be social in nature, for those categories are distinguished precisely by the locus of criterial authority over them. The category of the social must then be seen as self-adjudging, and hence as ontologically basic, so the broader claim of the ontological priority of social categories follows from the narrower doctrine concerning the social nature of authority. In what follows it will be argued that Heidegger develops precisely this line of thought in Division One of *Being and Time*.

## II

According to Heidegger, Dasein finds itself always amidst an already existing world of equipment, consisting of significant things each of which is experienced *as* something. The readiness-to-hand of a piece of equipment consists in its having a certain significance. This significance in turn consists in its appropriateness for various practical roles and its inappropriateness for others.

But the 'indicating' of the sign and the 'hammering' of the hammer are not properties [*Eigenschaften*] of entities . . . Anything ready-to-hand is, at worst, appropriate [*Geignet*] for some purposes and inappropriate for others. (p. 114)

Properties, by contrast, are what characterize the present-at-hand independently of human practical ends—what would be taken to be true of objects before human beings “attach significances” to them on the neo-Kantian picture Heidegger wishes to invert. Heidegger’s problem in the first part of *Being and Time* is to explain how such a category of objective Being could be constructed or abstracted out of the primitive system of appropriatenesses and significances which makes up the world in which we always already find ourselves.

How are we to understand this category of the ready-to-hand? To inhabit a *world* is to *take* each thing in that world *as* something. A piece of equipment is something experienced *as* something. Several points about this ‘as’-structure must be appreciated in order to understand the ready-to-hand as the kind of Being or significance a thing exhibits by being taken *as* something. First, the something<sub>1</sub>s which are taken as something<sub>2</sub>s must be understood as themselves things which are ready-to-hand as ways of taking still other pieces of equipment. “In interpreting we do not, so to speak, throw a ‘signification’ over some naked thing which is present-at-hand, we do not stick a value on it.”<sup>6</sup> The something<sub>1</sub>s which are given with respect to one set of takings must themselves have been socially constituted. Second, it must be understood how

thoroughly non-Cartesian and unsubjective is Heidegger's notion of the classificatory activity in virtue of which things show themselves *as* something<sub>2</sub>s. The world of the ready-to-hand is what we can be aware of, *as* we are or would be aware of it. For Heidegger, as for others, there is no awareness or experience without classification. But the "awareness" which is the appropriation of some bit of equipment *as* having a certain significance is a public behavioral matter of how the thing is treated or responded to, not a mental act. For Heidegger the confused notion of the subjective arises when the category of the present-at-hand has been achieved, as that co-ordinate mental realm which must be invoked when one mistakenly takes the present-at-hand as ontologically primary, and looks for something to *add* to it to explain the everyday world of the ready-to-hand. If this anti-subjectivism is overlooked, the use of the notion of classification to bridge the gap between Heidegger's 'as'-structure and traditional notions of consciousness will be misleading. Finally, it must be noted that modeling understanding on taking-as is a device for interpreting the text, not a rendering of its terminology. Officially, discussions of 'as'-structure' are restricted to the level of interpretation (which develops out of understanding) where something is noticed *as* a hammer not when it is hammered with (as the model of understanding would have it) but only when it is discarded as inappropriate for, or searched for as required by some practical project. The broader usage has an exegetical point, however, and the specific differences between understanding and interpretation can be accommodated within it, as we shall see. The positive account of treating or taking *as* has three features. First, takings are public performances which accord with social practices. Second, such performances are individuated as and by *responses*. Third, the responsive dispositions which constitute the social practices are related to one another so as to satisfy a strong systematicity condition. We examine these points below.

Where do the sorts or kinds or characters which are the something<sub>2</sub>s according to which something<sub>1</sub>s are classified come from? Any concrete object or event is similar to any other in an infinite number of respects, and dissimilar to it in an infinite number of others. For a respect of similarity is just a shared possible partial description, and these can be gerrymandered as we like. The practical discrimination of objects and performances into those appropriate for or according to some practice and those not is precisely the recognition of *some* of these infinitely numerous abstractly generable respects of similarity as having a special privilege over the rest. Heidegger should be interpreted in accord with the pragmatist thesis about authority, as taking this privilege to consist in its social recognition, that is, as a matter of how some community does or would respond to things. Something<sub>2</sub>s are response-types, and classifying something<sub>1</sub> as a particular something<sub>2</sub> is simply

responding to it with a performance of that type. Equipment is originally introduced in Section 15 as consisting of *pragmata*, “that which one has to do with in one’s concerned dealings.” The ready-to-hand is generically characterized by serviceability [*Dienlichkeit*]:

Serviceability . . . is not an appropriateness of some entity; it is rather the condition (so far as Being is in question) which makes it possible for the character of such an entity to be defined by its appropriatenesses. (p. 115, H 83)

“Serviceability” is thus the potential which objects have to be caught up in the practices which institute specific respects of appropriateness. For something<sub>i</sub> to be so caught up is for it to be *involved*.

The Being of an entity within the world is its involvement [*Bewandtnis*]. (p. 116, H 84)

Such involvement in turn comprises a system of references or assignments.

To say that the Being of the ready-to-hand has the structure of reference or assignment [*Verweisung*] means that it has in itself the character of *having been assigned or referred*. (p. 115, H 84)

The appropriatenesses which are the significance of a particular entity exist in virtue of such reference or assignment. Referring or assigning is instituting relations among equipment (pen, ink, paper, etc.) and clearly is something that is *done*, though we must not assume for that reason that it is something any one of us can do, or even that it is something the whole community can do (except in a derivative sense), rather than something done by the community’s practices as constitutive of those practices . . . .<sup>7</sup> These assignments exist in virtue of the responsive dispositions which are appropriate in a community.

A further doctrine is that

An entity is discovered when it is assigned or referred to something, and referred as that entity which it is. (p. 115, H 84)

Discovering an entity is taking it *as* something (the non-Cartesian notion of awareness as behavioral classification). Referring or assigning is to be understood not only as instituting the social appropriatenesses which are the significances of objects and performances, but also as making possible the appropriation of such significances by those who discover objects in terms of them. ‘Appropriation’ [*zueignung*] is Heidegger’s nonsubjective epistemic activity. To discover something ready-to-hand, to appropriate it, is to take it *as* something, to respond to it in a certain way. In one of his rare examples, after telling us that signs can be taken as paradigmatic of equipment in general, Heidegger says that

the kind of behaving (Being) which corresponds to the sign [a turn-signal arrow] is either to "give way" or stand still with respect to the car with the arrow. (p. 110, H 79)

Here it is precisely how it is appropriate to respond to the turn-signal in a context that makes it the bit of equipment it is. To take it *as* such a signal (discover it as such) is just to respond to it with the appropriate behavior.

The systematicity requirement may be put broadly by the claim that

Taken strictly, there "is" no such thing as *an* equipment. To the Being of any equipment there always belongs a totality of equipment, in which it can be the equipment that it is. (p. 97, H 68)

Anything ready-to-hand is so only in virtue of the role it plays in a "referential totality of significance or involvements."

As the Being of something ready-to-hand, an involvement is itself discovered only on the basis of the prior discovery of a totality of involvements. (p. 118, H 85)

In terms of what relations are such roles to be understood, and how must they fit together to form the appropriate kind of totality? Heidegger gives his answer in Section 18 "Involvement and Significance—the Worldhood of the World." Although the account offered there deploys an unfamiliar set of technical terms, its basic characteristics may be straightforwardly set out. The bearers of the social significances making up readiness-to-hand are of two kinds: objects and performances. Objects and performances are what can be constitutively judged to be (in the sense of being responded to as) appropriate or not according to the social practices which are the medium of social significance. Heidegger calls those practices "in-order-to's" [*das Um-zu*]. Fastening one board to another by driving a nail would be an example. An object can be caught up in such a practice either by being used in the practice, or by being produced in that practice. In the former case, Heidegger calls the object (for example a hammer or a nail, used in the different senses of 'employed' and 'consumed' respectively) the "with-which" [*das Womit*] of the practice, and in the latter case he calls the object which is produced the "towards-which" [*das Wozu*]. The assignments of objects are the relations between them instituted by relations between the practices in which they are involved in these two ways. The role of an object (its involvement) is determined by those practices in which it is appropriately used, and those practices in which it can appropriately be produced.

