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Knowledge, Opinion, Belief: The Dialectical Challenging

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ABSTRACT. This paper is written in the continental tradition – facing the analytic one – and advocates the knowledge first thesis, reviewing the entailment thesis (where believing is knowing, because to know entails to believe). It starts from the ancient distinction between knowledge and opinion and develops criteria for distinguishing knowledge, opinion and belief. The demonstration necessarily arrives to the kinds of beliefs and thus, to the relationships between knowledge and these kinds. While the distinction of kinds of beliefs leads to the understanding of why the knowledge belief problem did appear in epistemology, the analysis with this distinction is not rigid and can be approached dialectically. This standpoint is aiming at contributing to the debate of knowledge belief problem and to warmer relations between the continental and the analytic philosophy.

Keywords: epistemology, knowledge, opinion, belief, truth, cognisance, system, criteria, dialectic.

Knowledge is that which people know; it is not tantamount to the process of knowing, but is related, intertwined to it: it is the ensemble process of *knowing-cognisance*.

Instead of introduction

How to understand this *ensemble*? There are, of course, different ways of understanding it (psychological, bio-physiological, sociological, cultural, logical). In the following the epistemological is sketched. Epistemology inquires the *cognitive*

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modes, and the *states of thinking* related to the cognitive modes[1], and not the states of consciousness: knowledge, opinions, suppositions, guessing, judging, doubting, ignoring are cognitive modes; beliefs are states of thinking; and decisions and will, for instance, are (only) states of consciousness, irrespective of their strong connections with the former, and of their thinking and cognitive basis.

To understand is to explain the reasons of our ideas about some facts: thus, to explain the reasons of those facts. *As if* we would dis-cover, by our reasoning – and memory, or through memory, pointed out Plato – the inner fabric of reality. Here we see the beautiful and difficult problem of the two main domains of the existence, that of the consciousness and that of the real world, puzzling the ancient mind that contemplated the human reason able to grasp as a correspondent to the reason of the world. Also, we see the *meta* level of theory about theory, and the necessity to re-examine both the theory and the facts; because the contents of a theory does not reflect only the extra-epistemological milieu and it depends just on the inner logical articulation of facts[2].

How to explain (the reason of facts)? By putting order in the complicated and coloured cobweb of so many and different things and/as relations between them: thus, by distinguishing aspects and phenomena and then by trying to perceive their connections as successions. In order to do this and as a result of this, people cut out in their mind fragments[3] of reality according to both their interests towards some aspects and to the relationships between things: these fragments became the *systems* consciously and unconsciously taken into account by them.

Now, if we consider the system of cognitive modes, it's clear that we must explain them *within this system*, i.e., through the causes, results, functions, features of the cognitive modes, thus through their own reason-to-be; and not outside this system, because although we know that the ultimate explanation of a system is outside the system[4], we cannot explain the cognitive modes by extra cognitive

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[1] A.D. Woozley, *Theory of Knowledge. An Introduction* (1949), London, Hutchinson's University Library, 1957, p. 14: "The Theory of Knowledge is that branch of philosophy which has for its study the nature of cognition and its objects".

[2] Pascal Engel, *Des sceptiques peu casaniers*, 5 septembre 2023, https://www.en-attendant-nadeau.fr/2023/09/05/voyageurs-doute-van-damme/.

[3] Or, with an ontological word, μεροι, parts/portions. The awareness of the mental dissociation of parts from the whole when people see the world led the ancient philosophers to think about separate objects – and the dialectic of continuity and discontinuity – and also about the structural principles which "govern" all of them. For a recent synthesis, see A.J. Cotnoir, Achile C. Varzi (Eds.), *Mereology*, Oxford University Press, 2021.

[4] Ana Bazac, "The Last Stage Explanation Within the Study of Society", *Noesis*, XXXIV, 2009, pp. 81-91.

causes, the ultimate explanation – that which regards at the relations of the system with its environment and systems – not superseding the explanations of their inner structure and role. (If we want to explain beliefs, the will to have such or such belief or the popularity of such or such belief do not explain the peculiarity of belief towards cognitive modes). We need to discover the *structural-functional* features of a cognitive mode towards other cognitive modes (for instance, *knowledge* as *epistêmê,* and *opinion*): so, within the system of cognitive modes, not within the system of states of consciousness. As we need to discover the structural-functional features of states of thinking towards the cognitive modes. If this "identity principle" would not exist, the defining process and the definitions would fall apart. (Concretely, the will to act is related not only to beliefs, but also to knowledge).

Accordingly, and still from a methodological standpoint, it is necessary to not equate the discussion about structural-functional features of cognitive modes – thus, in any historical occurrence and genetic manifestation – with this occurrence and manifestation. The fact that one may know X after he believed it does not put knowing X tantamount to believing it. Or the fact that a theory was assumed as known even though it was not proved – and it is not proven for the subject – does not mean that knowledge would be a simple assumption of cognisance: on the contrary, knowledge is the assumption of a *justified* cognisance.

Knowledge and opinion: criteria of their dissociation

Thus, first of all the *results* of the knowing process are and show the cognitive modes. According to the title, we will pay attention only to *knowledge* and *opinion*.

For Plato – and letting aside any connection with his[5] ontology, namely determination of types of knowledge by the world of Forms, the intellectual objects understood through the exercise of dialectic, thus generating true knowledge, and by the physical objects, the particulars, perceived through senses, generating only *doxa* (opinions), even though there are different concepts of *doxa*[6] – *science*, i.e.,

[5] And with the ontology of Aristotle, who transposed the difference between episteme and doxa through the medium of the very important notions of the universal and the necessary. See Lucas Angioni, "Aristotle's Contrast between *Episteme* and *Doxa* in Its Context (*Posterior Analytics*, I, 33)", *Manuscrito*, 42 (4), 2019, pp. 157-210.

[6] See Jan Szaif, "*Doxa* and *Epistêmê* as Modes of Acquaintance in *Republic V", Études platoniciennes,* 4, 2007*,* pp. 253-272; Daniel Larose, "Sur la présence implicite de la notion d'opinion droite dans les dialogues de jeunesse de Platon", *Études platoniciennes,* 12, 2015, https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesplatoniciennes.687.

justified knowledge/ *epistêmê*, was "true judgement with an account"[7]/ "true opinion accompanied by reason"[8] (*Theaetetus*, 201c).

So, in order to know, to say about us that we know, and in order to consider that which we know, we need "the account", the *impersonal proofs/proving* of that which we consider we know. This impersonal proving unrolls, as *logos* – reason manifested through and as logical analysis – in our mind. Without this proving, that which we consider we know or as the known is only *doxa*, something that we believe, and we believe that which we assume to knowing because it was transmitted to us. Thus, knowledge – different from opinion – is always *proven* and in its structure has nothing to do with belief; the prerequisite of knowledge is *proving*, *dialectical analysis* (consciously in philosophy, said Plato; unconsciously /spontaneously in the common consciousness). (Rather, *doxa* is like propaganda, taken over information without the necessary method of doubts and critical thinking, thus subordinating the proving to the message of information; or like the superficial labelling of things by those "who think abstractly", believing their reductionism, as later on Hegel showed[9]).

However, if the concept of knowledge involves the logic as the reason-to-be of the known, at the level of each individual to know means to deploy in his/her mind the logical analysis of the data and information in question. This logical analysis is "independent", namely it is made aiming only the implicature and correlations between elements, and not the conformity with the points of views of the authorities about those data and information. In this respect, the spontaneous thinking is critical (interrogative and skeptical), thus "anti-authoritarian". If the infant takes over the known from his mother etc. and he equates her utterances with the objective state of the world (thus with "truth"), as he grows, he develops the ability to remake and acknowledge in his mind the logical reasons-to-be of the known. First, these reasons-to-be are intimately related to the good for him, the logical being good and the good, and as the space of his experience enlarges with new and new things not directly related to him, he learns to exercise the logical analysis: from his aim to understand. And obviously, the independent analysis does not entail a relativism that makes the world disordered and incomprehensible: because it must

[7] Plato, T*heaetetus*, Translated by John McDowell, Oxford, 1973.

[8] In *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 12 translated by Harold N. Fowler. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1921, https://www.perseus.tufts.edu.

[9] G.W.F. Hegel, "Wer denkt abstrakt ?" (1807), G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden,* Frankfurt am Main, Surkamp Verlag, 1970, 2 Band (Jenaer Schriften – 1801-1807), pp. 575-580.

fit with the *logos* of things[10]. Consequently, and if we transpose the development of epistemic attitudes into patterns, although an "authoritarian" (an "absolutist") regards knowledge as certain and thus the utterances given by authority as sure and the only ones which afford certainty, a "multiplist" already considers the many different knowledge providers (he is a relativist), then the humans learn to evaluate in their own mind the different points of view (they are "evaluativists"[11]). And only as "evaluativists" are they open to arguments[12], are critical and interact more[13].

The key problem, and excluding any correlation with metaphysics/ontology, in the above ancient definition of knowledge is the *truth*[14]: that is both the result of the proving and its basis. However, just this presence of truth at the beginning and at the end of the process of proving is and generates an amphiboly.

But why would truth be present at the beginning of the judgement of proving? Perhaps because *people consider/know/remember only true information* as superposing to reality; they consider only reality – equated with *alêtheia*, truth; truth and reality mutually superposing in Plato; somehow as later on, in Gottlob Frege, the sentences in his logical system are true because they are real, thus, *sentences = reality*, the concept of true being redundant, the simple positing of sentences already meaning they are true[15]; so, no one would waste time to judge about absurd things. (The sentences themselves having their truth-value (Frege)).

Nevertheless, people are interested to solve *problems*, which obviously are not known at the beginning, and anyway are not known as true. Thus, if we substitute in the above Plato's definition of knowledge, the *truth* with *the problems* – knowledge being "judgements with an account on problems" – we have that knowledge

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[10] And this *logos* is universal: if people would not follow it, they could not understand the world; for this reason, the infringement of logos is sad and unfortunate: "most men live as if each of them had a private intelligence of his own", Heraclitus, *The Complete Fragments*, 2, Translation and Commentary and the Greek Text, William Harris, 1994, http://wayback.archive-it.org/6670/20161201175133/, http://community.middlebury.edu/~harris/Philosophy/Heraclitus.html.

[11] Deanna Kuhn, Richard Cheney, Michael Weinstock, "The development of epistemological Understanding", *Cognitive Development*, 15, 2000, pp. 309-328.

[12] E. Michael Nussbaum and Lisa D. Bendixen, "Approaching and avoiding arguments: The role of epistemological beliefs, need for cognition, and extraverted personality traits", *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 28, 2003, pp. 573–595.

[13] Omid Noroozi, "Considering students' epistemic beliefs to facilitate their argumentative discourse and attitudinal change with a digital dialogue game", *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 2018 vol. 55, no. 3, 357–365.

[14] For this concept see *What's the Use of Truth?: Richard Rorty and Pascal Engel* (2007), Translated by William McCuaig, Columbia University Press, 2016. I endorse Pascal Engel's view.

[15] Although in Frege the meaning is treated as if it would it be external to the proposition – actually this treatment resulted from the need of formalisation – it is, as Wittgenstein insisted, embedded in the proposition, following the concrete use of its parts, i.e., their integral use.

requires *evidence and judgements* facing the problems and their rational inquiry with proofs. The contradiction of the two positions of truth disappears, and once more the definition of knowledge is exterior to belief. And here, knowledge is tantamount to the truth acquired following the process of complex judging/proving.

In the last instance, the basis of knowledge is *truth* (tantamount to reality, see supra): proved by both

- the *correspondence* between our declarations – provided that they express our ideas – about things and the things as such, as they are witnessed by our senses and/or our intellectual faculty,
- and the *logical consistency* of our declarations/ideas.

These criteria proved to be fundamental, with all the aspects of mediation.

"The book is on the table" is proven by our senses; "If A = B and B = C, then A = C" is logically proved (letting here aside any discussion about intuitions). The condition /criterion of truth is its *proving*. The belief in this or that discourse occurs only *after* they turned out to have been proved in a way or another: to have been turned out to be true – this case is the traditional one, illustrating the structural definition of knowledge as truth (a correspondence with facts) that was proven; or to have been declared officially that it is true, even the only truth: here, the declaration substitutes the evidence, the proving process. Moreover, people can believe in false discourses (Plato, *The Sophist*), but this belief doesn't transform the discourses/ideas into true ones: eventually, people believe them, but in a further fathoming they show their inconsistency and fallacy. The belief is not the condition / criterion of knowledge and truth, but of opinions.

Plato's suggestion of the difference between *knowledge* and *belief* can be understood if we take into account his equivalence of reality and truth (truth that must be dis-covered, recollected, because only by these means and only if the truth is recollected, can the humans know reality / approach to the understanding of both the eternal and phenomenal reality). So, truth superposes reality, let's say *truth = reality*. If we put the post-war Anglophone standard formula *truth = belief*, then it occurs that belief establishes reality, *belief = reality*. Something that is not true from an epistemological standpoint, no matter that in propaganda or in a type of education based on mnemotechnics it seems that reality would be the result of beliefs. But 2 x 2 = 4 works not because we believe it, but because it is true (demonstrated, experienced. And pragmatically, 2 x 2 =4 is used and useful *just because* it is true, the usefulness as such not being anterior to truth). We know – and use what we know – not because we believe it, but we believe only that which is given us as truth.

However, we may believe not only proven facts – and propositions[16] – but also opinions. Opinions and justified knowledge are cognitive modes.