Particular performances are called "in whiches" [*das Wobei*]. A social practice may be thought of as a class of possible performances, that is as a performance *type*. Such an in-order-to consists, namely, of just those performances which are or would be (taken to be) appropriate according to it. For

something to be (ready-to-hand as) a hammer is for it to be appropriate to respond to it with a performance of the hammering type, i.e., to hammer with it. It is performances of using and producing objects which make up the social practices in virtue of which those objects acquire their involvements and significances. Social object-types are then instituted by social practical types of the performances in which they are appropriately used or produced. In the world of the ready-to-hand, in which things are whatever they are (or would be) responded to *as*, then, the individuation of objects (by their roles as with- and towards-which) is determined by the individuation of social practices. Object types are instituted by performance types. So where do the appropriateness equivalence classes of performances, which are the social practices, come from?

As with objects, performance tokens exhibit infinite numbers of objective respects of similarity and dissimilarity. The privilege which one type or co-appropriateness class of performances exhibits as a practice can only have its source in its social recognition, that is, in how the type-privileged (co-typical) performance tokens would be treated or taken, or more generally responded to by the community in question. The performances comprised by a social practice are of the same type in that there is some other responsive performance type (something<sub>2</sub>) such that each of the tokens of the instituted performance type (something<sub>1</sub>) is, according to the community whose recognitions are constitutive in this domain, appropriately responded to by some performance belonging to the instituting type. A performance is recognized as being of the type by being responded to as such. For instance, what makes a certain class of performances all instances of the type *constructings of tribally appropriate dwelling huts* is that each of those possible performances would be appropriately responded to by a performance of the type *tribe members treating the produced object as a dwelling*—that is *being prepared to dwell in it under suitable circumstances*. Whenever what is produced by one practice is used by another, the using practice plays the role of responsive recognition performance type (rrpt) with respect to the producing practice. The role of a social performance type in a “totality of involvements” is specified by saying what performance type is its rrpt. and what performance type it is an rrpt for.

The requirement of systematicity or of the autonomy of significance may then be stated in two parts. First, with respect to objects, every object-type appropriately produced by one social practice must be appropriately useable in or by some other practice. The converse need not hold, for Heidegger says several times that *natural* objects are ready-to-hand as objects useable in human practice, but not requiring to be produced by it.<sup>8</sup> Second, with respect to performances, every performance type which is an rrpt for some

performance type must have some other performance type as its own *rrpt*. Again the converse need not hold, since we can respond to natural events. To specify the role of an object in such a system is to specify those practices with respect to which it functions as towards-which, and those with respect to which it functions as a with-which. To specify the role of a performance (in-which) is to specify the practice, that is the performance type to which it belongs. And to specify such an in-order-to is to specify its *rrpt* and what it functions as an *rrpt* of. Doing so determines all of the assignment relations and involvements which hold between socially significant objects as such, as well as the instituting responsive relations defining social performance types. The non-Cartesian epistemic notion of appropriation of significance or discovery of the ready-to-hand is also given a natural social-behavioral reading on this account. For to grasp the involvement of an object is to achieve practical mastery of its various assignments. And such mastery consists simply in being able to act (use, produce, and respond) appropriately according to the practices which institute those involvements. To respond to an object or performance which is appropriate according to a practice *as* appropriate according to that practice, that is, to respond appropriately to it, is to discover it as what it is, as ready-to-hand for what it is ready-to-hand for. Such practical capacities can be described without invoking anything subjective on the part of the practitioners. The inhabitant of a Heideggerian world is aware of it as composed of significant equipment, caught up in various social practices and classified by the involvements those practices institute. But this awareness is practical, social, and behavioral, consisting entirely in the exhibition of differential responsive dispositions according appropriately with those of the community.

The account suggested of the nature of the referential totality of significance within which we encounter the ready-to-hand explains the concept of the worldhood of the world in at least one straightforward sense. For the remarks above can be expressed in a first-order quantificational language. Such a language would need two different sorts of individual constants, to stand for object types and performance types, and three different predicates (corresponding to the three sorts of "assignment or reference" distinguished above):  $U(o, p)$ , interpreted as saying that object  $o$  is used in practice  $p$ ,  $P(p, o)$ , interpreted as saying that object  $o$  is produced by practice  $p$ , and  $R(p, p')$ , interpreted as saying that  $p'$  is the *rrpt* of  $p$ . It is easy to see that the two halves of the systematicity condition can be expressed as quantificational sentences in such a language. It is equally easy to see how the model theory for such a language might go. Theories in the specified language that include the sentences codifying the systematicity conditions would be interpreted by model structures which consisted of domains of object and performance types



(represented as sets of tokens) and relations between them of using, producing, and responding. A Heideggerean world is such a structure satisfying in the usual sense a first-order theory of the sort described which contains the systematicity conditions.<sup>9</sup> At the end of Section 18 Heidegger summarizes the structure he discerns:

The 'for-the-sake-of-which' signifies an 'in-order-to'; this in turn a 'towards-this'; the latter, an 'in-which' of letting something be involved; and that in turn the 'with-which'. These relationships are bound up with one another as a primordial totality; they are what they are *as* signifying . . . . The relational totality of this signifying we call 'significance'. (p. 120, H 87)

This passage emphasizes the systematic structure of social significance and retraces the relations of use and response described above. It mentions the further technical expression 'for-the-sake-of-which' [*das Worumwillen*] which marks the point of contact of the categorial structure with the existential concerns of Division Two and so cannot be discussed here. A practical 'in-order-to' gives a point to performances of some type by providing a use for the 'towards-this' (a particular 'towards-which') produced by such performances. Those performances are 'in-which's' individuated as types by their overall role or involvement in use of 'with-which's' as means or production of 'towards-which's', as those 'towards-which's' are individuated by their involvement not only in being produced by performances of a certain kind from raw materials of a certain kind, but also by their involvement in a further practice (an 'in-order-to' whose performances are themselves 'in-which's') which makes use of them. The communities whose responsive cognitive practices generate these structures of social significance will be considered next.

### III

We have interpreted worldhood as that referential totality which constitutes significance. In Being-familiar with this significance and previously understanding it, Dasein lets what is ready-to-hand be encountered as discovered in its involvement. In Dasein's Being, the context of references or assignments which significance implies is tied up with Dasein's own-most Being . . . . (p. 160, H 123)

Nothing like a full account of Dasein's kind of Being can be essayed here; that's the topic of the whole of *Being and Time*. On the other hand, something must be said about the constitution of the community in whose dispositions (for appropriate responsive recognitions or takings) significance originates. Happily, the features of Dasein's kind of Being which must be understood if the precipitation of the present-at-hand out of the ready-to-hand is to be intelligible can be explained with the materials already available.

The first point, of course, is that Dasein's Being is *social* in nature:

So far as Dasein *is* at all, it has Being-with-one-another as its kind of Being (p. 163 H 125)

Not only is Being toward Others an autonomous, irreducible relationship, as Being-with, is one which, with Dasein's Being, already is. (p. 162 H 125)

Dasein in itself is essentially Being-with (p. 156, H 120)

Next, Dasein's sociality is essential to the practical activity which constitutes worldly significance:

Dasein-with remains existentially constitutive for Being-in-the-world. (p. 157, H 121, compare also p. 163 H 125)

Third, it is only in the context of such Dasein-with that individuals can be spoken of.

In Being with and towards Others, there is thus a relationship of Being [Seinsverhältnis] from Dasein to Dasein. But it might be said that this relationship is already constitutive for one's own Dasein. (p. 162 H 124)

In terms of the 'they' [das Man] and as the 'they', I am given proximally to myself (p. 167 H 129)

These doctrines can be understood according to the Hegelian model of the synthesis of social substance by mutual recognition. To belong to a community, according to this model, is to be recognized as so belonging by all those one recognizes as so belonging. Hegel's idea was that community constitutive recognition is transitive *de jure*—that one must recognize those who are recognized by those one recognizes. The reflexive self-recognition that makes one an Hegelian individual will then follow if one can establish *de facto* symmetry, that is achieve recognition by those one recognizes. To be entitled to recognize or regard oneself as an excellent chess-player one must be entitled to be regarded as such by those one so regards.

Of course, for an account along these lines to be helpful in interpreting Heidegger, recognition must not be taken to be a mental act, but as with awareness and classification must be given a social behavioral reading in terms of communal responsive dispositions. What sort of response (rrpt) is taking or recognizing someone *as* one of us, a member of *our* community? Clues are to be found in two passages:

In that with which we concern ourselves environmentally, the Others are encountered as what they are; they *are* what they do. (p. 163, H 126)

What is it that other community members *as* such do? They take objects and performances *as* ready-to-hand with respect to various practices *by* using them and responding to them in various ways. How does such behavior constitute the practioners *as* other members of one's own community?

By 'Others' we do not mean everyone else but me—those against whom the 'I' stands out. They are rather those from whom for the most part one does *not* distinguish oneself—those among whom one is too. (p. 154, H 118)

Not everyone is a communal Other, but only those one recognizes or responds to as such. To respond to them as such is not to distinguish them from oneself. But in what regard? The previous passage said that the Others are what they do, so it is their doings which one does not distinguish from one's own. And this is to say that one treats their *responses* and dispositions as one's own. What they take to be appropriate performances and usings and producings of equipment, one also takes as such. To give one's own responses no special status or priority in this way is to treat the kinds they institute as social. It is to take the authority over appropriateness boundaries to reside in the community, which is constituted by that very recognition.<sup>10</sup>

The suggestion is that my recognizing someone as a co-community member is responding to him in a certain way. That way is for me to respond to his responses as having the same authority to institute kinds and appropriateness equivalence classes that my own responses have. In particular, my recognitions of others *and myself* as members of the community have no special authority. My recognitions of myself as community member count only if they are taken to count by those I take to be community members. Their so taking my recognitions is in turn simply a matter of their recognizing me, that is treating my responses as equally authoritative as theirs in determining appropriatenesses. The community, *Mitdasein*, then differs from the ready-to-hand in that its members are constituted not only by being recognized or responded to in a certain way, but also by their *recognizings* and responses as *recognizers*.

Being-together-with in the sense of forming a recognitive community is accordingly the existential basis of the consilience of practice which constitutes the category of the ready-to-hand and hence, as we shall see, the category of the present-at-hand as well. The distinction between the existential and the categorial terminologically marks that between *recognizers*, and the merely *recognizeds* which do not have the kind of Being of one of us. The practical agreement of recognizing each other's *recognizings* can be called 'communication' "in a sense which is ontologically broad":

'Communication' in which one makes an assertion—giving information, for instance—is a special case of the communication which is grasped in principle existentially. In this more general kind of communicating the Articulation of Being-with one another understandingly is constituted. Through it a co-state-of-mind [*Mitbfindlichkeit*] gets 'shared', and so does the understanding of Being-with. (p. 205 H 162)

In the next section we investigate the genesis of the category of the present-at-hand out of the sort of understanding which consists in shared recognitive practice permitting communication about a world of equipment each bit of which is whatever it is recognized-by-us as.

#### IV

The claim to be developed in this section is that the category of the present-at-hand consists of ready-to-hand things which are appropriately responded to by a certain kind of performance, *qua* things that can *only* be appropriately responded to by such a performance. That categorially constitutive kind of responsive recognition performance type is *assertion*. Since Heidegger holds that “assertion is derived from interpretation, and is a special case of it,”<sup>11</sup> the story must begin with the notion of interpretation (*Auslegung*).

Interpretation is a co-ordinate notion to that understanding which consists in the practical mastery of a totality of significations or assignments required if one is to live in a world at all. For “. . . we never perceive equipment that is ready-to-hand without already understanding and interpreting it.”<sup>12</sup> Four features of interpretation must be recognized. First, interpreting characterizes practical activity.

Interpretation is carried out primordially not in a theoretical statement but in an action of circumspectful concern . . . [e.g.] laying aside the unsuitable tool . . .” (p. 200, H 157)

Second, interpreting involves making something one’s own. Interpretation is described as “the working-out and appropriation of an understanding.”<sup>13</sup>

In understanding their lurks the possibility of interpretation—that is of *appropriating* what is understood. (p. 203, H 161. See also p. 191, H 150)

Taking something as something was the form of the act of understanding, that discovery of a bit of equipment which also disclosed a totality of equipmental involvements. What is it practically to appropriate such an understanding?

The answer is offered by a pair of passages, worth citing at length, which for the third point introduce the crucial *conditional* structure of interpretation, out of which the possibility of inference and hence assertion develops.

Circumspection operates in the involvement-relationships of the context of equipment which is ready-to-hand. What is essential is that one should have a primary understanding of the totality of involvements . . . . In one’s current using

and manipulating, the concerned circumspection . . . *brings* the ready-to-hand *closer* to Dasein, and does so by *interpreting* what has been sighted. The specific way of bringing the object of concern closer we call *deliberating* [*Ueberlegung*]. The schema particular to this is the 'if . . . then . . .'; if this or that, for instance, is to be produced, put to use, or averted, then some ways, means, circumstances or opportunities will be needed. (p. 410, H 359)

Interpretation classifies according to personal ends or projects, and hence appropriates. What new element is indicated by the invocation of the 'if . . . then . . .' as what is in this way brought closer to oneself?

But if deliberation is to be able to operate in the scheme of the 'if . . . then . . .', concern must already have 'surveyed' a context of involvements and have an understanding of it. That which is considered with an 'if' must already be understood *as something or other* . . . The schema 'something-as-something' has already been sketched out beforehand in the structure of one's pre-predicative understanding. (p. 411, H 359)

Understanding appropriates equipment. It is exercised in taking something as something, e.g., as a hammer. Interpretation at the level of deliberation adds to this use and appropriation of equipment, the use and appropriation of equipmental *understanding* of particular involvements. One can not only take something as a hammer, but can take a hammer as one of the tools required for a certain practical project. What is appropriated is then the conditional serviceabilities of things. One uses and produces conditional understandings of the significance of particular something<sub>s</sub> as something<sub>s</sub>.

The fourth point is that this non-Cartesian cognitive notion of interpretation as the personal practical appropriation of a conditional appropriateness or equipmental involvement brings us closer to the notion of linguistic assertion.

. . . in the significance itself, with which Dasein is always familiar, there lurks the ontological condition which makes it possible for Dasein, as something which understands and interprets, to disclose such things as 'significations'; upon these, in turn, is founded the Being of words and of language. (p. 121, H 87)

'Significations' are the conditional appropriatenesses into which the totality of significations can be "dissolved or broken up."<sup>14</sup> What makes the transition to language possible is that one can come to respond differentially to (and hence disclose practically) not just things and performances but the significations which are their conditional dependencies. Deliberation develops towards asserting when what is surveyed from the point of view of a practical end is a field of 'if . . . then . . .'s, each of which may then itself be used or laid aside, just as with first-order equipment. Deliberation accomplishes a special kind of abstraction, requiring responsive recognition of the serviceabilities of equipment, rather than merely of the equipment itself.

The key to the precipitation of the present-at-hand out of the ready-to-hand lies in assertion:

The levelling of the primordial 'as' of circumspensive interpretation [the "existential-hermeneutical 'as'"] to the 'as' with which presence-at-hand is given a definite character [the "apophantical 'as'"] is the specialty of assertion. Only so does it obtain the possibility of exhibiting something in such a way that we just look at it. (p. 201, H 158)

The articulation leading to the discovery of the present-at-hand begins in the 'if . . . then . . .' of interpretation of the ready-to-hand. What matters is "what is awaited"<sup>15</sup> in the 'then . . .' part. In the basic case of interpreting something merely ready-to-hand, what is 'awaited' is the useability or producibility of some actual or envisaged object or performance—that is, the projection of a practical possibility. In presence-at-hand, the primary consequence of an 'if (something as something) . . .' is the appropriability of some *claim* or assertion. The difference between responding to something as present-at-hand and as merely ready-to-hand is that things which are present-at-hand are appropriately responded to as such only by producing a particular kind of performance, namely assertions. The 'then' is still something ready-to-hand when we thematize (i.e., respond to something as present-at-hand), but it is an assertion, a very special kind of equipment.

The question is then

By what existential-ontological modification does assertion arise from circumspensive interpretation? (p. 200, H 157)

The answer in brief is that assertions are equipment appropriately used for *inference*. Assertion is the topic of Section 33, which offers three 'significations' of assertion. The central one of these is that "assertion means communication."

As something-communicated, that which has been put forward in the assertion is something that Others can 'share' with the person making the assertion . . . That which is put forward in the assertion is something which can be passed along in further retelling. (p. 197, H 155)

What is expressed becomes, as it were, something ready-to-hand within-the-world which can be taken up and spoken again. (p. 266, H 224)

Asserting thus has the significance of issuing a *re*-assertion license to other community members. The assertion is produced as something useable by others.

The other two features by which assertion is introduced are "pointing-out" some subject of assertion, and "giving it a definite character" by predicating something of it. What is shared, in other words, is the taking of something as something. Where before taking something as something

(pointing it out and characterizing it) was something one could only *do*, now it becomes something one can *say*. What was implicit in performance now becomes an explicitly producible and usable bit of equipment, which one can appropriate and make available for others to appropriate. The pointing-out of a subject is socially transitive across authorized re-assertions, and so guarantees communication in the sense of securing a common topic.

Even when Dasein speaks over again what someone else has said, it comes into a Being-towards the very entities which have been discussed. (p. 266 H 224)

Such social preservation of a common subject-matter is a necessary condition for the possibility of agreement and disagreement of assertion, as opposed to mere change of topic.