Methodological remarks

Therefore, the lesson of the ancient philosophy is the epistemological *rigour* in the conception of knowledge. Actually, just because truth is a knot of relations between

- our mind / our logical capacity, including in our discourses, to "fit" to the *kosmos*/ order of things[17], and
- the world as such, *ta onta*, the things (Aristotle), including the intellectual world of Forms or of Categories,

can we conceive it. Just because our ideas and discourses are not simple copies of the existence (as Socrates and Kant insisted), are we interested in their truth and proving. Just because we have a lot of ideas, i.e., standpoints – or propositions, for simplify this according to the order put by the analytic philosophy– which refer/ describe/suggest different aspects of facts and different attitudes towards them, we needed criteria to distinguish the standpoints and considered truth and proving as the paramount ones. And obviously, this process is very difficult: all of the elements of the considered system (*mind/logical capacity – proving – reality*) are *relative*, because all the elements mutually depend on each other, and concretely on the proving, the *actual* manifestation of the capacities of mind; while not forgetting that all the elements are Ones formed by the many parts which are formed by many parts (Plato, *Parmenides*) which may be or are contrary and even contradictory, but this doesn't annul the common unities. Just the mutual dependence and the

[16] A proposition is a set of signs aligned according to its overall meaning that results from the alignment itself, i.e., from the use of the atomic meanings of words. It is the articulated expression of the cognitive relationship of man with the world. Psycho-physiologically, a proposition expresses the representations formed in mind, thus both integrating different perceptions into an image and the throwing of the consciousness on this representation, that is, giving it meanings. (On its part, representation is based also on the translation of the mutual real and intelligible visual images into the spatial model of knowledge, as ordered succession, as logical inferences and relations; this translation was prefigured by Plato as "spatial ascent". See Sybille Krämer, "'The Mind's Eye': Visualizing the Non-visual and the 'Epistemology of the Line'", in *Image and Imaging in Philosophy, Science and the Arts*, volume 2, edited by Richard Heinrich, Elisabeth Nemeth, Wolfram Pichler and David Wagner. Frankfurt · Lancaster · Paris · New Brunswick, Ontos Verlag, 2011, pp. 275–293 (287).

[17] Patricia Curd, "Thinking, Supposing, and *Physis* in Parmenides", *Études platoniciennes, 12, 2015,* http://journals.openedition.org/etudesplatoniciennes/741.

different types of relations between things imply that our logical capacity exercises as *dialectic*. So, with all the relativity, the humans have arrived to *consistent and coherent* knowledge, as well as to proven *criteria* of justification and knowledge. And especially, they have arrived to the ideas and criteria of *critical* analysis of knowledge and criteria of knowledge and justification. This *critical* standpoint is an important part of the human knowledge and gives both its *universal* and *particular* and *individual* features.

The historical character of knowledge, the fact that it is "constructed" in and by different social milieus, and that the same fact manifests in different social-historical conditions in different manners, is not the justification of an *epistemic relativism* where knowing would be believing, and truth would be surreptitiously equated with opinion. In the present political atmosphere, this epistemic relativism is considered the argument of the "anything goes" in the supply of information, proofs, and beliefs/knowledge: so, since there is a multi- dimensional change, starting from the meanings of concepts used in the process of knowing, are there epistemological criteria?

Yes, there are: those of the above-mentioned methods and principles regarding the concept and realisation of the process of knowing. And perhaps the extra epistemological principle of *consequences* of the process of knowing.

Historicity doesn't mean epistemological relativism that dissolves the technical rigour

Once more, the fact that knowledge is *historical* and determined by many cognitive and extra-cognitive conditions, by different subjective inputs, doesn't mean that knowledge would be belief and neither that the proof process would be more or less substituted by belief. Obviously, this happens in the real world, but here the point is just to see if this real aspect of subordination of information and knowledge to beliefs would be epistemologically legitimate; for this reason, the *theoretical*, *technical definition of knowledge* is so important.

For this definition, not our more advanced judgement and information about a definite fact than they were centuries or decades before is the criterion to consider the anterior knowledge as untrue. Because it is always about the *epistemic responsibility in the discussed interval*. This *epistemic responsibility* involves the knowledge creator subject's awareness of the information related to *that definite fact in that interval*. This information may be impregnated by subjective and ideological interests and views, and thus we simply consider them and analyse their influence on

the assumption of a certain truth/knowledge, but that's all. When Aristarchus of Samos proposed the heliocentric model, it was not accepted: because, epistemologically, there were no (not enough) *proofs* for it. ("The influence of Aristotle's and Claudius Ptolemaeus' theories" does explain nothing: *epistemologically*, this influence as such was related first of all to the systems of proofs, and not to the premises of philosophical principles/worldview which supported and framed them). The geocentric model was thought true (and truthful) and people behaved according to it quite successful. We know that this model is not true, and thus it does not represent *our* knowledge, but it was true then, at least empirically proved, and proved to be untrue nowadays. Generally, the *problem, the trouble* appears when *those who know that a theory is not based on true (proved) information, still impose it*. Except this aspect, all is a question of cultural evolution, *socially* determined.

Truth is relative? Of course, but this doesn't mean that there is no truth[18], that there are no criteria of knowledge. In a specific time-interval and in respect to a specific question and specific information, one can arrive to truth, the plausible, proven coherent correspondence of our ideas about that question with facts: if we exercise the critical (and self-critical) analysis of things.

The cultural evolution of knowledge and truth emphasises not only the cardinal role of proving (and proving as essential epistemological feature and means), but also the *socially determined tendency to substitute it with belief*. This tendency was promoted by *the few* and imposed the suitable information and proofs of theories which departed from knowledge as they represented a greater amount of non-epistemic interests. So, the cultural evolution of knowledge and truth depends on both the *epistemic conditions* of levels of information, knowledge and methods, and the *non-epistemic* ones. It's no wonder that *the many* have based their knowledge and conception of truth on the tendency from above that imposed the belief over the proofs and critical analysis of information. The epistemic precedence of knowledge towards beliefs was assumed by Kant who urged: *sapere aude*, dare to know, thus against the mechanical assumption of beliefs.

These social causes of the constitution and history of knowledge are so important that they were transformed (in the post-war Anglophone world) into a dominant epistemological definition of knowledge as *true belief*, i.e., as believed information and theory which, epistemologically, at their turn, were proven before to being true, but descriptively seemed to not needing a previous proving because people believe them. However, this definition ignores that *knowledge as truth /true*

[18] See the survey of problems in the understanding of truth in Panu Raatikainen, "Truth and Theories of Truth", *Cambridge Handbooks in Language and Linguistics*. Cambridge University Press, 2021, pp. 217-232.

information, thus proven, is its premise that no needs any belief for its constitution. As well as it ignores that the truth of the belief needs to be proven before the belief as such, because the belief is true (or not true), only information /knowledge is, or is not.

It would be an extra epistemological warning to insist that the belief-centred definition of knowledge is consonant to the cardinal importance of beliefs in the construction of truths given to the public. However, this warning is not superfluous: propaganda – and the whole advertisement industry – are based just on the exceeding of proving in a rationally conducted system of information by beliefs; these are *doxa*. And since these beliefs are held as the only truth, any alternatives being considered as "disinformation", they become the only information that supports "the proofs". It is possible, obviously, that people search for other information and proofs, in a critical effort to construct knowledge; but mostly, they do not know to exert criticism because they have only the information, methodology and proofs officially given.

Cognisance

The objects of cognitive modes are *cognisance*, and I think this aspect is missing from the approach that mixes the cognitive states and the states of thinking and of consciousness. The peculiarity of cognisance towards states of thinking and consciousness is that they are positing *around the truth-false end and criterion*. Thus, on the one hand, there is a big difference between cognisance and wills, images etc.; while on the other hand, there is a big difference between knowledge and belief: only knowledge has as core the truth-false end, while the belief as such *moves this end to the margins of knowledge*, because it rarefies its correspondent or possible knowledge. (Actually, not the truth-value is important in beliefs, but their own state of thinking as labelling). The role of truth-false end in the cognitive modes is a main criterion to differentiate knowledge from belief.

However, and rather this is the other, or even main distinctive criterion and feature, knowledge means to have been *scrutinized the logic* (causes, antecedents and posteriors, succession) *of a cognisance and, before, of data and information*, which were received also as beliefs. But structurally, the epistemic peculiarity of data and information does not require – actually, even rejects – the believed status of data and information. A new-born has before him data, which become information in their mental processing, but which do not transform into beliefs. The new-born does not believe anything: he tries to understand the data and information in order

to cope with his needs and environment and to maximize his pleasure to live. Consequently, he tries to know (to understand, as understanding and knowing was tantamount in the ancient tradition), he judges etc. Only after, so based on knowledge, begins he to *trust* his mother etc. (because he knows that she cares of him, caress him, with a word learned late, loves him).

This difference of the *logical analysis* gives *knowledge* the *priority* in cognitive modes and towards the states of thinking (just opposed to those who follow the post-war Anglophone tradition of believing is first, the problem being only to understand that truth is that which transforms a belief into knowledge[19]). Letting aside the above genetic example, "knowledge is first"[20] because it is "reproducible", i.e., it can be assumed *on logical basis* by other individuals, and obviously "repeatable" by the same subject in different contexts. These attributes borrowed from science suggest not only the fact that science is a model for knowledge but also that it's always on the basis of logical analysis of *proving* that we can delimit knowledge from opinions and from beliefs. Both opinions and beliefs are "replicable", able to be copied, but outside the process of logical scrutiny. Knowledge means that the thinker beings always can explain in their mind the proven logic of cognition. Even when they use a cognisance in a mechanical manner: in the last instance, they can explain in their mind why do they use it. So, they do not believe it: they know it positively.

Cognisance and the two forms of belief

By speaking about cognisance, we must not forget that they are the result of *data* processing in the mind, so of creating i*nformation*. Cognisance is information that is also treated *in mente* logically and thus that receives an *overall meaning*, beyond the meanings of information: thus, a truth-value. But since it's about data and information, we understand the *context dependence* of both of them and cognisance and that their relativity *does not dissolve the logical criteria of knowledge*.

The above pointing of data, information and cognisance allows us to understand that cognisance is a *system*: it is "a theory" because its overall meaning

[19] Birte Schelling, *Knowledge – Genetic Foundations and Epistemic Coherence*, Epistemische Studien, Band 23 / Volume 23, Frankfurt · Lancaster ·Paris · New Brunswick, Ontos Verlag, 2011.

[20] Clayton Littlejohn, "How and Why Knowledge is First", in J. Adam Carter, Emma C. Gordon, Benjamin Jarvis (Editors), *Knowledge First: Approaches in Epistemology and Mind*, Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 19-45.

encompasses the disparate meanings of information / propositions[21] it is constituted from. But the fact that it is a system means that there are two types of systems of cognisance: *proposition* and *theories* which are systems of information or propositions forming an outlook on a complicated state of things. And we must not confound the two types of cognisance, because the means in their proving are different. To proving a proposition involves the analysis of its internal coherence and correspondence with the facts it describes *hic et nunc*. To proving a theory means to add to the analysis of its internal coherence and correspondence with the facts it describes a larger temporal, informational and perspectival space: because otherwise the criterion of universality in proving is not met. We may base this claim on the negative of the above condition: if a theory is not proved "scientifically"/in the larger space without which one cannot "falsify" (Popper) it, it becomes a belief. And the coherence of a theory with circumscribed information does not mean that it is true, namely knowledge. Therefore, the single propositions / information which are members of a theory can be falsified in themselves and among them[22] – and thus they are cognisance, units of knowledge – but this does not entail that the theory as such is true, i.e., proven "all the way", so even by falsifying it.

Beliefs as a cover of cognisance

In its turn, belief – which is also context dependent – in the first instance, does not imply the analysis of the believed cognisance, thus neither of its meanings, they are taken for granted. In this respect, belief is either *assumption* of cognisance (belief as *credere*, to rely on, but not as faith, obviously) or its *confirmation* (belief as *convincere*, to win by proving): thus, a "measure" of cognisance, their quantitative evaluation, namely in proportions augmenting or minimizing till annulling them. I am convinced means that I assume the (high) quality of evidence of a certain cognisance. I believe in the sense of *credo* means that not this evidence is important for me, but only the content/the message of the cognisance. In this case, belief is less than knowledge, it is opinion. So, if we must not confuse the two meanings of belief, in both its forms it is a *cover*, an *envelope* of cognisance. This is the *strict* sense, putting beliefs as a mode of thinking: just by being a cover of cognisance, are beliefs not explainable in terms of truth and logical analysis, but in terms exterior

[21] Linguistically, logically and in the analytic tradition, information is proposition.

[22] But the coherence among propositions does not assure that their truth, their contents would correspond to the facts.

to them, determined by a big proportion of extra cognitive causes. They are *feelings involving an attitude towards cognisance*. Thus, strictly structurally, the belief is exterior to cognisance, while only in a *larger* sense is it a cognitive mode.

Beliefs as structural and conjunctural companions of knowledge

If the analytic sense of belief is that knowing something means *to confirm in one's mind* that fact – because only this sense of confirmation in one's mind means that this confirmation is always articulately expressed as propositions acknowledging something – it is the superficial, *weak*, let's say cliché language, namely vague, uniformisation sense. But the humans have developed in their practice strong senses of words, including by constructing new words, because they wanted to transmit the nuances, their internal attitudes towards the many different situations. Even in English one says "I am convinced…" – when he is – not vaguely, "I believe…". So, the continental philosophy brings in to the discussion about knowledge and belief just the strong senses of belief, as either *credere* or *convincere*. I am convinced, because I proved/it is proven. These two strong senses are superposing on each other but in the weakest sense: that when *credo* means *convincere*, and *convincere* means *credo*. But the special meanings of these words – which were constructed just to express these meanings – are just the special attitudes, to being convinced *or* to believe. By taking into account the strong senses, we are challenged to further inquiry their relations with truth, opinion, guessing, doubting, including in the analytic and logical ways.