Predication, as explicitly communicable characterization, further extends the authorizing dimension of asserting. For predicates come in inferential families: *if* what is pointed out is appropriately characterizable by one speaker as red, *then* it is appropriately characterizable by another as colored. The practical conditional appropriatenesses of assertion which make up such families of predicates guarantee that an asserting licenses more than just re-assertion, licensing others to draw conclusions beyond what was originally claimed. As members of inferential families, the predicates used to characterize objects in assertions codify the conditional significances responded to as such already in deliberation. It is in virtue of the socially appropriate inferential consequences of an asserting that it conveys information, authorizing a specific set of performances (including other assertions) which would have been inappropriate without such authorization. The taking of something<sub>1</sub> as something<sub>2</sub> of pre-predicative understanding becomes explicitly usable and sharable once linguistic terms are available as equipment for publically pointing out something<sub>1</sub>s, and predicates codifying as inferential significances the conditional serviceabilities discerned by deliberative interpretation are available as equipment expressing explicitly the involvements implicit in the something<sub>2</sub>s things were taken as.

Understanding asserting as authorizing reassertion and inference specifies the appropriate *use* to which assertions, as bits of equipment, may appropriately be put. The cognitive responsive performance type of any asserting-type will be the set of assertions which it may appropriately be seen as licensing, namely those which follow from it according to the inferential practices of the community. But this is only half the story. What about the appropriate circumstances of *production* of this new sort of ready-to-hand equipment? Corresponding to the dimension of authority governing the use of assertions as equipment-for-inference is a dimension of responsibility governing their production. For in producing an assertion one does not simply

authorize others to use it inferentially, one also undertakes the responsibility to justify one's claim.

Assertion communicates entities in the 'how' of their uncoveredness . . . . If however, these entities are to be appropriated explicitly with respect to their uncoveredness, this amounts to saying that the assertion is to be *demonstrated* as one that uncovers. The assertion expressed is something ready-to-hand. (p. 267, H 224, emphasis added)

As ready-to-hand, assertings are subject to social appropriatenesses of production as well as use. These concern when one is entitled to commit oneself to the claim, or in Heidegger's terminology, 'appropriate' it, so that the inference and reassertion license is in force.

It is therefore essential that Dasein should explicitly appropriate what has already been uncovered, defend it against semblance and disguise, and assure itself of its uncoveredness again and again. (p. 265, H 222)

The responsibility to justify or defend one's claims undertaken as a matter of course in their appropriate production is essential to the special sort of communication which emerges with assertion. For even when Dasein speaks over again what someone else has said, though it comes into relation to the things pointed out and uncovered "it has been exempted from having to uncover them again, primordially, and it holds that it has thus been exempted."<sup>16</sup> That is, he who relies on the authority of a previous speaker in reassertion is absolved of the responsibility to justify his claim which he would otherwise have undertaken by his performance of producing that assertion. His reliance upon the authority of the first assertor just is his acquisition of the right to defer justificatory responsibility for his own assertion to the original speaker. The response which socially constitutes taking someone to have appropriately made an assertion (fulfilled or be able to fulfill his justificatory responsibility) is to treat his assertion as genuinely authoritative as licensing others, that is, to recognize as appropriate any deferrals of justificatory responsibility for that claim and its consequences to the original assertor by those relying upon that authority. It is in this way that the dimensions of responsibility and authority, of appropriate production and use, are related so as to constitute assertions as equipment-for-communicating.<sup>17</sup>

This sketch of Heidegger's notion of assertion puts us in a position to understand the category of the present-at-hand. The crucial point to understand here is that the move from equipment ready-to-hand, fraught with socially instituted significances, to objective things present-at-hand, is not one of decontextualization, but of *recontextualization*. Asserting and the practices of giving and asking for reasons which make it possible are themselves a special sort of practical activity. Responding to something by making an as-



sersion about it is treating it *as* present-at-hand. Presence-at-hand is constituted by special appropriatenesses of response.

In characterizing the change-over from manipulating and using and so forth which are circumspective in a 'practical' way, to 'theoretical' exploration, it would be easy to suggest that merely looking at entities is something which emerges when concern *holds back* from any kind of manipulation . . . But this is by no means the way in which the 'theoretical' attitude of science is reached. On the contrary, the tarrying which is discontinued when one manipulates can take on the character of a more precise kind of circumspection . . . (p. 409, H 357–58)

Claims, equipment for asserting, represent "more precise" interpretive responses because in them the significations which are merely implicit in ordinary equipment become explicit or "thematized," accessible to claims and inferences and hence to demands for justification. Treating something as present-at-hand is not ignoring its social significance, but attending to a special sort of significance it can have, namely significance for the correctness of assertions about it. Corresponding to a new social mode of response, asserting, there is a new kind of Being, presence-at-hand, constitutively uncovered by that response.

Thematizing objectifies. It does not first 'posit' the entities, but frees them so that one can interrogate them and determine their character 'objectively'. Being which objectifies and which is alongside the present-at-hand within-the-world is characterized by a *distinctive kind of making-present*. (p. 414, H 363)

The present-at-hand may thus be defined as what is ready-to-hand as a with-which for the practice of assertion, that is, as what is responded to as such only by making a claim about it. We have seen what kind of a performance assertings are. What is the relation between what is responded to as ready-to-hand for assertion and what is pointed out as present-at-hand in the assertion? Heidegger explains this in terms of a transformation:

The entity which is held in our fore-having—for instance the hammer—is proximally ready-to-hand as equipment. If this entity becomes the 'object' of an assertion, then as soon as we begin this assertion, there is already a change-over in the fore-having. Something *ready-to-hand with which* we have to do or perform something turns into something '*about which*' the assertion that points it out is made. Our fore-sight is aimed at something present-at-hand in what is ready-to-hand . . . Within this discovery of presence-at-hand, which is at the same time a covering-up of readiness-to-hand, something present-at-hand which we encounter is given a definite character in its Being-present-at-hand-in-such-and-such-a-manner. Only now are we given access to *properties* or the like . . . This levelling of the primordial 'as' of circumspective interpretation to the 'as' with which presence-at-hand is given a definite character is the specialty of assertion. Only so does it obtain the possibility of exhibiting something in such a way that we just look at it. (p. 200, H 158)

The present-at-hand is first discovered *in* something already ready-to-hand which we are related to by being practically involved with it. It is then possible to adopt a special stance, shifting from the original practical context to that of assertion. The referentiality of the relation to the original piece of equipment is inherited by assertions about the object discovered in it. Dealing with the object in such a context, where practical significance is restricted to significance for inference, is attributing properties to something present-at-hand pointed out in the assertions about it.

One question remains. In what sense does responding to something by making an assertion about it count as treating it as having objective properties? What sort of independence of the social appropriatenesses of use and production constitutive of the ready-to-hand is attributed to the present-at-hand when we understand its defining recognitive responsive performance type to be asserting? Equipment as such is always equipment serviceable for the pursuit of some practical end. Significance flows from the practically orienting projects to the 'with-which's and 'towards-which's whose involvements are their roles in instrumental practices. The objectivity of the present-at-hand consists in the indifference of the appropriatenesses of assertion to the practical ends motivating assertors. Taking something as a hammer is taking it as appropriate for hammering. When the property of heaviness is discerned in the present-at-hand object which was ready-to-hand as a hammer, a claim is made whose appropriateness is not a matter of serviceability for or obstruction of any particular practical ends or projects. The justifiability and hence appropriateness of such a claim is not a matter of answering to some practical need.

The autonomy of justification and inference with respect to the pursuit of practical projects is the source of the autonomy of the properties of the present-at-hand with respect to the appropriatenesses of practice. It is this autonomy that is invoked when it is said that the truth of assertions answers to the things pointed out in assertion. Authority is a social matter, and in the game of asserting and giving and asking for reasons authority over the appropriateness of claims has been socially withdrawn from the sphere of usefulness for practical ends.

The claim that the objectivity of the present-at-hand consists in its insulation by assertion from *Dasein's* practical activity can be given a strong or a weak reading, and it is important to distinguish these. On the strong reading, the present-at-hand would be entirely irrelevant to practical concerns. On this account, the only appropriate response to something present-at-hand is an assertion, the only use which can be made of assertion is inference, and inference is restricted to *theoretical* inference, that is inference whose conclusion is another assertion. Assertions are seen as irrelevant to practice, as mere representations of an independent reality indifferent to

practical projects. This practical indifference is then inherited by the present-at-hand, since it can only be the subject of such assertions. This idea is present in Heidegger. It is not presence-at-hand however, but what he calls the doctrine of *pure* presence-at-hand (or, sometimes, 'Reality').