Therefore, we can distinguish between the *structural* sense of belief – that by knowing we are aware of the cognisance and thus, of the real state of things, and we acknowledge them, but without being convinced of the truth of the cognisance or even without believing it – and the *conjuncture* (*hypothetical*) sense of special types of attitudes towards the cognisance that involve assumption of their truth in different degrees. The structural sense of belief is the *weak* one: knowing means believing but as a simple notice of cognisance and the facts they reflect. The hypothetical, special sense (of both *credere* and *convincere*) is *strong*.

The model of the child or of AI supports the above distinction. First, the information is taken over (is transmitted) and thus the acknowledgement state takes place. Then, the logic and reasons of information form and strengthen the beliefs of the child and the AI's information about the soundness and the soundness criteria of the information it receives.

The fact that I acknowledge in my mind something – in this sense can we understand the tradition of equivalence between *knowing that* and *truth* and *existence* / and *propositions*, this tradition being that which equates the hypothetical

beliefs and the structural ones, reducing the former to the latter– does not mean "a special form of belief" (that I am convinced or I believe) but on the contrary, a common misunderstanding of the difference between a commonplace equivalence of knowing and believing and indiscriminately treating the beliefs, and the necessary epistemological discrimination between the meanings of belief.

Only in the weak sense of belief the entailment thesis is correct. But in the strong senses – as *credo* or *convincere* – the entailment is only possible, but not inherent. I know something – I noticed in my mind that information – but I do not believe it; and conversely, I believe something but in fact I do not know it. And I know something but I am not convinced about it; or "I am convinced that" but I do not know it. And obviously, I believe something without it being true (so, obviously, without being justified. When I say that I know *I assume the truth* – so the *justification* of facts expressed by propositions – but in the specified senses of belief, I can both not assume the truth – *credo* and *certus sum*/*persuasum habeo* – and assume it.

Thus, in the weak sense of belief the entailment thesis is not a simple tautology, it is first of all, an *internal* – and in the inherent propositional form – *explanation* of *this* weak sense: that when I know I at the same time notice in my mind that information, and just this internal noticing transforms that information into my cognisance. While in the strong senses, there is certainly this constitutive entailment but further, related to the strong senses as such the entailment is, once more, only possible.

The weak sense of belief is like the "thin belief"[23] and the fact that there are two different kinds of beliefs (the weak and the strong), the weak one being a basic epistemic (i.e., mental logical check of the perception and representation) acknowledgement of the seen facts – irrespective if we see concrete or abstract ones – while the strong ones being superposed on the weak one, and thus on the knowledge we having, as attitudes towards this knowledge. Together they constitute a "deep awareness"[24] that explains why is so difficult to distinguish between the two kinds.

Therefore, by distinguishing between the different kinds of beliefs we also can better understand the interference of beliefs in the process of knowing. An argumentation may be rigorous, the conclusions being consistent with the rules of inference and the premises, but we feel that it is disputable. So, we do not think it is true. Why this? Because we consider that the premises themselves are not, we are not convinced about them. Thus, in our attitude towards the theory we deploy two beliefs: one related to premises and one related to the consistency of argumentation.

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[23] Wesley Buckwalter, David Rose, and John Turri. "Belief through Thick and Thin." *Noûs* 49 (4), 2015, pp. 748–75.

[24] As Neil Mehta formulates, http://www.profneilmehta.com/.

This simultaneity of beliefs explains why it is so difficult – and obviously, we consider here only the epistemological aspect – to think in a critical manner, that is to arrive to conclusions after critically judging the political standpoints and messages: because some aspects seem believable, while other one not.

The dialectic of knowledge and belief

1) However, if "knowledge is first", knowledge and belief are not mutually exclusive. The qualities of cognisance – its justification by their correspondence and coherence – do not necessarily involve to being believed. And, as above mentioned, knowledge is not definable in terms of beliefs. But: one can know and believe *at the same time*, in both forms of beliefs (I know theory X and I'm convinced about it; I believe – in the sense of *credere* – rather theory Y that I also know). I either believe or disbelieve, and I can feel both by knowing the objects of my feelings. As well as in a larger sense, we can consider that we start from beliefs which we then try to understand/scrutiny.

These *dialectical* situations of cognitive and thinking modes – they can be united but they can also diverge from each other, apparently taking over the priority, taking part of each other etc. – neither annul the core, the knowledge around which all states of mind spin, and impose to rethink their existing definitions. We need the discipline to construct structural-functional definitions – thus relative only to cognitive aspects of cognition. Anyway, we have to be both disciplined and, actually just from this aim, open to discuss the dialectic: the dynamic of modes and their intertwining, their contradictions, the criteria of analysis and also the criteria of the context dependent subjects, the awareness of cognitive and thinking modes, what the critical spirit in knowledge does mean.

And although the meanings of *dialectic* have appeared when discussing about Plato, we can encapsulate it as unity in/with difference and as dynamic unity of the contradictory.

2) Knowledge means known facts, i.e., certainty. The *anticipative* thinking is based on presumptions and probabilities; but also on some known facts, even though past ones or prerequisite secondary facts. But one can believe anticipations: consciously, as certainty of the *trends*, based on knowledge of probabilities, and not on indefeasible situations. Here, beliefs are no longer calm states of consciousness, noticing certain facts in front of which one is not even aware that one believes them – so are these facts assumed as certain – but enthusiastic impulses, driving forces of further research and understanding. In other words, the logic of knowledge, as

logic of certain facts, generates its own impetus to continue, while in the anticipative thinking this impetus is rather fuelled by beliefs, but obviously, not only by them.

The model of scientific research and knowledge helps us to understand the distinction between knowledge and beliefs. The epistemic starting point is the *hypotheses*, supported according to their level of plausibility. Here it's clear that the beliefs in hypotheses depends on their level of plausibility and follows the process of choices of hypotheses. The result of the scientific research is a multiply-verified *theory*/*knowledge* and thus, of certainty. The researchers know that this theory is context dependent (on the data and information etc. of the while), but this doesn't dissolve the certainty of the theory according to the present scientific context. They positively know it. Again, the belief follows the knowing. However, in order to endeavour scientific research, we need to *believe* the reasons-to-be of that research, its *telos* as the core ideas of its hypotheses, and the beauty (possibility and necessity) of the hard work of the research. But these beliefs, as their joy and worry, are exterior even to the believing of knowledge in the process of knowing.

The importance of the enthusiasm of the scientific research as such, of "believing" both the reason-to-be of a certain particular research and its paradigm as encompassing theory and research programme, must not be confused with the theory of equivalence of knowledge and belief. This warning is confirmed by those moments in the history of science when: 1. on the basis of experiments or a theory, a new unsuspected phenomenon is suggested to a scientific community; 2. the phenomenon is accepted by it with enthusiasm, whilst its basis is still unknown; 3. the theory of the new phenomenon becomes fashionable and is endorsed with unquestionable formulas.

However, the phenomenon is still unknown, or insufficiently known and the formulas appear to have contradictory consequences: they have an explaining role but at the same time, they close the phenomenon in the frame they edge. Consequently, they become dogmatic means to stop further inquiry of the phenomenon and, inherently, to go beyond their stakes.

3) An interesting aspect is that of "self-experiments" or self-studies. Here, we may surmise that both knowledge and beliefs are strengthened because of the most direct relationships within the proving process. And because the researcher is a human being, we may suppose that his beliefs are stronger than his knowledge and even determine this knowledge, preceding it and being tantamount to it. However, if we take the researcher as only a researcher, it's obvious that he knows that the theory resulted from his self-studies must be replicable, namely verifiable by other researchers, if he wants his theory to be really scientific, reliable, certain. Thus, again knowledge is stronger than the belief.

4) We must not forget that the analytic approach discusses propositions, thus not necessarily theories. When one discusses "All Cretans are liars", one knows (intuitively) that this is not true, so it's not the case to believe it. Moreover, if one knows that it's about a famous ancient example of logical paradoxes, the more so the speaker is "Cretan", one can believing that the discussion will turn toward paradoxes and, even though we do not know the subtleties, we nevertheless react when someone says "All Cretans are liars": "ah, a discussion about paradoxes will follow". We believe that the message of the proposition – which we know, and know that it is false – has the above significance, that it starts a discussion about paradoxes. Our belief that we know what it is about – although we do not really know the problem of paradoxes – is somewhat instead of knowledge.

But when it is about theories, or more exactly, about the making of theories, which involves more judgements, things are more complicated. We choose some *hypotheses* – from a previous state-of-the-art analysis of existing theories, hypotheses and proofs – and they seem to us plausible, perhaps even true. But we don't know exactly if they are true: we must use the specific scientific means (experiments etc.) in order to assume they are true, or not. Here, the belief precedes knowledge; and after the process of proving, the knowledge precedes the belief and determines it.

From a different standpoint, the analytic approach of propositions as "atoms" is certainly useful. And the propositional and formal methods force us to better understand the "nuances", namely the different situations of the relationships between knowledge and belief. However, just the axioms of the standard analytic approach[25] of the knowledge-belief problem, rather reducing the first item to the second should be rethought. In the analytic technical understanding, it is about propositional knowledge. Language mediates between the consciousness of humans and reality. In this approach, to know means to believe the proposition that expresses the real states of things. But whether I know that it's about a proposition – so, I know – I can doubt its content, so I do not believe it, but I believe I'm understanding why was it said. However, the intention condition of the speaker does not necessarily lead to the equivalence of knowledge and belief or to their opposition: anyway, it is *exterior* to the truth-value of the proposition stated by him. The same is with objective conditions. The proposition "it's five o'clock" is true when I do not know that my watch stopped yesterday just at five o'clock, so

[25] As shown in Jonathan Jenkins, Matthias Steup, *The Analysis of Knowledge*, 2017, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2019 edition), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/knowledge-analysis/; Eric Schwitzgebel, 'Belief'. In E. N. Zalta (ed.). *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2019 edition), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/belief/.

I believe it (I know what time is it), but my knowledge is false and opposed to my belief of the proposition.

More: the attitudes towards knowledge and any cognitive state are *exterior* to these states. I am *convinced that* – in propositional form, *p* – or I *believe that* means the attitude towards *p*, but *p* itself is true or false by its own epistemic structuring. My feelings that I believe *p* in a way or another are epistemologically *ulterior* to the internal logic of the proposition (that it is coherent in different degrees etc.). I know the facts described by *p*: that's all.

These dialectical situations led sometimes to confusions, but just this dialectic must be "dis-covered": as it was also in pages of the postwar analytic philosophy. The awareness of this dialectic protects us from inertia in the attitudes towards paradigms.

5) Both knowledge and belief have the same practical result, they both lead to action: and it is not necessary to pass from one another in order to pushing to act. One can act on the basis of knowing something, without being necessary to believe it, and one can act on the basis of believing something without knowing it really. And obviously, the same practical result is not tantamount to the same practical results.

6) The *complexity* problem: which are more complex, belief or knowledge? Some state that it is belief[26], because to believe something would mean to judge that information and to decide to believe it/which attitude toward that information one chooses. However, from the points of view of the above criteria, both are just as complex. If to believe X means that X meets the consistency criterion, the correspondence one – and many times even the coherence criterion – is tantamount to know it: we know something if our idea about it corresponds to the fact, and this correspondence allows its articulate description consistently, etc.

7) Knowledge entails belief in many cases, but not in all of them. One may believe something – as both *credo* and *convincere/persuasum habeo* – but this may not be on the basis of knowledge, i.e., of independent mental analysis and demonstration, but only on the basis of the *authority* that emitted the ideas. Thus, knowledge and belief are separated. Exclusive to each other? No, because the subject assumes the logic of the authority, and he "knows" and can reproduce *in mente* this logic, irrespective of its correctness. Anyway, in the authority argument belief is first: sometimes devoid of any knowledge, other times leading to it.

Psychology and neuro-psychology shed light on an interesting form of authority argument: that when the authority is our memory. We see something which we never saw before but which, inherently, resembles – or some aspects

[26] Monika Gruber, *Either you know or you've gotta believe*, Jun 1, 2023, https://www.qeios.com/read/IMUAZJ.

resemble – to known things, collected in our memory. And we say about the new thing: *déjà vu*. Neuro-physiology explains that the process of focusing on something engages the activation of networks of information in order to compare the new thing with the existing knowledge, as a normal checking[27] and our reaction is only the articulation of this moment. Or, on the contrary, we see something which we already saw and we become confuse and say: *jamais vu*. The unfamiliarity manifests through the difficulty to put the thing in relation with different familiar categories of things (information) and thus to articulate it[28].

8) But letting aside the authority conjuncture, the relationship between knowledge and belief is more complicated than we suppose on the basis that knowledge means logical analysis and the discernment of truth. One can believe false ideas, why – is the business of sociology of cognition, but epistemologically this occurs because *to know is tantamount to believe in the structural unity of these processes*: as having information and believing it; in other words, only by reasoning one arrives to true conclusions and obviously, one believes them. However, this equivalence is doubtful if we universalize it. Georg Simmel has showed that in knowledge (theories, deployment of theories) there are, apart from explicit propositions, some implicit ones, implicit suppositions, and people do not control them (they are not aware/fully aware of them)[29]: that is, the conclusions may be false even though the explicit premises and the reasoning with explicit premises are correct. Another case is the existence of polythetic notions[30]: they are not simply polysemic, but notions which have one meaning but it is used in more and different meanings by people (and by researchers) in dialoguing. Thus, everyone thinks that the interlocutor uses the same meanings as himself/herself, and obviously the result is not only a dialogue of the deaf but also inadvertences between conclusions from the same premises. One may believe the conclusions by supposing that they refer to the same theory/the same meanings of concepts, but in fact the theory is given by those who assume other meanings.