['Reality'] in its traditional signification stands for Being in the sense of pure presence-at-hand of Things . . . [But] *all* the modes of Being of entities within-the-world are founded ontologically upon the worldhood of the world and accordingly the phenomenon of Being-in-the-world. From this arises the insight that among the modes of Being of entities within-the-world, Reality has no priority, and that Reality is a kind of Being which cannot even characterize anything like the world or Dasein in a way which is ontologically appropriate. (p. 211, H 254)

Presence-at-hand corresponds to a weaker reading of the insulation assertional practices provide between the objects present-at-hand and practical projects. For although it is correct to see assertions as the only appropriate responses to the present-at-hand as such, and although the only use that can appropriately be made of assertions is inference, it is simply a mistake to think of all inference as theoretical inference. There is also practical inference, whose premises are assertions and whose conclusion is a practical performance which is not an assertion but, in virtue of its genesis as the result of such deliberation, an action. Assertions about the present-at-hand can be practically relevant. We can use information about the merely present-at-hand properties of things, such as the heaviness of the hammer. Without the possibility of language exists through non-assertional performance, theoretical or intralinguistic inference would lose much or all of its point.<sup>18</sup>

If it is then incorrect to see the present-at-hand as completely irrelevant to practical pursuits, as in pure presence-at-hand, what *is* meant by its objectivity? Just this. The *only* way in which the present-at-hand can affect Dasein's projects is by being the subject of an assertion which ultimately plays some role in practical inference. It is not that the present-at-hand is irrelevant to non-assertional practice, it is that its relevance is *indirect*. Assertions are the only interface between the present-at-hand and the rest of our practice. The mistake of the doctrine of pure presence is to see no interface at all.<sup>19</sup> The genuine difference between the present-at-hand (which can be thought of in an extended sense as ready-to-hand for the practices of assertion and inference) and what is ready-to-hand is that one can only make practical use of assertions about the present-at-hand, never of what is present-at-hand itself. Its assertional proxies are serviceable equipment, but the present-at-hand itself is not. Only as represented in assertions can the present-at-hand partake of the equipmental totality of significance which is the world within which Dasein lives and moves and has its Being. Discovery of the present-at-hand is an authentic possibility of Dasein's Being, instantiated by all human com-

munities ever discovered. Pure presence-at-hand is a philosophers' misunderstanding of the significance of the category of presence-at-hand, and a Bad Idea.

The categorial nature of the present-at-hand, no less than that of the ready-to-hand (or for that matter the existential nature of Dasein itself as *Mitdasein*) is constituted by its being appropriately responded to in a certain way, in this case by assertions. In this fact resides Heidegger's ontological pragmatism, and the self-adjudicating nature of *Mitdasein-in-the-world*. Heidegger sees social behavior as generating both the category of equipment ready-to-hand within a world, and the category of objectively present-at-hand things responded to as independent of the practical concerns of any community. In virtue of the social genesis of criterial authority (the self-adjudication of the social, given pragmatism about authority), fundamental ontology (the study of the origin and nature of the fundamental categories of things) is the study of the nature of social Being—social practices and practitioners. Only because Dasein as socially constituted and constituting masters communal practices classifying things according to kinds which are whatever they are taken to be

can Dasein also understand and conceptualize such characteristics of Being as independence, the 'in-itself', and Reality in general. Only because of this are 'independent' entities, as encountered within-the-world, accessible to circumspection. (p. 251, H 207)

\* \* \*

We have been concerned with three conceptual innovations presented in *Being and Time*. One of these is Heidegger's hierarchy of non-Cartesian cognitive notions. At its base is understanding—the disclosure of a totality of social significance and the discovery within it of individual pieces of equipment by mastery of communal responsive practices. At the next level is deliberative interpretation by appropriation of the conditional significances implicit in the understanding of the ready-to-hand. Finally there is the discursive appropriation of the present-at-hand through assertion of sentences which in virtue of their social inference potentials explicitly thematize the significations one becomes aware of in interpretation. Second, we have seen how the category of presence-at-hand arises within and yet is distinct from the more fundamental category of readiness-to-hand. Third, in terms of the first two points it is clear that the ready-to-hand is first among equals among the categories because of the self-adjudicating nature of the social (*Mitdasein* in a world which is a totality of practical significance). Understanding in this way the basic ontological structure of Heidegger's account in Division One is the necessary preparation for understanding both his account of the in-

dividuation of Dasein and the institution of temporality by the personal appropriation of projects in Division Two, and his profound reading of that tradition of philosophy which has left us in such a mistaken position that "in general our understanding of Being is such that every entity is understood in the first instance as present-at-hand."<sup>20</sup>

*Robert Brandom*

*University of Pittsburgh*

### NOTES

1. The general orientation of this essay owes much to John Haugeland, particularly to his account of transcendental constitution as and by social institution, in "Heidegger on Being a Person", *Noûs*, March 1982. I would also like to thank my fellow staff members and the seminar participants at the Council for Philosophic Studies 1980 Summer Institute, "Phenomenology and Existentialism: Continental and Analytic Perspectives on Intentionality," for their responses to an earlier version of the ideas presented here.

2. See Rorty's "Incorrigibility as the Mark of the Mental," *Journal of Philosophy* vol. 67, no. 12 (June 25, 1970).

3. Of course Descartes held other views about the substances to which these categories applied as well. He filled in the abstract ontological categorization of epistemic kinds with specifications, e.g., of the objective realm as having its essence exhausted by geometric extension, and of the epistemic subject whose incorrigible "takings" define the mental as itself identical with the sum of mental things it is aware of. The current concern is with the ontological framework rather than with Descartes' theories about the entities it categorized.

4. In "Freedom and Constraint by Norms" (*APQ*, April, 1977) I investigate the sort of norm inherent in the appropriatenesses instituted by social practices. I took it to be significant that the social/objective distinction can be seen as the origin of the value/fact distinction, and that both naturalists, who want to reduce one category to the other, and non-naturalists, who do not, presumed that it was an *objective* distinction between facts and values which was at issue. I explore the consequences of treating the social/objective, and hence the value/fact, distinction as itself social rather than objective, that is, as a matter of how the community responds to various things, not how they are independently and in themselves.

5. As Rorty has argued (*Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979) on the plausibility of such a claim rest Sellars's and Quine's twin attacks on the two varieties of unjustified justifiers ("privileged representations") which foundationalists, particularly positivistic ones, had relied on as the foundations of our inferential structures. Thus Quine dismantled the picture of *language* as a source of authority immune to social revision ("intrinsic credibility," "self evidence," etc.) for some sentences thought to be *ture-in-virtue-of-meaning*, and Sellars performed the same service for the picture of the mind as a source of supposedly socially impervious privilege for "reports" of thoughts and sensations.

6. p. 190, H 150.

7. Cf. the "*sich verweisenden Verstehen*" of p. 119.
8. See, e.g., p. 100, H 70.
9. Such a model must be used with caution, however. Heidegger is concerned that the structures so taken as worlds involve *concrete* relations of use, production, and response, rather than simply structurally analogous relations. He says

The context of assignments or references, which, as significance, is constitutive for worldhood, can be taken formally in the sense of a system of Relations. But one must note that in such formalizations the phenomena get levelled off so much that their real phenomenal content may be lost . . . the phenomenal content of these "relations" and "relata"—the "in-order-to", the "for-the-sake-of," and the "with-which" of an involvement—is such that they resist any sort of mathematical functionalization. (pp. 1 21–122 H 88)

10. This view represents a normative version of the 'conformism' discussed by Haugeland (op. cit.), without what I take to be the ontologically irrelevant account of its ontic genesis which he offers.
11. P. 203, H 160.
12. P. 190, H 150.
13. P. 275, H 231.
14. P. 204, H 161.
15. P. 411, H 360.
16. P. 266, H 224, following the passage on speaking-over quoted above.
17. I have presented the details of an account of asserting along these lines in "Asserting," forthcoming in *Noûs*.
18. Here 'theoretical' inference refers to language-language moves, by contrast to 'practical' inference involving language-exit moves (in Sellars's sense). In a different sense 'theoretical' claims are those which can *only* be arrived at inferentially, and not as non-inferential reports. Discussion of the relevance to the understanding of presence-at-hand of claims which are theoretical this sense is beyond the scope of this essay.
19. The semantics of the points of view generated by such 'interfaces'—where a set of claims can make a difference to practical deliberations only insofar as it makes a difference to some other set of claims which then affects the deliberations—is discussed in my "Points of View and Practical Reasoning," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, June 1982.
20. P. 268, H 225.