When we think we focus our attention on something (this is Brentano's and Husser's intentionality) which we know at least a little part of it, even though we do not know the rest – we try to understand the thing by comparing or relating it to

[27] Radka Jersakova, Chris Moulin, Akira Robert O'Connor, "Investigating the role of assessment method on reports of déjà vu and tip-of-the-tongue states during standard recognition tests", *Plos One*, Volume 11, Issue 4, 2016, e0154334.

[28] Chris J.A. Moulin et al., "The the the the induction of jamais vu in the laboratory: word alienation and semantic satiation", *Memory*, Volume 29, Issue 7, 2021, pp. 933-942.

[29] Georg Simmel, *The Problems of the Philosophy of History: An Epistemological Essay.* (1892/1905), Translated and edited by Guy Oakes. New York, Free Press, 1877, p. 46.

[30] Raymond Boudon, *L'art de se persuader des idées douteuses, fragiles ou fausses*, Paris, Fayard, 1990.

some known facts, be they part of it and/ or distinct facts –. We are curious about the thing, or we focus on a thing that actually we do not know but we believe it. (Or) we recollect our memories about it, including doubts or our more or less enthusiastic support, fully believing it. We may remember our false opinions about the thing and the tumultuous history of our revisions and change of opinions: now we know all of that and certainly being convinced about them. While when our present opinions are false, we believe them, indeed.

Or, when we know how – at the superficial level of acknowledging this because we saw the steps to doing something or we retained them because we were told or we read, so because the know-how was formulated in our mind as propositions – it's clear that we believe these steps in both the structural meaning of belief as structurally united with knowing and the conjunctural meaning (in both varieties); and it's not necessary to have the ability to perform these steps[31].

Briefly – and although the sense of belief as *credo* can be tantamount with *persuasum habeo*, i.e., I am convinced that – belief as conviction is the inherent follow-up of knowledge where to know involves the understanding of logic and reasons of an idea; while belief as *credo* is rather anterior to an information, and also ulterior to it.

Instead of conclusions

I conclude in a sociological note. The emphasis of beliefs indiscriminately in the definition of knowledge is a *contemporary* pendant of the contemporary *dominant* praxis of creating knowledge, and it is opposed to the ancient tradition of understanding knowledge as distinct from belief. This praxis is viewed in the natural and "exact" sciences, too, but it is specific to the humanities and, obviously, to the social-political formation of common conscience. This core idea doesn't exclude the history of complexity in the definitions of truth: that, for instance, the truths are constructed (as the beliefs are) and that the consequences of this construction and specifically of beliefs retroactively configure the truth and knowledge. Simply my note reverberates the feeling that the theoretical equivalence of truth and beliefs and knowledge and beliefs, so a kind of reduction to beliefs, an epistemological relativism, could be a theoretical legitimation and can be used as a legitimation of the political practice of forging the general beliefs of people, of moral relativism.

[31] John Bengson, Mark. A. Moffett & Jennifer C. Wright, "The Folk on Knowing How", *Philosophical Studies* 142:3, 2009, pp. 387-401; Michael Brownstein & Eliot Michaelson, "Doing Without Believing: Intellectualism, Knowledge-How, and Belief-Attribution", *Synthese*, 193(9), 2016, pp. 2815-2836.

This "ideological" observation did not forbid me to insist that strictly, the *definition of knowledge is based on epistemic elements and is constructed in strict epistemological frame*. While holistically or within the system of thinking, and more, within the system of consciousness, knowledge is constructed as a result of all types of information and influences: but it cannot be defined by these influences[32]. If so, strictly, belief is not a cognitive element, that is, *sine qua non* for knowledge. It is only an element of thinking. Whilst knowledge is a cognitive element that is the reference of the belief, i.e., of the attitudes towards knowledge. *Epistemologically*, and obviously letting aside any philosophical tradition[33], the thesis of distinction between knowledge and belief is justified. The weak sense of belief – that it is a structural cover of cognisance, a notice of cognisance but not a judgement on and attitude towards them – helps us to understand that the strong sense (as *credere* or *convincere*) cannot be confused with this weak sense, and thus that beliefs cannot be treated out of order. Knowledge, i.e., the understanding of logic and reason of cognisance and facts, is not based on belief and the belief has as "substrate" different forms of knowledge (knowledge, ignorance, opinion, false opinion etc.). Only *broadly culturally*, the belief can be "the basis" of any knowing, thus having the role of knowledge.

Are there differences between the colloquial sense of (some) words – here *belief*, but also *knowledge* and *truth* – and the technical analytic sense? And is this analytic approach equivalent to the modal logic treatment? Concerning this last question, it is obvious that there is no equivalence: essentially, epistemology treats cognition beyond the logical formalization, but with its help. While regarding the first question, as long as the technical analytic discussion of these words gives examples, in fact problems, from the real world, it's difficult to consider that the research of these problems would solve something without taking into account aspects emphasized outside the analytic approach[34]. Because the *system* here is not

[32] George Boger, "Subordinating Truth – Is *Acceptability* Acceptable?", *Argumentation*, 19, 2005, pp. 187-238.

[33] As in the important paper of Maria Rosa Antognazza, "The distinction in kind between knowledge and belief". Meeting of the Aristotelian Society held online on 18 May 2020, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 2020, Vol. cxx, Part 3. But see before, Theoni Anastassopoulou-Kapogianni, "The Evolutionary Conception of Knowledge: A Reference to Ancient and Modern Views", in *Greek Philosophy and Epistemology*, Volume II, Edited by Konstantine Boudouris, Athens, International Center for Greek Philosophy and Culture & K.B., 2001, pp. 11-18.

[34] Contrary to Miesko Tałasiewicz, Review of: Either you know or you've gotta believe, Jun 14, 2023, https://doi.org/10.32388/7A2O6U: "epistemologists should not be too quick to use linguistic intuitions derived from phraseological associations and not rely on bon-mots and untranslatable puns of one language or another".

that of analytic philosophy – or that of continental philosophy – but just the end, the question of knowledge and belief. If we treat it exclusively in the frame of analytic philosophy, we risk to be opaque towards aspects shown by continental philosophy, so we narrow the answer to the question.

If in many cases knowledge entails belief – as *convincere* – this entailment is not universal: because, we must not forget, beliefs are attitudes towards knowledge and these attitudes may miss. Simply, "I know this" and this acknowledgement is enough for me as grounding of my following thoughts and actions. While in other cases, I feel the need to express my assessment of cognisance: "I believe….", either as "I am convinced of" or "I think that… (*credo*).

However, why this? Because beliefs are attitudes and as such, they involve the awareness by the subject of his assessment. "He believes…", not simply knows. It is possible that concrete attitudes as beliefs be so internalised that they are unconscious, but ultimately, they are based on conscious feelings. "I know" is a simple noticing of the cognitive relation. "I believe" is a conscious assessment of the level of knowledge. And to changing the perspective against the mechanical assumption of equivalence of knowledge and beliefs means to understand just the dialectic and the historical reasons-to-be of their relations.

The intentions of people manifest in their words. They say, strictly epistemologically – and regardless here of clichés, or of extra cognitive, moral intentions, or of euphemistic expressions just of doubts – "I believe", in both its meanings, because their intention is not to noticing something by showing that they know it, but to express the exaltation of their feelings towards the facts.

By speaking about beliefs, one sheds the light of doubts regarding the definition of knowledge, and this is very good. Cognisance is information about the state of things, but since we witness doubtful information and clear-cut extra epistemic forces constructing it and imposing it as an undisputable belief, then once more it is necessary to question both the epistemic and extra epistemic aspects of knowledge and to endeavour to understand the peculiarity of epistemic aspects. And this doesn't mean to plunge in an infinite vicious circle: the *limits* between epistemic and extra epistemic aspects are not absolute – and what we should do is just to face the limits and to approach them dialectically – but we do this in an ordered way, in a scientific one, where the logic of excluded middle treats the many included ones.

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The Grammar of Faith. Ludwig Wittgenstein on Madness and Religious Faith

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ABSTRACT. Ludwig Wittgenstein repeatedly called religion and faith "madness", "folly", etc. However, this does not mean that he considered it irrational or meaningless. Rather, he saw in it a way of thinking and speaking, a "language-game", that was not explicitly rational, but nevertheless meaningful, and in which there were "entirely different connections" than normal between individual statements. Nor can the language of faith be regarded as conventional, according to Wittgenstein, even if approached from the point of view of the nature of the statements it contains. If, for example, we think that theological statements are factual statements (as if they refer only to existing things or objects), then this language immediately becomes meaningless. The aim of my study is to analyze the "grammar" of this language (the language of faith or religion), using Wittgenstein's notes from different times, paragraphs of his published works, comments made during university lectures, etc., and to describe the correct use of words in it.

Keywords: Wittgenstein, madness, religious faith, language-game

Before I write anything about Wittgenstein, let me quote one of his notes from 1947: "Am I the only one who cannot found a school or can a philosopher never do this? I cannot found a school because I do not really want to be imitated. Not at any rate by those who publish articles in philosophical journals."[1] Wittgenstein

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[1] Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Culture and Value* (edited by G. H. von Wright, translated by Peter Winch), The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1980, 61e. It is likely that Wittgenstein wrote his note in response to a personal experience mentioned by Norman Malcolm in his memoir: "Wittgenstein was almost as much angered by imperfect representation of his thoughts as by the plagiarism of

therefore did not want to be imitated, especially by those who wrote articles for philosophical journals. (By the way, he was convinced that there was more wisdom in an ordinary crime novel than in all the volumes of *Mind*.) He probably wouldn't have liked to know that long, tedious studies would be written about him after his death.[2] If, therefore, I do not wish to be disgraceful, I must say that what follows below is not intended to be a study about Wittgenstein, but rather an attempt to organize his thoughts on religion and belief from different times (individual paragraphs of his works, notes, thoughts expressed in lectures, etc.), with the hope that they will show us some kind of a unified train of thought in their fragmentation and dispersion. Of course, I also know that Wittgenstein himself never tried or wanted to form them into a unified whole.

What is normal and what is not?

The first question that anyone who sees this title will probably ask is how these two are connected: insanity and religion, madness and faith. The explanation can be found in one of Wittgenstein's remarks, written in 1931: "Religion as madness is a madness springing from irreligiousness."[3] But years later, he still says in a lecture on religious faith (presumably in 1938) that anyone reading Paul's letters will find that they not only say that faith is not rational, but that it is "folly".[4] It is not

them. He told me of an incident involving a young lady who had attended his lectures. She wrote an article which was intended to present Wittgenstein's views on a certain topic. She submitted it to Moore, the editor of *Mind*, and also showed it to Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein thought it was very bad and told her she *could not* publish it. When she persisted in her intention to publish it, Wittgenstein went to Moore to persuade him not to print it. He said to Moore: 'You attended those lectures. You know that her account on them is bad'. According to Wittgenstein, Moore admitted that 'It wasn't good', but was not dissuaded from publishing the piece. It was clear to me that Wittgenstein had been very much vexed and excited by this incident." Norman Malcolm: *Ludwig Wittgenstein. A Memoir* (*With a Biographical Sketch by G. H. von Wright*), Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2001, 50.

2 Of course, we do not have to accept Wittgenstein's dismal opinion of those who "publish articles in philosophical journals". The truth is that after his death, but especially from the '70s onwards, many excellent studies and even several independent volumes were written on Wittgenstein's philosophical views on religion. Probably the most important of these is D. Z. Phillips' now classic book, which is in fact a collection of studies: *Wittgenstein and Religion*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1993. Although it is true that it is still controversial in many respects, this book, especially its chapter titled: *Religious Beliefs and Language Games* (a study originally published in 1970), did much to popularize Wittgenstein's philosophical views on religion.

3 Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Culture and Value*, 13e.

4 Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief* (edited by Cyril Barrett), University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967, 58.

only that faith is not rational, but that it does not claim to be of that nature. Religion and faith, then, at least in Wittgenstein's understanding, are a kind of madness, a form of foolishness, and it is most characteristic that for Wittgenstein this raises above all a methodological question, the question of *understanding*: how can one understand madness? Is it understandable at all? – Let me add right away that although the question or the direction of the question may be purely methodological, dealing with madness is still a "personal matter" for Wittgenstein – just like pretty much every other topic was deeply personal for him.[5] In 1946, for example, he wrote: "I am often afraid of madness."[6] Two years earlier, he had formulated the same idea with almost aphoristic demand and persuasive power: "If in life we are surrounded by death, so too in the health of our intellect we are surrounded by madness."[7]

Nevertheless, it is a fact that his question about madness, however personal it may have been to him, is purely methodological: how can one understand madness? To answer, as so often, Wittgenstein clings to the ideas of others, but only to refute them. In this case, his starting point is one of Freud's thoughts, whom he did not particularly admire: "Freud writes excellently and it is a pleasure to read him, but his writing is never *great*."[8] Freud's relevant thought, at least in the form Wittgenstein understood it (and recorded for himself in 1938), is as follows: "Freud's idea: In madness the lock is not destroyed, only altered; the old key can no longer unlock it, but it could be opened by a differently constructed key."[9] Is this true? – Wittgenstein asks. Is what Polonius said about Hamlet true, that "Though this be madness, yet there is method in't".? When do we say people go mad, and when do we say that they act normally?

This is a question that Wittgenstein explores in his 1945 work *Philosophical Investigations*, published only after his death. In order to better understand the following ideas, it is necessary to know that for Wittgenstein (who also taught for a short period at an elementary school in Trattenbach in the early 1920s, including mathematics, while hitting and beating children), human behavior is basically a rule-abiding behavior acquired by "training"; through this training we learn to play

5 As Wright puts it in his brief biographical sketch to Malcolm's memoir: "It is probably true that he [Wittgenstein] lived on the border of mental illness. A fear of being driven across it followed him throughout his life." Norman Malcolm: *Ludwig Wittgenstein. A memoir (With a Biographical Sketch by G. H. von Wright)*, 4.

6 Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Culture and Value*, 53e.

7 Idem, 44e.

8 Idem, 87e.

9 Idem, 33e.

certain "language-games" (we learn to follow certain language rules in our lives).[10] It is no coincidence that Wittgenstein, in order to give an example in his *Philosophical Investigations* to illustrate the difference between normal and abnormal behavior, chooses a situation of teaching someone mathematics, the *language-game* of mathematics (§ 143):

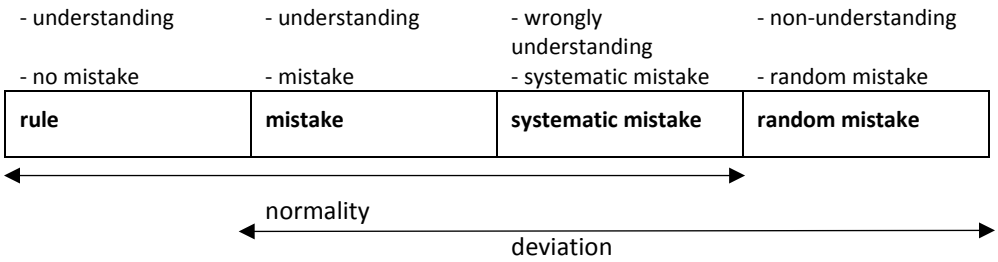
> "Let's now examine the following kind of language-game: when A gives an order, B has to write down series of signs according to a certain formation rule. Let the first of these series be that of the natural numbers in the decimal system. – How does he come to understand this system? First of all, series of numbers are written down for him, and he is required to copy them. (Don't balk at the expression 'series of numbers'; it is not being used wrongly here.) And here already there is a normal and an abnormal learner's reaction. – At first, perhaps, we guide his hand in writing out the series 0 to 9; but then the *possibility of communication* will depend on his going on to write it down by himself. – And here we may imagine, for example, that he does copy the figures by himself, but not in the right order: he writes sometimes one, sometimes another, at random. And at *that* point communication stops. – Or again, he makes '*mistakes*' in the order. – The difference between this and the first case will of course be one of frequency. – Or he makes a *systematic* mistake; for example, he copies every other number, or he copies the series 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, … like this: 1, 0, 3, 2, 5, 4, … . Here we shall almost be tempted to say that he has understood us *wrongly*. Notice, however, that there is no sharp distinction between a random and a systematic mistake. That is, between what you are inclined to call a 'random' and what a 'systematic' one. Perhaps it is possible to wean him from the systematic mistake (as from a bad habit). Or perhaps one accepts his way of copying and tries to teach him the normal one as an offshoot, a variant of his. – And here too, our pupil's ability to learn may come to an end."[11]

Assuming that rule-abiding behavior is what can be called "normal" and irregular is what is called "abnormal", then the main message of Wittgenstein's example is that

[10] Fania Pascal, who taught Wittgenstein Russian in the '30s and to whom he once gave a lengthy confession about one of the incidents in which he beat a little girl, recalls it as the most disturbing part of the confession. As he spoke, she says, Wittgenstein apparently had little control over himself, and that he experienced the incident (he hit the little girl who went to complain to the headmaster, but he denied it) as an early crisis in his "manhood", as an exceptional "trauma" — although it is not entirely clear from the account whether physical aggression was his real trauma or the fact that he lied about it. In any case, Pascal argues, this was the incident that led Wittgenstein to "give up teaching, perhaps made him realize that he ought to live as a solitary". (Rush Rhees (ed.): *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1984, 37-38.)

[11] Ludwig Wittgenstein*: Philosophical Investigations* (translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte), Blackwell, Oxford, 2009, 62e-63e.

there is "no sharp distinction" between the two: the difference between what is simply a mistake and what we call a "random" mistake consists only in the frequency of mistakes; similarly, there is no sharp distinction between "systematic" and "random" mistakes. In other words, there is no sharp distinction between normal and abnormal, so we can never say exactly when we crossed the "border" of normality; exactly how far what we call normal human behavior extends and where madness begins. Graphically, perhaps this whole idea could be illustrated as follows:



The other message of this example is that if someone makes mistakes too often, if he keeps making mistakes, it indicates that he is unable to master the language-game we are trying to teach him. This is called deviation, madness, mental disturbance, which we can try to describe or "diagnose" "from the outside" but, as we will see later, there is no common ground for *understanding* it.

In Wittgenstein's other posthumous work, *On Certainty*, we find a very similar example, which no longer relates to "training" to rule-abiding behavior and deviation from the rule, but specifically to mental disturbance, but which Wittgenstein approaches from the same point of view of "error" and "mistake". The example found in § 67 is as follows:

> "Could we imagine a man who keeps on making mistakes where we regard a mistake as ruled out, and in fact never encounter one? E.g. he says he lives in such and such a place, is so and so old, comes from such and such a city, and he speaks with the same certainty (giving all the tokens of it) as I do, but he is wrong. But what is his relation to this error? What am I to suppose?"[12]

Continuation of the example in § 71:

[12] Ludwig Wittgenstein: *On Certainty* (edited by G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, translated by Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe), Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1969, 11e.

> "If my friend were to imagine one day that he had been living for a long time past in such and such a place, etc. etc., I should not call this a *mistake*, but rather a mental disturbance, perhaps a transient one."[13]

Finally, the conclusion of the reasoning in § 73 and 74:

> "But what is the difference between mistake and mental disturbance? Or what is the difference between my treating it as a mistake and my treating it as mental disturbance?"
> "Can we say: a *mistake* doesn't only have a cause, it also has a ground? I.e., roughly: when someone makes a mistake, can be fitted into what he knows aright."[14]

The bottom-line, then, is that my *reaction* to mistakes and mental disturbance will be different: I will teach the former, that is, the one who is merely wrong, because error can still be inserted into the basis of one's right knowledge – but not the latter. In the former case, we can still explain where he was wrong, and the person will probably admit that he was wrong: the possibility of such mistakes is included in all language-games (as the possibility of deviating from the rule), they are part of the *nature* of language-games, because all language-games are based on the fact that it makes sense to talk about correct knowledge and error.

The question then arises, what should religion be regarded: mistake or mental disturbance? It seems that for Wittgenstein it is neither this nor that. Rather, it is a form of thinking that is not reasonable but nevertheless *meaningful*, although it is characterized by a specific logic of internal connections. In his lectures on religious faith, he illustrates this with the following example: suppose, he says, that we arrive on an island, and we observe that the people who live there have different faiths, some of which we would be inclined to call "religious"; the people who live there make various statements, some of which seem to us to be religious statements. The point, Wittgenstein argues, is that they differ from statements reflecting other beliefs not only because of their *subject*, but in fact it is the "entirely different connections" between the statements that make them religious.[15] – And there will be situations, he adds, when we simply won't be able to decide whether it's a religious belief or simply some kind of erroneous opinion. In some situations we will say that indigenous people "reason wrongly", and in other situations we will say that they "don't reason at all"; or, possibly, "'it is an entirely different kind of reasoning'" from ours.[16] The first

[13] Idem.
[14] Idem.
[15] Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, 58.
[16] Idem.

we would say if their reasoning resembled ours and they made mistakes similar to ours, because every error, says Wittgenstein, is a mistake in one system (just as what is a misdemeanor in one game is not a misdemeanor in another). Or we could say (and this would be the second situation) that "where we are reasonable, they are not" – which would mean that "they don't use reason here".[17]

If we take the latter as Wittgenstein's final word on this issue, we might conclude that for him religion is a peculiar, explicitly non-rational way of thinking, which does not mean that it is "meaningless" or "irrational". On the contrary, he, as he mentions later, considered "unreasonable" precisely those attempts which aimed to rationalize the otherwise non-rational faith (he mentions by name a certain Father O'Hara as a representative of this aspiration).[18] Another idea that comes up in this example is that it is not always easy to distinguish between belief and erroneous opinion, and that it is more difficult to do so the more a system of belief resembles our rational thinking. It also follows (Wittgenstein dwells on this idea at length earlier) that if something can only be clearly identified as a religious belief if it *differs* from our rational thinking, then it is inherently impossible to argue with it in a rational way of debating. "These controversies", Wittgenstein says, referring to the controversies that believers have with non-believers, "look quite different from any normal controversies. Reasons look entirely different from normal reasons. They are, in a way, quite inconclusive. The point is that if there were evidence, this would in fact destroy the whole business."[19] So if faith is not rational, we can hardly rationally argue for it, and if there were evidence, there would be no faith.

Another alternative worth exploring (assuming we start from Freud's hypothesis that there is a "key" to madness) is whether what we call rule-abiding (i.e., normal) behavior can be *private*, so to speak. Is it possible for a rule to be followed by only one person and only once in life? Or, in other words: what do we accept as rule-abiding behavior? Where is the line between rule-abiding and non-abiding behavior? Can every action be described as rule-abiding behavior? (For example, when someone randomly copies numbers, can we say that he still follows a rule but only follows it once?) The whole question, which Wittgenstein also explores quite lengthy in his *Philosophical Investigations*, concerns the issue of so-called "private language", and this is probably one of the most famous and controversial arguments in this work.

[17] Idem, 59.
[18] Idem.
[19] Idem, 56.

In § 199, he states:

> "Is what we call 'following a rule' something that it would be possible for only *one* person, only *once* in a lifetime, to do? – And this is, of course, a gloss on the *grammar* of the expression 'to follow a rule'."[20]

And Wittgenstein's answer, of course, is *no*:

> "It is not possible that there should have been only one occasion on which only one person followed a rule. It is not possible that there should have been only one occasion on which a report was made, an order given or understood, and so on. – To follow a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are *customs* (usages, institutions). To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to have mastered a technique."[21]

It is therefore not possible, Wittgenstein argues, for someone to speak a "private" language, because to understand a language is to learn and master a technique, that is, to follow certain human habits and institutions – and precisely because they are institutions, language-games cannot be private in nature.
A few paragraphs later, in 206, he writes:

> "Following a rule is analogous to obeying an order. One is trained to do so, and one reacts to an order in a particular way. But what if one person reacts to the order and training *thus*, and another *otherwise*? Who is right, then? Suppose you came as an explorer to an unknown country with a language quite unknown to you. In what circumstances would you say that the people there gave orders, understood them, obeyed them, rebelled against them, and so on? Shared human behavior is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language."[22]

The same thought in *On Certainty* (§ 254): "Any 'reasonable' person behaves like *this.*"[23] Thus, we can understand a language unknown to us only by referring it to a *common* human way of acting (i.e., the way in which all "reasonable" people behave), so we would not have a common "system of reference" for understanding a private language. That is why I said earlier that although we can try to describe or diagnose mental disorder or disturbance from the outside, we would lack a common system of reference (a common ground) to understand it.

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[20] Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigations*, 87e.
[21] Idem.
[22] Idem, 88e.
[23] Ludwig Wittgenstein: *On Certainty*, 33e.

Wittgenstein's position, in short, is that individual and one-time rule obeying cannot be called rule obeying: there is no such thing as private language, a game that is played by only one person and only once. A language without rules cannot be called a language because a rule cannot be followed only once. – There is therefore no "method" in madness, it has no language that we can understand, because a language (being an institution) can only be understood based on a common human way of acting: that is, on the ground of how *reasonable* people behave. This is, then, Wittgenstein's answer to Freud: madness has no internal system, we cannot understand it, we do not have a "key", so to speak, with which we could "unlock" it.

The grammar of faith

But how does this relate to the problem of religion and faith? To answer this question, we should perhaps turn to one of Wittgenstein's aphorisms, which is the last entry in *Zettel* (§ 717): "'You can't hear God speak to someone else, you can hear him only if you are being addressed'. –That is a grammatical remark."[24] But if this is a grammatical remark, as Wittgenstein claims, then it tells us that the language of faith is the *par excellence* private language: you do not hear God speak to others. And yet, unlike madness, we tend to regard the language of religion as meaningful. So how can this language be meaningful, what exactly is the *grammar* of this language? Because, once again, even though it is private, we tend to think that this language is meaningful. (How do we know, for example, that Abraham really heard God's voice and was not just a madman trying to murder his son Isaac? – because we do not hear God speak to someone else, so we do not hear Him speak to Abraham either.)

As a guide to the grammar of this language, that is, the language of faith, and the correct use of words in this specific language-game, we can perhaps take one of Wittgenstein's notes from the *Philosophical Investigations* (§ 373): "Grammar tells what kind of object anything is. (Theology as grammar.)"[25] Theology, then, is a kind of grammar (i.e., it describes only the rules of the language of faith), and this grammar itself tells us where the "objects" spoken of in the language of faith can be classified. This time, Wittgenstein's idea is difficult (or mysterious), so I must turn for help to the study of the late Robert L. Arrington: *Theology as Grammar* (which is an excellent study, whatever Wittgenstein thought of those publishing articles in philosophical journals). According to Arrington, the meaning of the idea is as

[24] Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Zettel* (edited by G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe), University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967, 124e.