## *Points of View and Practical Reasoning\**

ROBERT BRANDOM, University of Pittsburgh

Problems of practical reasoning often arise as the result of a clash between two different points of view. What do we mean when we say that while from the point of view of prudence there is no reason to rescue one's drowning enemy, from the point of view of morality there is reason to do so? In this essay we examine how the idiom of points of view arises in practical discourse, and offer a clarification of it. We will be particularly concerned with a common argument for assigning a privileged status to the moral point of view, an argument which can be seen to be fallacious once certain features of judgments made from a point of view are clearly discerned.

A familiar dissection of practical deliberation distinguishes between *prima facie* or presumptive reasons for action, and reasons on balance or all things considered. The leading idea of the two-stage explanatory strategy to which these two notions of reason correspond is the following. During the first stage of analysis each of the considerations making

---

\* I am grateful for the many helpful comments on previous versions of this paper offered by P. Foot, J. Cooper, L. McFall, and an anonymous referee.

up a total practical situation is assigned to an abstract object (a 'weight'). The assignment is envisaged as made without regard for other circumstances of which account may eventually have to be taken, representing the contribution that consideration makes to practical inferences involving it. A function is then to be defined which operates on this set of weights to determine what rational force each retains when considered in concert with its fellows, yielding an all-things-considered recommendation for action. In the first stage, *prima facie* reasons for action are assembled, and in the second stage they give rise to a reason on balance.

Each of these notions of a reason has a claim to explanatory priority over the other. The essential link between reasoning and action-orientation consists of reasons on balance. When as theorists we seek to codify practical reasoning in a principled way, it is the relation between reasons on balance and the performances they provide rational motivation for that we want to make explicit. It is reasons on balance which are reasons *for action*. On the other hand, it is only by means of the notion of *prima facie* or presumptive reasons that finitely storable principles can be brought to bear on practical deliberation at all, since any such principle admits of an indefinite range of possibly relevant counter-considerations in any actual situation (principles are contextually defeasible).<sup>1</sup> As the vehicles of principles, *prima facie* reasons are reasons *for action*. The concept of such reasons plays a crucial dual role, both acknowledging the relativity to context or total evidence of practical inference, and securing an analytic niche within which relatively context-independent principles can be developed and applied in the ultimate codification of such inference. The full-blooded concept of a reason for action requires both the connection with action-orientation of reasons on balance and the connection with principles making such motivation *rational* motivation which resides in presumptive or provisional reasons.

The notions of *prima facie* or presumptive reasons central to this approach originated as technical legal tools, but the same effect is achieved in ordinary deliberative discourse by the use of judgments described as made from some *point of view*. Consider a surgeon asked by her patient to perform a lucrative but unnecessary operation. We can say that money provides a *prima facie* reason for performing the operation, professional self-respect a countervailing reason for refraining. Or we can say with the plain man that from the point of view of making money,

---

1 See Davidson's interesting discussion in 'How is Weakness of the Will Possible?', in J. Feinberg, ed., *Moral Concepts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1970).



one has reason to operate, while from the point of view of the profession there is reason not to. In ordinary parlance one can admit that a consideration, e.g., the rudeness of refusing a reasonable request which it is in one's power to grant, has some force as a reason without admitting it as conclusive for action-guidance, by using reason-on-balance talk modified by the explicit invocation of a perspective – 'from the point of view of etiquette, she ought to accede.' The specification of the perspective qualifies the usual motivating force of the 'ought' judgement, offering the conclusion only as a sort of sub-total.<sup>2</sup>

One can have prima facie reason to perform an action without its being the case that one *ought* to perform the action.<sup>3</sup> So to retain the connection between prima facie reasons and action guidance (necessary for them to be called 'reasons' at all), such reasons when carefully formulated must include ceteris paribus clauses. A prima facie reason to do A entails that one ought to do A other things being equal, or if no sufficiently weighty countervailing considerations apply. Reliance on ceteris paribus clauses is a notorious embarrassment. One may ask how the recommended connection of this species of reason with action differs from saying that a presumptive<sup>4</sup> or prima facie reason to do A is one which implies that one ought to do A unless for some reason it doesn't imply that. It is only insofar as we can give substantial content to the description of circumstances intended to be excluded by the ceteris paribus clause that such an account will be non-trivial.<sup>5</sup>

The non-technical idiom of 'points of view' an attractive response to this issue. *From the point of view of X* is an operator which allows the definition of prima facie reasons in terms of the more primitive action-

- 
- 2 For finer-grained deliberation, such points of view may be subdivided, as when trying to decide what she has reason to do from the point of view of making money, the surgeon reflects that while from the point of view of cash flow there is reason to operate, in view of possible malpractice suits, from the point of view of long-term capital structure there is reason to refuse to operate. It is in this way that one can reconstruct a distinction between reasons-on-balance and prima facie reasons even *within* some point of view.'
  - 3 The point here is not that there can be reasons for action which do not function as reasons for all agents. The distinction between prima facie reasons and reasons-on-balance is orthogonal to that between reasons as expressing abstract communal norms and reasons as expressing concrete individual motivations.
  - 4 *The Moral Point of View* (New York: Random House 1965), 38-9
  - 5 See for instance D. Kurtzman's 'Ceteris Paribus Clauses: Their Illumination and Elimination,' *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 10 (1973) 35-42.

orienting notion of reasons-on-balance (Ross: reasons sans phrase).<sup>6</sup> It does so first by recognizing that prima facie reasons are reasons insofar as they are expressible as reasons-on-balance modified or limited by ceteris paribus clauses, and second by stipulating explicitly the obtaining of the antecedent of the ceteris paribus clause (i.e. *which* other things are taken as equal) in a non-empty way. A judgment's denomination as 'from the point of view of making money' tells us something about what range of possibly countervailing considerations has been taken account of, namely those relevant to making money. The result can then be presented as a reason-on-balance from an explicitly restricted perspective, without denying the defeasibility of the action appraisal by circumstances appearing from other perspectives.<sup>7</sup> Advancing a putatively countervailing consideration not significant from the specified point of view will accordingly not count as disagreeing with the perspectively qualified judgment, but simply as continuing the evaluation in progress. The notion of a point of view thus potentially provides a bridge from the basic action-orienting concept of reasons-on-balance to the theoretically indispensable but muddy concept of prima facie or presumptive reasons, without requiring further qualification by mysterious ceteris paribus clauses.

There is a far-reaching argument for the overridingness of moral considerations which takes its point of departure from the consideration of perspectival reasons. Although the argument in question is fairly widely subscribed to, for the sake of definiteness we may consider a recent and particularly clear expression by Becker:

...a close look at moral disputes in general supports this view: that what is inevitably at issue – apart from flaws of logic – is some restriction on the scope of reasons allowed to count toward deciding what one ought (morally) to do.

---

6 'Because I have reason on balance to do it,' is of course never a reason for acting, neither in the prospective context of deliberation nor in the retrospective context of appraisal. Citing reasons is always citing prima facie reasons. But this does not reduce the notion of a reason-on-balance to empty formality. Such citation justifies an action only when it is further claimed, at least implicitly, that the considerations cited *outweigh* possibly countervailing ones not mentioned. It is this second claim which secures the connection to action-guidance and gives separate content to the notion of reasons-on-balance.

7 This issue has been addressed in a somewhat different way in the context of conditionalization in deontic logics. See B. Chellas, 'Conditional Obligation,' in S. Stenlund, ed. *Logical Theory and Semantic Analysis* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel 1974). For a comprehensive review of related literature, see the bibliography in G. di Bernardo, ed., *Logica Deontica e Semantica* (Bologna: Societa Editrice il Mulino 1977) 349-447.

The egoist restricts his attention to his own good. The altruist ignores some important facts about human psychology. Utilitarians are said to oversimplify. And so on. The sum of such objections can only mean that what we expect from a valid moral judgment is that it have taken *everything* into account – that it has not overlooked or brushed aside pre-emptorily any relevant sort of value, source of obligation, or virtue.<sup>8</sup>

So it is claimed that a necessary, though no doubt not sufficient, condition of *moral* judgement is that it be judgement *all things considered*. This is contrasted with those normative judgments made from some particular point of view (e.g. the point of view of the welfare of the agent, or of the greatest good for the greatest number in his community). Prudential judgements, or those made from the point of view of making money are seen as taking account only of a certain limited range of reasons for action, namely those having to do with prudence or the making of money. By contrast:

What the demand for moral justification of an act does is to “detach” the act from its connection with special or restricted assumptions about what sorts of considerations are relevant and asks for a justification of it no holds barred.<sup>9</sup>

A formal contrast is thus envisaged between all-encompassing moral deliberation, and judgements including some restriction on admissible considerations.