[25] Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigations*, 123e.

follows: if we take the language of theology as a *descriptive* language, if we think that theology speaks of existing things or objects (i.e., it is not mere grammar), then this language immediately becomes meaningless – and not necessarily because God is not an "object". Indeed, statements that theologians usually make (such as "God exists" or "God is love") turn out to be meaningless not only when applied to a thing or object called God, but also when they are treated as factual (or descriptive) statements at all. The problem, then, is not only that God is not an object, but also that no statement about God is a factual statement.[26] (That is, it is completely irrelevant whether God is considered an object or a person here: the word "God", says Wittgenstein, in his lectures on religion, "is amongst the earliest learnt – pictures and catechisms, etc. […] The word is used like a word representing a person. God sees, rewards, etc." But "if the question arises as to the existence of a god or God, it plays an entirely different role to that of the existence of any person or object I ever heard of".[27] So the statement that "God exists" has a completely different grammatical status from those that refer to the existence of some object or person known to us.)

These statements, Arrington argues, are not factual statements about some object or person named God, but rather "grammatical remarks expressing rules for the use of theological terms in everyday religious discourse".[28] They show us how the word "God" must be used correctly in the language or language-game of religious faith. "One is simply not talking of God if there is any question about his existence, if, that is to say, it makes sense to wonder *whether* he exists."[29] For the believer, God exists by definition, and the word God he uses, says Arrington, is such that (at least in Christianity) it is immediately associated with the concept of "love". Thus, "God is love" is not a factual statement, but a grammatical remark that shows one of the rules for using the word God. (Such as statements like "I am a sinner", "God loves me", "God had a purpose in taking this child", which show us only the rules for using the words like "sin", "God", etc.) "These rules constitute or create the language of religious belief."[30]

So, there is nothing wrong with the language of theology, Arrington adds, and there is nothing wrong "precisely because it consists of a set of rules for the proper employment of religious terms".[31] (It also follows that one can *err* in the use

[26] See Robert L. Arrington: *'Theology as Grammar' Wittgenstein and some critics*, in: Robert L. Arrington and Mark Addis (editors): *Wittgenstein and Philosophy of Religion*, Routledge, London and New York, 2001, 167-183, 172.

[27] Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, 59.

[28] Robert L. Arrington: *'Theology as Grammar' Wittgenstein and some critics*, 172.

[29] Idem.

[30] Idem.

[31] Idem.

of religious expressions – and if one can err, then the language of faith cannot be private in the first place. We could even say that Wittgenstein (re)discovers here a paradoxical feature of the nature of faith that has long been known, namely that it is both deeply personal and yet *common*.) There would be a problem with this language, Arrington continues, only if the theologian believed that he was making factual statements about God, because in that case he would not be a theologian, but "a metaphysician who had confused grammatical and factual investigations".[32] There is therefore nothing wrong with theology, as long as it is merely grammar. Similarly, there is nothing wrong with an atheist (or, as Arrington calls it, an "atheologian") saying "God does not exist", as long as it is merely a grammatical rule statement that tells us that he is playing a language-game in which the use of the word God is meaningless: there are no rules for the use of the word God in this language. "But the atheologian would be making a confused metaphysical claim if he thought he was giving us a truth about the world: in fact there is no God. He would be confusing grammatical and factual assertions."[33]

However, according to Arrington, "the fact that theological statements are grammatical ones does not entail that all religious statements are factual, descriptive ones".[34] (Descriptive in the sense that they merely express some grammatical rule.) "Some may be – for example, 'I am a sinner' and 'God loves me', and 'God had a purpose in taking this child' – but others, many others, will be prescriptive in nature, giving one edicts for how to live one's life."[35] And by considering them central to religious life, Arrington adds, "Wittgenstein is simply saying that 'living a certain kind of life' is at the heart of religious discourse and action – *not* an investigation into or speculation about the nature of the world".[36]

And here again it is worth pausing and lingering for a moment, because this question (i.e. "what does it mean to believe?", "what does it mean to live a religious life?") is undoubtedly the most important question of Wittgenstein's reflections on the philosophy of religion, and as such it is again deeply personal, as evidenced by several of his notes in *Culture and Value*. It seems, then, that Wittgenstein was looking for faith, looking for ways to reach the state of faith – at least some of his remarks suggest something like this. His best-known and probably most quoted note in this respect is from 1947:

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[32] Idem. A reference to *Zettel* § 458 (82e), where Wittgenstein writes that "the essential thing about metaphysics: it obliterates the distinction between factual and conceptual investigations".

[33] Idem.

[34] Idem, 173.

[35] Idem.

[36] Idem.

> "It strikes me that a religious belief could only be something like a passionate commitment to a system of reference. Hence, although it's *belief*, it's really a way of living, or a way of assessing life. It's passionately seizing hold of *this* interpretation. Instruction in a religious faith, therefore, would have to take the form of a portrayal, a description, of that system of reference, while at the same time being an appeal to conscience. And this combination would have to result in the pupil himself, of his own accord, passionately taking hold of the system of reference. It would be as though someone were first to let me see the hopelessness of my situation and then show me the means of rescue until, of my own accord, or not at any rate led to it by my *instructor*, I ran to it and grasped it."[37]

The same idea in another, otherwise beautiful, aphoristic formulation back in 1945:

> "It is as though I had lost my way and asked someone the way home. He says he will show me and walks with me along a nice smooth path. This suddenly stops. And now my friend tells me: 'All you have to do now is find your way home from here'."[38]

And finally, one more note from 1946:

> "I believe that one of the things Christianity says is that sound doctrines are all useless. That you have to change your *life*. (Or the *direction* of your life.)"[39]

Wittgenstein thus seemingly have believed that the language of faith (or the language of "instruction" in religious faith) was only partly constituted by what he called the description of the "system of reference", that is, the description or "portrayal" of basic grammatical rules. (We could say in other words: theology.) Because, on the other hand, this language is "appeal to conscience", a "prescriptive" way of speaking, which must achieve that we "taking hold" of this system of reference with passion and of our own accord, and navigate the world accordingly; to play this language-game, and thus to change our whole lives. Because, once one accepts that "God exists" as the basic rule of grammar (which is in fact a pleonasm or tautology), then he will use all his other statements about the world according to this grammar. Similarly, if a person accepts that one of the basic grammatical rules for using the word God is "God is love", then he will presumably live his whole life in that spirit. The believer's faith, says Wittgenstein, will not manifest itself in various lines of thought or in ordinary references to the foundations of faith, "but rather by

[37] Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Culture and Value*, 64e.
[38] Idem, 46-47e.
[39] Idem, 53e.

regulating for in all his life".[40] Arrington is probably right, then, when he stresses that, for Wittgenstein, the essence of religion or belief is not some inquiry or speculation, but a way of life, which Wittgenstein calls "a way of living", a changed "direction" of our lives, etc. – He allegedly once told his friend Drury (who wanted to be a theologian at that time) that "if you and I are to live a religious life, it mustn't be that we talk a lot about religion, but that our manner of life is different".[41]

It is important to add that, according to Wittgenstein, the language of religion isn't descriptive not only in the sense that it only describes rules of language, but also in the sense that it merely reports some historical events: for example, what the historical Jesus said and did. Because no historical report can ground the Christian faith adequately, given that the kind of "indisputability" that normally characterizes historical facts would hardly be enough to change our entire lives. Christianity, then, says Wittgenstein in his lectures on religious faith, "doesn't rest on an historic basis in the sense that the ordinary belief in historic facts could serve as a foundation". "Here we have a belief in historic facts different from a belief in ordinary historic facts. Even, they are not treated as historical, empirical, propositions. Those people who had faith didn't apply the doubt, which would ordinarily apply to *any* historical propositions. Especially propositions of a time long past, etc."[42]

The language of faith, then, is not merely the language of the historical accounts of the Gospels, and if this is so, it also follows, somewhat astonishingly, that the foundation of the Christian faith would not be shaken even if historians proved that not a word of the Gospels was true in the *historical* sense. Because Christianity, once again, is not based on a shared belief in events that have taken place a long time ago. "Queer as it sounds: The historical accounts in the Gospels might, historically speaking, be demonstrably false and yet belief would lose nothing by this […] because historical proof (the historical proof-game) is irrelevant to belief." – Wittgenstein recorded in 1937.[43] Faith, then, is by no means the same language-game that a historian plays when he talks about historical evidence (for example, Ernest Renan when he writes his book on the life of Jesus), and even if there is such a historical account in the language of faith, it has a very *specific* (i.e. not merely historical) significance. Or the same thought, from a little earlier, but also from 1937:

[40] Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, 54.
[41] Rush Rhees (ed.): *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, 114.
[42] Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, 57.
[43] Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Culture and Value*, 32e.

> "Christianity is not based on a historical truth; rather, it offers us a (historical) narrative and says: now believe! But not, believe this narrative with the belief appropriate to a historical narrative, rather: believe, through thick and thin, which you can do only as the result of a life. *Here you have a narrative, don't take the same attitude to it as you take to other historical narratives*! Make a quite *different* place in your life for it. — There is nothing *paradoxical* about that!"[44]

It seems, after all, (or at least the above notes suggest something like this) that Wittgenstein sought faith, sought the answer to the question of how to arrive at a state of faith.[45] Why he sought faith would be difficult to say simply and succinctly, although in the *Culture and Value* we find some thoughts that may explain this search for faith. One such thought from 1946 sounds like this: "It says that wisdom is all cold; and that you can no more use it for setting your life to rights than you can forge iron when it is *cold*."[46] Right the next note: "Wisdom is passionless. But faith by contrast is what Kierkegaard calls a *passion*."[47] One year later, in 1947: "Wisdom is cold and to that extent stupid. (Faith on the other hand is a passion.) It might also be said: Wisdom merely *conceals* life from you. (Wisdom is like cold grey ash, covering up the glowing embers.)"[48] Also in 1947: "'Wisdom is grey'. Life on the other hand and religion are full of colour."[49] – It seems that Wittgenstein considered wisdom insufficient for life, because it is cold, because it is grey and because it is stupid, and that he sought the passion for living life in religion. (Which also shows that he undoubtedly learned one or two things from Kierkegaard, such as that faith is passion and that our faith is justified by our whole lives, by our actions.[50])

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[44] Idem.

[45] He also allegedly told Drury that "I am not a religious man, but I cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view". (Rush Rhees (ed.): *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, 79). On Wittgenstein's religiosity, see a book by another of his friends, Norman Malcolm: *Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?* Routledge, London, 1993, especially its first chapter, *A religious man?* (7-23).

[46] Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Culture and Value*, 53e.

[47] Idem.

[48] Idem, 56e.

[49] Idem, 62e.

[50] On Kierkegaard's influence on Wittgenstein's thinking, see Genia Schönbaumsfeld's excellent book (*A Confusion of the Spheres. Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein on Philosophy and Religion*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007), who discusses Kierkegaard's influence separately in Wittgenstein's "early" and "late" periods. Perhaps the most relevant part for us is Chapter 4 of the book, in which Schönbaumsfeld examines the extent to which Kierkegaard's and Wittgenstein's views on religious belief are related.

Faith and certainty

But can I say with passion, Wittgenstein asks, rather between the lines, in his book *On Certainty*, that this is my foot? The question is astounding, but logical, provided we accept Wittgenstein's position that our whole life, and all our actions, are based on various unfounded beliefs, and that these beliefs are justified by our life, that is, by the way we act. But isn't the same true for religious faith? From this point of view, therefore, it is indeed a question whether there is a difference between faith and faith, and if the peculiarity of religious faith is that it is passionate, it is reasonable to ask whether this passion is *unique* to religious faith. So, can I say, once again, with passion, that this is my foot? And perhaps even more astounding than the question is that Wittgenstein's answer is *yes*. "I may claim with passion that I know that this (for example) is my foot.", he recorded on March 17, 1951.[51] But what does that mean? What follows from this? Does it follow that there is no *qualitative* difference between our religious beliefs and our other, ordinary beliefs? Wittgenstein's answer can be found partly in this same posthumous book, partly again in *Culture and Value*.

Wittgenstein's reasoning was initiated by the argument of George E. Moore, who, in his *A Defense of Common Sense*, lists some statements that he does not think are even worth mentioning, all of which he *knows* to be true. Moore was trying to demonstrate in this way the nature of our everyday knowledge, namely that it is of a nature that we cannot even think of doubting.[52] Similarly, in his essay *Proof of an External World* and in a lecture of the same title at the British Academy, he argued that a convincing way to prove the existence of his hands was simply to show one of them and make a gesture with it: that this is my hand, I simply know – this is an ultimate, unquestionable evidence of common sense.[53] Wittgenstein's answer (who, again, clings to other people's ideas here only to refute them) is that Moore cannot *know* that it is his hand, because with explicit knowledge we can only dispose of what we doubt or *can* doubt at all. Moore cannot, reasonably, doubt that it is his hand, and consequently he cannot know it – and therefore here we are simply dealing with the misuse of the word "know" by someone (most typical of philosophers).

Wittgenstein's position, in contrast to Moore's, is that all our doubts are preceded by unprovable, unfounded beliefs. – I believe that the Earth existed before I was born, and God did not create it in the last half hour. In the same way, I believe

[51] Ludwig Wittgenstein: *On Certainty*, 49e.