This contrast may then immediately be exploited to argue that moral judgments ought to override those made from any other ‘point of view,’ insofar as judgments ‘all things considered’ have rational precedence over judgments which restrict the circumstances considered. Since judgements made from the point of view of prudence or etiquette are seen as ignoring a range of possibly countervailing considerations, we always have reason to act as recommended by moral judgements:

If that is so, then a valid moral judgement is by definition overriding. Its action-guidance is “inescapable” or “binding” in the sense that there is nothing more to consider – nothing further which might be introduced to enlarge the inquiry further and make prescription subject to withdrawal.<sup>10</sup>

Moral judgments are thus seen as Reason’s last word concerning human actions, in virtue of their non-perspectival completeness. The connec-

---

8 The Finality of Moral Judgements’ *Philosophical Review*, **82** (1973) 364-70

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid.*

tion noted above between reasons-on-balance-from-a-point-of-view and prima facie reasons, together with some observations about meta-ethical disputes, is taken to set 'the moral point of view' off from other points of view as not perspectival in the same sense.

It is easy to see the advantages such a strategy offers for one who is concerned to argue for the overridingness of moral considerations. If one treats the moral point of view as just one perspective among others such as prudence, etiquette, political expediency, etc., then the overridingness thesis is the antecedently implausible assertion that in adjudicating the claims of such competing prima facie reasons expressed as perspectival judgements-on-balance, the moral point of view should be assigned an *infinite* weight. And then we must ask why there cannot be weak moral reasons, outweighed in some particular circumstances by stronger considerations of prudence or taste.<sup>11</sup> By arguing for a purely formal distinction between moral reasons and all others, the advocate of overridingness need not address such questions.

The essential requirement of this formalist argument is that perspectival judgments must exclude certain kinds of consideration as irrelevant. The invidious distinction between moral judgements and those made from some point of view, on which the overridingness claim rests, is made out precisely in terms of the latter's *ignoring* considerations of which the former takes account. But some care must be taken in formulating this claim. It simply is not the case that when a judgement is made from the particular point of view, say, of making money there are some kinds of consideration (e.g. the virtuous character of an individual or the socially approved style of holding a soup-spoon in Albania) which are in principle irrelevant. On the contrary, given any consideration it is easy to describe circumstances in which how much money would be made turns precisely on that issue. After all, one can bet on anything.

Sophisticated accounts of the logic of relevance have been worked out,<sup>12</sup> but the present point requires attention only to the most straightforward notion of relevance, definable in ordinary logical systems. We suppose that the background beliefs which form the context of deliberation are expressed in a set of sentences C. Then we must surely admit that a consideration *p* is relevant to the truth of a further sentence *q* in that context if while the set C of sentences expressing

---

11 P. Foot, 'Are Moral Considerations Overriding?', in her *Virtues and Vices* (Oxford: Blackwell's 1978) 181-8

12 For the best of these, together with a survey of the others, see A. Anderson and N. Belnap, *Entailment*, Vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1975) especially Part I.

background beliefs does not by itself entail  $q$ ,  $C$  together with  $p$  does entail  $q$ .<sup>13</sup> In other words, it is clear that  $p$  is inferentially relevant to  $q$  in some set of circumstances if in those circumstances  $p$  represents the last piece of information needed to establish the truth of  $q$ . While it is obvious that the satisfaction of this condition is *sufficient* for  $p$  to be judged relevant to  $q$ , in ordinary usage we would not require the satisfaction of such a rigorous condition for a judgement of relevance. Even with this restrictive criterion of relevance, the possibility that the context  $C$  contains the conditional 'If  $p$  then  $q$ ' ensures that there will always be some contexts in which  $p$  is inferentially relevant to  $q$ . Of course, no sentence is in this sense relevant in *all* contexts to any sentence it does not *logically* entail. What this means in our case is that even in the most demanding sense of 'relevant,' there is no sort of consideration which is in principle irrelevant to judgements as to what should be done from the point of view of making money. Again, any issue could matter from the point of view of prudence, since getting what one wants in the future can depend on any feature the world might be imagined to have. The denial of in-principle irrelevance (irrelevance in all contexts) of course admits that any circumstance may be irrelevant in a particular case, but the most ardent advocate of the overridingness claim would not deny that this applies equally to moral judgements (to some one of which the eye-color of the mouse hiding under the bed *may* be irrelevant).

This shows that we cannot explain the difference between judgements made from some point of view and those made all things considered by looking for a set of considerations which simply cannot enter into the perspectival judgement. Rather, we should look at the different ways in which circumstances can be taken account of in making a judgement. In a situation in which the girth of a particular tree is relevant to my decision as to what I ought to do tomorrow from the point of view of making money (when lumberjacking, for instance), it is relevant to the final judgement only insofar as in the actual circumstances it entails some statement about how much money will be made. Statements concerning how much money will be made are *directly* or immediately relevant to a decision made from the point of view of making money, while other considerations matter only insofar as they jointly entail such statements. When one qualifies a political recommendation as 'made from the point of view of winning primary votes,' one distinguishes a class of sentences, those describing how many primary votes will be won. The significance in practice of this class of directly relevant con-

---

13 Of course there is a dual notion of negative relevance corresponding to that stated above, which holds just in case the background beliefs alone do not entail *not-q*, but those beliefs together with  $p$  do entail *not-q*.

cerns is that anyone who objects to the perspectival recommendation on the basis of a further consideration is obliged to argue that that consideration makes a difference to the truth values of some sentences about how many primary votes will be won. Two grades of relevance are discriminated, and claims which are not directly relevant must show as credentials their directly relevant consequences or be turned away as not even indirectly relevant.

This suggestion that judging from a perspective enforces a distinction between directly and indirectly relevant considerations may be developed as follows. A point of view can be taken to consist of two elements, a specification of a set of sentences expressing directly relevant considerations, and a maxim determining a preference ordering of directly relevant circumstances. The point of view of making money, for instance, has as first element the set of all sentences specifying amounts of money gained. Its second element, the rule 'maximize profits,' tells us how the evaluation of the directly relevant considerations applicable in a particular case is to settle the issue of what should be done from the point of view of making money.

The idea is that practical deliberation from a point of view ought to be seen as involving three stages. First, one must determine from the description of the point of view what set of sentences it distinguishes as directly relevant. The second stage consists of constructing and assigning truth values to conditionals whose antecedents describe the various contemplated actions being compared, and whose consequents express directly relevant considerations. Then the maxim is applied to compare those directly relevant consequences and yield a recommended course of action.<sup>14</sup> The perspectival maxim surveys the possible outcomes as summarized by the directly relevant consequences of the possible courses of action. For the operation of the maxim no facts are significant save those expressed by these statements. The point of view of hedonic utilitarianism, for instance, discriminates as directly relevant those sentences which report the amount of pleasure and pain which will be caused to members of some community. To apply that point of view to an actual situation, it must be determined which of these sentences will be true according to which actions are undertaken. Besides the directly relevant sentences, this point of view contains a maxim urging the performance of whichever will produce the least pain and the most

---

14 A more sophisticated account would assign *probabilities* to directly relevant considerations during the first stage and require a maxim stated in terms of the expected return along the dimension defining the perspective. the arguments we are concerned with can all be approached equally well in the simpler interpretation according to truth values, however.

pleasure in the community as a whole. A distinction is enforced between directly relevant considerations and the rest by the fact that the maxim settles what ought to be done given only the truth values of this distinguished set of sentences, conditioned on the alternatives being considered. As argued above, any consideration can be *indirectly* relevant to what ought to be done from any point of view. But this is so because anything can be relevant to the determination of the truth values of directly relevant considerations.

Before restating the dispute about the overridingness of the moral point of view more carefully according to this model, we examine what use such perspectival structures of appraisal might be when no clash of points of view is involved. Consider the scientific task of codifying the practical inferences which are the licensings of a certain class of performances for a community. We imagine here, as is actually the case in moral theory, that we are confronted with a community which exhibits a rich set of such inferential and justificatory practices, but has not codified those practices in a set of principles.<sup>15</sup> The inferences of concern here are not formal or logical inferences, but *material* inferences involving the particular contents of the sentences involved – depending on concepts of rights or welfare or interests and so on. They are practical inferences in that their conclusions are appraisals of the appropriateness of performances. One form which the codification of such practices into principles could take is that of a perspectival semantics for those practical inferences. Such a semantics is a theory-form, a simplifying structure for organizing an initially heterogenous mass of individually admissible inferences. Its strategy is to exhibit the inferences in question in terms of a point of view, that is, a maxim paired with a set of directly relevant considerations. To produce such a representation, one must be able to discriminate a subset of sentences involved in the target inferences, to play the role of directly relevant considerations. For some set *S* to play that role with respect to a maxim is for it to be the case that whenever the community regards as warranted an inference from a description of a situation to the appropriateness of some performance, that description entails the truth of some subset of sentences of *S* which in turn, according to the maxim, settle the appropriateness of that performance.<sup>16</sup> Finding a perspectival rendering provides a recipe

---

15 See my 'Freedom and Constraint by Norms,' *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 16 (1979) 187-96.

16 The sort of significance captured in such a semantics concerns the appropriateness of inferences and other performances, including assertions about what ought to be done. Perspectival schemes for practical inference are thus

for determining the admissibility of inferences. First one determines what directly relevant considerations are entailed by the premises of the inference. Then, considering only these directly relevant facts, one applies the maxim to determine what performance is appropriate.

If one can find a set of sentences and a maxim which play the role described in the previous paragraph, then one can represent their target inferences (justifications) in a particularly simple way. It is perfectly appropriate to try to codify our everyday moral reasoning by exhibiting for it a perspectival semantics. I take it that it is a prime task of moral theory to find a point of view which would support such a codification. Its maxim might approve the actions which permit the greatest overall exercise and development of the human capacities of the members of a community, those which most secure and enhance their virtues, those which provide them the most emotional satisfaction, or which involve minimal infringements of their fundamental rights, or may take some form we have not thought of yet. In presenting a theory in this form one would not be 'overlooking or brushing aside pre-emptorily any relevant source of value,' as the formalist argument of our first quotation above alleges. One is rather *organizing* a practical inferential field according to the scheme of maxims and the discrimination of directly and indirectly relevant considerations. Such organization need in no way falsify the inferential practices it addresses.

Of course, any simplifying scheme can be *misused* to oversimplify. This would occur if a theorist attempting to codify a set of inferences seized on a maxim and a set of considerations treated as directly relevant which expressed only *some* of those inferences. Employing the perspectival semantic apparatus in this way can be either pernicious or merely preliminary. It is pernicious insofar as it amounts to a false theory of the evaluative inferential practices one starts out to codify. An example would be an attempt to present moral reasoning which admitted as directly relevant only the affective states of individuals, and whose maxim recommended as morally appropriate those performances approved of at the time by the agent issuing them. A theory of this sort is bad just because it is inadequate to its intended explanatory domain.

An artificial perspectival restriction of attention may be a legitimate preliminary evaluation, however, if the restriction it embodies is explicitly admitted. This is what we do with the idiom of points of view in ordinary discourse. When discussing what ought to be done to win the

---

more akin to assertibility semantics than truth-conditional semantics (see my 'Truth and Assertibility,' *Journal of Philosophy*, 73 [1976] 137-49). So invoking such schemes does not beg the question against a non-cognitivist rendering of action appraisals.



game one first explicitly invokes a certain form of perspectival evaluation, and then qualifies one's conclusion by admitting that conclusive counter-reasons may exist which cannot be expressed in this perspectival form. One uses the linguistic form appropriate for the expression of reasons-on-balance, 'You ought to castle early,' but gives it the force of a *provisional* conclusion based on *prima facie* reasons by using the idiom of points of view, e.g. adding the qualification '...from the point of view of control of the center.'

It is obvious from the account we have given of perspectival representation that a set of inferential practices which could not be expressed entirely in terms of one point of view might be completely captured if one considered two independent points of view and had some hierarchical principle of 'overridingness' to settle disputes between them. The addition of a principle for adjudicating disputes between perspectives makes possible the use of several perspectives to represent sets of inferential practices too heterogeneous to yield to codification in a single point of view.

The precise account offered here of points of view as constituted by a set of considerations treated as directly relevant by a perspectival maxim has enabled us to discriminate three uses of perspectival representations of inferential practices: as theory-form, as bad theory, and as cold-storage for codifications admitted to be partial and preliminary in the context of an overridingness relation between competing points of view. Our aim is the evaluation of a particular argument for the overridingness of the moral point of view in practical deliberation. We have noted that it would not be appropriate to condemn a moral theory (or any other theory) just for taking the form of a perspectival semantics. For using such a theory-form need not involve ignoring any sort of consideration, but concerns only the way in which relevant considerations are taken account of. Indeed, of competing expressively adequate schemes for codifying a field of justifications or inferences, a perspectival representation will always be preferable to a non-perspectival one on grounds of simplicity and economy. For a perspectival scheme reduces the deliberative task to that of determining the truth values of the directly relevant statements, conditional on the performance of various actions.

This point is not decisive against the formalist claim that moral judgements are overriding in virtue of treating *all* considerations as directly relevant, however. For the issue of overridingness arises when individually *inadequate* perspectival schemes are being combined in an attempt to represent fully some set of performance-licensing practices, not when we are comparing expressively adequate schemes. So we must ask whether, when adjudicating the conflicting claims of two

schemes neither of which captures their common target practices completely, a scheme in which everything is directly relevant for that reason should override a perspectival one. It should not. Think for the moment of the formalist's all-things-directly-relevant scheme as a limiting case of perspectival accounts as ever larger sets of considerations are taken as directly relevant. It is not the case that in general because one point of view considers more things as directly relevant than another the first overrides the second. For the maxims those perspectives embody must be considered as well. An example will make this point clear. In a practical deliberation about which mechanical manipulations to perform on the innards of a household appliance, a preliminary appraisal may be made from the point of view of avoiding electrical short circuits. The directly relevant considerations are statements affirming the occurrence or non-occurrence of shorts of various severities in different locations. It is conditionals relating such statements as consequents to descriptions of the various contemplated actions which must be investigated. In the context of the true conditionals of this form, the maxim 'Minimize the occurrence and severity of shorts' determines what ought to be done from this point of view. But there are other points of view whose maxims correspond to other possible interests but which include the same considerations as directly relevant. The same actions can be deliberated about from the point of view of causing a house fire which will look innocent to suspicious insurance investigators. Directly relevant considerations will include those concerning electrical shorts, as well as, for instance, the fact that apparently spontaneous combustion will occur under various circumstances. In this case, though, the maxim operating on conditionals whose consequents are directly relevant urges performing whichever action *will* result in a short or a chemical fire. The second point of view considers more features of the situation as directly relevant, but does this mean that it should override the first? Clearly not, for the maxim generating the second point of view corresponds to a perverse motive. How many circumstances are directly taken account of by the unworthy interest the maxim expresses is not of itself relevant to the weight it should be accorded when in conflict with other interests. So even if morality treats all circumstances as directly relevant, as the formalist seems to want to claim, that will not be a reason for moral judgements to override those made from some (other) point of view.

Stepping back a bit, we should see that even if it were sufficient for one sort of judgement to override those made from some point of view that the first treat all circumstances as directly relevant or be non-perspectival in some other sense, it would still not be correct to argue in this way for the overridingness of *moral* judgements. For as Kant is concerned to point out, morality is constituted as much by what one is *not* permitted to take (direct) account of in moral deliberation as by what one

does consider.<sup>17</sup> Not everything directly relevant from the prudential point of view (How powerful is this drowning person? What rewards will I gain by rescue?) is directly relevant from the moral point of view. Our ordinary moral reasoning clearly excludes some sorts of consideration (such as skin color, sex, parentage, wealth and so on) from direct relevance to moral deliberation. These factors may be considered *only* insofar as in the concrete situation they entail some morally relevant circumstance such as the existence of an obligation or right, or a difference in the predicted welfare of some person. It is not just, as the formalist might be tempted to claim, that considerations such as the pleasure I might feel at the discomfiture of an enemy are given little weight in moral reasoning compared to others such as effects on communal welfare. From the moral point of view such considerations have *no* weight, except as they bear on those of direct moral relevance – as happens when we take a wealthy individual to have greater obligations to succor the poor, or the community to have special debts to the victims of historical patterns of mistreatment. And this is to say that there *is* a moral point of view, though our approach has offered no substantive suggestions as to what its maxim might be, or how to describe usefully its range of directly relevant features. The exclusion of some considerations as morally insignificant in themselves is a feature of our moral reasoning which is merely reflected in our explicit moral theorizing in the idiom of a moral ‘point of view.’ A careful look at the notion of a point of view together with this brief reminder about basic features of our practices of giving and demanding moral reasons support the conclusion that *if* moral judgements are to be thought of as overriding perspectival judgements, some further reason must be found for according such a privilege than the claim that moral judgements are not made from any point of view. Not only is that claim false, but even were it true it would not justify the overridingness thesis.

*April 1981*

---

<sup>17</sup> This is one of the points of the discussion of duty in the first section of the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*.