[52] See: George Edward Moore: *A Defense of Common Sense*, in: George Edward Moore: *Selected Writings* (edited by Thomas Baldwin), Routledge, London and New York, 1993, 106-133.

[53] See: George Edward Moore: *Proof of an External World*, in: George Edward Moore: *Selected Writings*, 147-170.

that this is my hand: I do not doubt it, nor can I doubt it. My unfounded beliefs are justified by the equally unfounded action, my whole life: I act without ever having any doubt whether it is my hand: I simply prepare the tea there. "My life shows that I know or am certain that there is a chair over there, or a door, and so on. – I tell a friend e.g. 'Take that chair over there', 'Shut the door', etc., etc." (§ 7)[54] So I act in the spirit of that faith, and my faith is justified by my whole life, by the way I act. But, as we have seen, the same is true for religious belief: that it is also groundless, and that it is justified by our whole lives. And yet, there must be a difference between faith and faith, and the only difference we can point out is *passion*. Religious belief may be "a passionate commitment to a system of reference", but in the case of the statement "this is my foot", that passion seems superfluous, irrelevant, and even comical.

And yet, Wittgenstein is not at all telling us that we cannot speak passionately about our feet, but rather that (on the one hand) this passion is quite *rare* when we talk about our feet, and that (on the other hand) even if it is present, it always expresses something very *specific* (unusual). Let us look at Wittgenstein's reasoning in its entirety, and not just the opening thought: "I may claim with passion that I know that this (for example) is my foot." (§ 376) "But this passion is after all something very rare, and there is no trace of it when I talk of this foot in the ordinary way." (§ 377). "I say with passion 'I *know* that this is a foot' – but what does it *mean*?" (§ 379). "I might go on: 'Nothing in the world will convince me of the opposite!' For me this fact is at the bottom of all knowledge. I shall give up other things but not this." (§ 380) "This 'Nothing in the world' is obviously an attitude which one hasn't got towards everything one believes or is certain of." (§ 381) "That is not to say that nothing in the world will in fact be able to convince me of anything else." (§ 382)[55] – Even our most basic beliefs are therefore not without doubt, Wittgenstein argues, and yet it is possible that in some cases (for example, if it has been amputated) I doubt whether this leg is really mine (the example is morbid, I know, but this is Wittgenstein's example; he participated as a soldier in the First World War, and during the second he worked in a hospital).

So, Wittgenstein says, I can speak passionately about my feet, for example in a (quite rare) speech situation where I want to emphasize that for me this is a fact ("this is my foot") that lies on the bottom of all knowledge, that I will not give up, that no one and nothing will ever convince me otherwise. This does not mean, however, that *nothing* in the world can really convince me otherwise. Even our most basic everyday beliefs are not without doubt, Wittgenstein argues – which is not true of religious faith. If, therefore, we look for the difference between faith and

[54] Ludwig Wittgenstein: *On Certainty*, 2e.
[55] Idem, 49e.

faith, we will find it in the fact that religious faith is unshakable and free from all doubt: it is of such a nature that there can be no doubt attached to it. We may doubt all our other common beliefs, however fundamental they may be, except religious beliefs. "This in one sense must be called the firmest of al beliefs", says Wittgenstein in his lectures on religious faith, "because the man risks things on account of it which he would not do on things which are by far better established for him."[56]

One of the conclusions that can be traced from the above sentence (among everything else) is that if religious belief is "unshakeable", [57] as Wittgenstein puts it, it is not because it is more *grounded* than any other faith. (As we have seen before, if faith is not rational by its very nature, it can hardly be rationally argued.) On the contrary, says Wittgenstein: "An honest religious thinker", he wrote in 1948, "is like a tightrope walker. He almost looks as though he were walking on nothing but air. His support is the slenderest imaginable. And yet it really is possible to walk on it."[58] It may be said, therefore, that the thoughts of the religious thinker have no foundation, as if he was walking in the air, and yet he walks firmly on this ground. Similarly, Wittgenstein argues, believers are not convinced of faith by various proofs, such as so-called "proofs of God". In 1950, the penultimate year of his life, he recorded the following:

> "A proof of God's existence ought really to be something by means of which one could convince oneself that God exists. But I think that what *believers* who have furnished such proofs have wanted to do is give their 'belief' an intellectual analysis and foundation, although they themselves would never have come to believe as a result of such proofs. Perhaps one could 'convince someone that God exists' by means of a certain kind of upbringing, by shaping his life in such and such a way."[59]

Thus, religious belief is not free from doubt because its foundation is more solid: believers have not formed their faith based on some proofs of God, but rather "analyze" it with the help of them, so to speak. (It is like saying that Thomas Aquinas, whose *Summa Theologiae* was read by Wittgenstein, did not prove the "existence" of God with his five proofs or "ways", but merely analyzed the concept of God; his investigations were conceptual, not factual.) Believing, at least according to Wittgenstein, as we saw earlier when discussing the question of the historical authenticity of the Gospels, may be "the result of a life". What exactly this means can be revealed by the continuation of the above quote:

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[56] Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, 54.
[57] Idem.
[58] Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Culture and Value*, 73e.
[59] Idem, 85e.

> "Life", he writes here, "can educate one to a belief in God. And *experiences* too are what bring this about; but I don't mean visions and other forms of sense experience which show us the 'existence of this being', but, e.g., sufferings of various sorts. These neither show us God in the way a sense impression shows us an object, nor do they give rise to *conjectures* about him. Experiences, thoughts, – life can force this concept on us."[60]

If we live enough, life, with its sufferings, can "force on us", so to speak, the concept of God; we experience, we think, and we can come to this concept. But not in some "mystical" experience that "reveals" the existence of God, nor in sensual experiences that show us the "existence" of this being – whatever that means.

Similarly, says Wittgenstein, the believer does not believe in the way of *probability*: for him God's existence is not a *hypothesis* accepted because of its great plausibility. This is unlikely because he believes in a way of unshakable *certainty*. A believer who believes that "God exists" does not think he has good or convincing evidence for this. This is not a hypothesis on his part, and this is why, says Wittgenstein, we do not encounter a situation in religious controversies where one party is certain of something and the other says, "well, possibly".[61] (He once asked Drury: "Can you imagine St. Augustine saying that the existence of God is 'highly probable'?"[62]) Or, as he writes in *Culture and Value*, if man, as a believer, ponders the strength of temptation and the frailty of human nature, he does not think according to the logic of either/or, because to assume that one of the two forces must necessarily prevail is not a religious idea at all, but a "scientific hypothesis". "So if you want to stay within the religious sphere you must *struggle*", he adds.[63] To think, then, that one of two forces fighting each other, the power of temptation and the frailty of human nature, must prevail is not the mindset of the believer, but of some practitioner of science. The religious person simply *fights* temptation, knowing his own frailty, trusting that God is on his side in this struggle, because "religious faith", Wittgenstein writes, is nothing more than "trusting".[64]

Religious faith, then, once again, is a faith which is unshakable, which cannot therefore be disputed or argued against. It is a recurring thought among Wittgenstein's notes on religious faith, Arrington writes, "that religious believers do not hold their central beliefs with probability or well-grounded confidence; they hold them with

[60] Idem, 86e.
[61] Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, 56.
[62] Rush Rhees (ed.): *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, 90.
[63] Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Culture and Value*, 86e.
[64] Idem, 72e.

certainty, 'unshakably' as Wittgenstein puts it".[65] Surely this is the case, he adds, with statements like "God exists". This is not a hypothesis on their part, not even a well-grounded one. "It is a belief held unshakably, one totally removed from the traffic of debate and argument, one that has no uncertainty attached to it."[66] – If we return to Wittgenstein's remark that theology is grammar, this idea could be rephrased as follows: the fundamental statements of theology are grammatical statements that cannot be disputed, since they lay down precisely the rules of the use of language. Playing this language-game, you must follow *these* rules.

If such statements, writes Earl Stanley B. Fronda in his book on Wittgenstein's religious thought, are taken as "substantial" statements, if they are taken as saying *something* about the world, they "become meaningless (i.e. they will fail to function in the way they are intended to, which is to make claims that can in principle be tested for factual truth or falsity)".[67] Nevertheless, such statements have their uses, he adds, provided they are treated as "grammatical statements".[68] Their "real function is to show the rules for the use of words".[69] Therefore, these statements are inherently true, and their truth is so obvious or self-evident that anyone familiar with this language-game will normally say when we phrase them: "Of course!". And everything suggests, he adds, that the statement "God exists" is such a "grammatical statement" in religious language.[70] That is, it is not a substantive (or factual) statement, because it does not claim that God actually exists, but simply analyzes the concept of God, which includes existence in the same way that, for example, the concept of the road includes having length. – Fronda's interpretation seems to be supported by the fact that precisely in connection with such statements (i.e. statements that cannot be doubted) Wittgenstein says in his *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* that they are, so to speak, grammatical propositions: "To accept a proposition as unshakably certain – I want to say – means to use it as a grammatical rule; this removes uncertainty from it."[71]

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[65] Robert L. Arrington: *'Theology as Grammar' Wittgenstein and some critics*, 176.

[66] Idem.

[67] Earl Stanley B. Fronda: *Wittgenstein's (Misunderstood) Religious Thought*, Brill, Leiden, Boston, 2010, 120.

[68] Idem.

[69] Idem.

[70] Idem, 121., 128.

[71] Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (edited by G. H. von Wright, R. Rhees and G. E. M. Anscombe, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe), The M.I.T. Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, 1964, 81e.

And if "God exists" is a statement that expresses a basic grammatical rule, then that means that all other propositions we use to describe the world will be formulated according to this rule. As Arrington puts it: if we accept "God exists" as a grammatical rule, then this is "a way of giving meaning to everything we say about the world: all aspects of nature and human nature are to be understood in terms of their source in God and in terms of God's providential relation to his creatures".[72] We will use, thus, all our statements about the world according to this grammatical rule, because adhering to this grammatical rule presupposes "all descriptions, decisions, etc., be formulated or completed in terms of the notion of God's creative power, God's judgments, God's grace, or God's love and anger".[73] What is at stake here, he writes, is a system of reference or "representation", that is, "a way of talking and thinking about all things".[74]

> "And to say that the religious believer is passionately committed to this system of reference is to say that it stands fast for him, that he takes it as a matter of course."[75]

Grammatical statements, then, are "self-evident", in the sense that they reflect well-known and immutable rules (immutable as far as their *application* is concerned) for the correct use of words. So, if anyone speaks of God at all, he must speak of Him as if He exists, otherwise he would be misusing the word God (this is not proof of God, but a grammatical rule). Denying God's existence here would be simply absurd, since in this language-game we cannot even articulate what it would be like if God did *not* actually exist. (There can neither be a description of what it would be like if there were *no* God nor what it would be like if there *were* God, as Fronda mentions.) Therefore, "God exists" is a grammatical statement for the believer because there can be no doubt attached to it. Not because God really, factually exists (nothing can be said about this factually), but because in the language-game he plays, this is the most basic rule of grammar.[76]

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[72] Robert L. Arrington: *'Theology as Grammar' Wittgenstein and some critics*, 176.

[73] Idem.

[74] Idem.

[75] Idem.

[76] A preliminary version of this study was published in Hungarian in the 2022/67 issue of the philosophical journal 'Kellék'.

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Intentionality and Autonomy in Husserl's Phenomenology: A Comprehensive Analysis of Conscious Decisions and the Transcendental Ego

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ABSTRACT. This essay embarks on a thorough exploration of Edmund Husserl's seminal contributions to the philosophical discourse on consciousness, with a particular focus on the dynamics of conscious decisions within the framework of phenomenology. By delving into Husserl's nuanced examination of consciousness—its temporal structure, the nature of self-awareness, and the foundational concept of intentionality—the analysis reveals the intricate ways in which Husserl posits the transcendental ego as the nexus of meaning, judgment, and perception. The discussion illuminates how Husserl's theory of intentionality and the intentional act's matter and quality serve as the cornerstone for understanding the will's engagement with the world. Through a detailed exposition of Husserl's ideas on the phenomenological reduction, the essay articulates the active role of consciousness in constituting reality and the ethical dimensions underpinning the exercise of free will. The paper argues that Husserl's insights into conscious decision-making challenge conventional views by framing free will within the contexts of knowledge, ethical deliberation, and the ego's autonomy. This essay contributes to the ongoing dialogue between phenomenology and contemporary philosophy of mind by highlighting Husserl's profound impact on our understanding of consciousness, agency, and the existential significance of human decisions.

Keywords: Edmund Husserl, Phenomenology, Conscious Decisions, Transcendental Ego, Intentionality, Free Will, Consciousness, Epistemology, Temporality, Rationality, Autonomy, Phenomenological Reduction (Epoché), Intersubjectivity, Self-awareness

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Introduction

Edmund Husserl views the will not just as a capacity to make choices but as fundamentally rooted in reason and knowledge.[1] This perspective frames the will's ability to decide and act as inherently linked to understanding what actions are possible and justifiable. Consequently, the freedom of the will—its ability to choose freely among various actions—is deeply intertwined with the individual's knowledge and rational capacity. This connection between the will and knowledge introduces a nuanced challenge to traditional notions of freedom. If one's ability to choose (the will's "fiat" or declaration to act) is contingent upon knowing what options are available and which of those options are ethically or logically sound, then freedom is not simply the ability to make any choice. Instead, freedom becomes conditional upon the individual's understanding and rational judgment. Therefore, Husserl suggests that for the will to exercise true freedom, it must be based on a foundation of knowledge—both of what actions are possible and of what actions are morally or logically appropriate. This view implies that ethical or rational deliberation is essential for the exercise of genuine freedom, moving the discussion of will and freedom into the realm of epistemology. Husserl's approach to understanding the will is deeply rooted in the study of consciousness.[2] For Husserl, unraveling the essence and structure of consciousness, along with its connections to the external world, is essential. He views consciousness as a domain of pure experience, indicating that our conscious experience is fundamental to comprehending the nature of the will. This perspective suggests that the will's decisions and actions are intricately linked to our inner experiential world, highlighting the importance of conscious experience in shaping human agency and freedom.

To facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the nuanced interplay among Husserl's various themes, this introduction will conclude with an outline that underscores how these themes unfold from epistemology to their implications for ethics and the autonomy of consciousness. Firstly, we will explore Husserl's epistemological framework, emphasizing the foundational role of consciousness and its inherent intentionality in the pursuit of knowledge. This sets the stage for understanding the autonomy of consciousness, not just as a passive receptacle of experiences but as an active agent in the constitution of reality. Following this, we delve into the ethical dimensions emergent from this autonomy, wherein the

[1] Ferrarello, Susi. "On the rationality of will in James and Husserl." *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* 2, no. II-1 (2010): 2.

[2] Ferrarello, Susi. "On the rationality of will in James and Husserl." *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* 2, no. II-1 (2010): 3-5.

transcendental ego's engagement with the world is inherently moral. The progression from understanding consciousness in its epistemic capacity to recognizing its ethical implications reveals how Husserl's phenomenology bridges the gap between knowing the world and living within it ethically. This outline serves not only to chart the course of our exploration but also to highlight the seamless transition from theoretical considerations to practical, lived experience, thereby underscoring the centrality of consciousness in both realms. Through this journey, we aim to illuminate the complex tapestry of Husserl's thought, showcasing the intricate connections between the autonomy of consciousness, the pursuit of knowledge, and the foundation of ethical life.

Consciousness

The concept of consciousness has fascinated thinkers across various disciplines, bridging the interests of the philosophical and scientific communities alike. It occupies a central place in psychology[3] and neuroscience[4], where it is studied from the perspectives of mental processes and brain functions.[5] Within philosophy, consciousness is a pivotal theme across multiple branches, including phenomenology[6], epistemology[7], and metaphysics[8]. This wide-ranging intrigue underscores the complexity and multifaceted nature of consciousness, highlighting its significance in understanding human experience, cognition, and the essence of existence itself. Current research endeavors to explain how the brain and body give rise to consciousness and to elucidate the connections between conscious experience and cognitive processes.[9] A pivotal challenge for neuroscience is to decode not only how the brain facilitates our experiences and perceptions of the world but also how

[3] Turcotte, J., Lakatos, L., & Oddson, B. (2021). Psychology of Consciousness: Theory, Research, and Practice.

[4] Dehaene, Stanislas, and Lionel Naccache. "Towards a cognitive neuroscience of consciousness: basic evidence and a workspace framework." Cognition 79, no. 1-2 (2001): 1-37.

[5] Seth, Anil K., Zoltán Dienes, Axel Cleeremans, Morten Overgaard, and Luiz Pessoa. "Measuring consciousness: relating behavioural and neurophysiological approaches." *Trends in cognitive sciences* 12, no. 8 (2008): 314-321.

[6] Pekala, Ronald J., Jack Steinberg, and V. K. Kumar. "Measurement of phenomenological experience: Phenomenology of Consciousness Inventory." Perceptual and Motor Skills 63, no. 2 (1986): 983-989.

[7] Velmans, Max. "An epistemology for the study of consciousness." *The Blackwell companion to consciousness* (2017): 769-784.

[8] Prentner, Robert. "Process metaphysics of consciousness." *Open Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (2018): 3-13.

[9] Thompson, Evan, and Dan Zahavi. "Philosophical issues: Phenomenology." (2007).

it fosters a sense of self in the act of knowing.[10] Contemporary perspectives on consciousness, either wholly or in part, are deeply rooted in the philosophical tradition of phenomenology, introduced by Edmund Husserl in the early 20th century. Husserl was profoundly interested in the foundation of knowledge.[11] He aspired to establish a rigorous philosophical and scientific understanding of knowledge. To this end, he believed that consciousness must serve as the primary starting point, considering that without its thorough comprehension, no genuine knowledge can be attained.[12]

Both phenomenology and analytic philosophy have made profound contributions to our understanding of consciousness, yet they approach the subject in distinctively different manners[13]. Phenomenology, introduced by Edmund Husserl, emphasizes the primacy of lived experience.

In the fifth of his "Logical Investigations," Husserl delves into the complexities of consciousness by distinguishing among three definitions, each highlighting the relationship between various acts and consciousness itself.[14] First, Husserl describes consciousness as the entirety of what is experienced. This definition encompasses all acts and the full extent of its knowledge, portraying consciousness as a comprehensive system of acts alongside our perception of this system. Husserl argued that to truly grasp the concept of consciousness, we must turn our attention to the immediate presentation of reality as we experience it. He believed that reality is best understood not through abstract theorizations or detached observations, but through how it manifests itself to us, from the nuanced standpoint of phenomena.[15] This approach doesn't necessarily negate the existence of an objective reality. Instead, it underscores that our primary access to such reality is mediated through our experiences. By adopting a phenomenological stance, we are urged to bracket out our preconceptions and immediate judgments. In doing so, we move away from seeking the intrinsic, mind-independent nature of things, focusing instead on the richness of their appearance in our consciousness and the meanings they inherently possess for us. This shift in perspective, as advocated by Husserl, prompts a deeper exploration into how we relate to the world strictly based on its appearance and

[10] Damasio, Antonio R. *The feeling of what happens: Body and emotion in the making of consciousness*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, (1999): 104-105.

[11] Giorgi, Amedeo. "Concerning the phenomenological methods of Husserl and Heidegger and their application in psychology." *Collection du cirp* 1, no. 1 (2007): 63-68.

[12] Giorgi, Amedeo. "Concerning the phenomenological methods of Husserl and Heidegger and their application in psychology." *Collection du cirp* 1, no. 1 (2007).

[13] Giorgi, Amedeo. "Concerning the phenomenological methods of Husserl and Heidegger and their application in psychology." *Collection du cirp* 1, no. 1 (2007): 69-71.

[14] Husserl, E. (2000). *Logical investigations.* London: Routledge Press.

[15] Thompson, Evan, and Dan Zahavi. "Philosophical issues: Phenomenology." (2007): 71-72.

how these appearances shape our understanding of consciousness. Thus, when we adopt the phenomenological stance, we step back from making immediate judgments about the world. Instead of concerning ourselves with the intrinsic nature of things in a detached, mind-independent or theory-independent manner, we become keenly interested in how these things present themselves in our consciousness, in the richness of their appearance, and in the meanings they hold for us. Transcendental phenomenology focuses on how things are experienced or presented to us, rather than their intrinsic nature. This perspective emphasizes the process of experiencing and the conditions under which objects are perceived, highlighting the subjective aspect of perception and consciousness[16]. In "Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy" Husserl introduces the concept of phenomenological reduction, or epoché, which involves suspending or bracketing natural assumptions about the existence of the external world to focus purely on the phenomena of consciousness. This method allows Husserl to investigate the structures of consciousness and how objects are constituted in subjective experience.

Therefore the second definition builds on the first by introducing the concept that the immanent (inherent) components of consciousness are fully perceived by what he calls an 'inner consciousness' (Gewahrwerden). This suggests that every piece of data or information is part of a lived experience (Erlebnis) within consciousness, emphasizing the direct and immediate perception of these experiences.[17] He distinguishes between the natural attitude, in which we take the existence of the world for granted, and the phenomenological attitude, which examines how the world appears to us through consciousness. Husserl further developed these ideas in later works, including "Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology"[18] and "The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology,"[19] where he deepens his exploration of the relationship between the life-world (Lebenswelt) and the phenomenological perspective. These texts collectively lay out Husserl's argument that the essence of phenomenology is to study the ways in which things present themselves to consciousness, rather than assuming an objective reality independent of our experience.

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[16] Husserl, Edmund. *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy: First book: General introduction to a pure phenomenology*. Vol. 2. Springer Science & Business Media, (2012): 27-32

[17] Husserl, E. (2000). *Logical investigations.* London: Routledge Press.

[18] Husserl, Edmund. *Cartesian meditations: An introduction to phenomenology*. Springer Science & Business Media, (2013): 7-17.

[19] Husserl, Edmund. The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology: An introduction to phenomenological philosophy. Northwestern University Press (1970).

Husserl's third definition expands further by presenting consciousness as a universal comprehension of pure lived experience. This involves an additional layer of experience, necessitating a "new percept" to accompany every perception. Husserl is pointing to a deeper level of awareness that underlies and enriches our direct experiences, suggesting that consciousness also includes a reflective aspect that recognizes and interprets every experience. Husserl's third definition of consciousness delves deeper into an aspect he initially described as 'objectifying interpretation,' which he later refers to as 'act-matter.'[20] This concept stands in contrast to another component named 'act-quality.' Together, the matter and quality of an act constitute its intentional essence, integral to understanding consciousness's functionality. In Husserl's framework, both matter and quality are innate components of the intentional act itself, contributing to its comprehensive structure. Specifically, the 'matter' of an act is crucial because it establishes the act's 'reference' to an object. This reference is not vague or general; instead, it's remarkably precise, defining not only the object of focus but also the exact manner in which the object is perceived or thought about. Thus, the matter element is essentially what directs consciousness towards an object, embodying the act of 'intending' or aiming at the object in the realm of intentionality. Through this nuanced analysis, Husserl illuminates how consciousness is inherently 'directed' towards things in the world, a characteristic known as 'intentionality.' The 'matter' within an act of consciousness plays a pivotal role in how an object is specifically and uniquely targeted by our mental faculties, detailing both the object and the mode of engagement with it. This concept helps explain the intricate workings of consciousness, showcasing its active engagement with the world through intentionality. Multiple acts of consciousness can target the same object, yet each act might interpret or "mean" the object in a unique manner. This is because every act could be focusing on a distinct attribute or property of the object. The concept of 'matter' within an act represents this focus or directedness towards the object, more precisely, towards a particular property of that object. Essentially, the matter aspect of an act specifies the target of consciousness—what the act is aware of. Contrasting with 'matter,' the 'quality' of an act refers to how consciousness engages with the object. While 'matter' points to the 'what'—the specific property or aspect of the object being directed at—'quality' addresses the 'how'—the manner or mode in which the act apprehends or experiences the object. Together, these aspects of matter and quality delineate not only the focus of an act of consciousness but also the nature of its engagement with that focus, illuminating the multifaceted relationship between consciousness and the objects of its attention.

[20] Husserl, E. (2000). *Logical investigations.* London: Routledge Press.

Husserl views consciousness as a domain characterized by pristine and complete rationality.[21] Within this realm, consciousness doesn't just float in a vacuum; it actively engages with the external world. The tools for this engagement are rooted in rationality itself. In other words, consciousness interacts with, understands, and makes sense of the world around it through rational processes. These processes, or tools, enable consciousness to analyze, interpret, and respond to various aspects of the external world, establishing a bridge between the inner realm of thought and the outer reality. This conception positions rationality not only as the essence of consciousness but also as the means through which consciousness connects and interacts with the world beyond itself. The will is portrayed as one of the various facets or areas within consciousness, functioning as a crucial instrument through which consciousness comprehends and interacts with the external world. Essentially, the will allows an individual to direct attention, make decisions, and take actions based on their understanding and experiences of their surroundings. This suggests that the will plays a significant role in shaping how we perceive, interpret, and engage with the world beyond ourselves, acting as a bridge between our inner mental processes and the external reality.

Therefore Husserl's quest is to articulate a precise understanding of consciousness's domain. In his "Logical Investigations," he centers his analysis on consciousness and its unadulterated contents, positing it as the wellspring of fundamental logical principles.[22] Phenomenology, for Husserl, serves as a method dedicated to elucidating the contents of consciousness with the goal of establishing a foundation for pure logic. This endeavor leads him to conceptualize consciousness as an uninterrupted stream of meanings, framing it within an epistemological context.[23] This perspective highlights consciousness not merely as a repository of thoughts and experiences but as the origin of a structured system of logic, underscoring its role in the genesis and organization of knowledge.

The inherently intentional consciousness

Husserl posited that the crux of understanding lies in focusing on the phenomenon, or the appearance, and discerning the manifold meanings it holds for us.

[21] Ferrarello, Susi. "On the rationality of will in James and Husserl." *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* 2, no. II-1 (2010): 7.

[22] Husserl, E. (2000). *Logical investigations.* London: Routledge Press.

[23] Ferrarello, Susi. "On the rationality of will in James and Husserl." *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy,* 2, no. II-1 (2010): 5-7.

He delved into questions regarding how these significant phenomena are constructed, specifically inquiring about the processes that shape these conscious appearances[24]. In essence, objects present themselves in our experience in certain ways due to the inherent structure of consciousness. In Husserl's phenomenology, consciousness possesses a unique characteristic: it is inherently intentional[25]. This means that consciousness consistently directs itself toward something external, reaching or pointing beyond its own bounds. However, this concept of intentionality differs from the more common understanding of the term, which implies having a purpose or a deliberate aim during an action[26]. It's essential to differentiate between these two nuances of intentionality in the phenomenological context. Intentionality is the manner in which an object presents itself, a phenomenon that is pertinent to experience but not confined by it[27]. In the realm of contemporary philosophy of mind, 'phenomenological consciousness' designates those mental states imbued with a subjective, experiential nature. In essence, for a mental state to be considered conscious, a subject must actively inhabit that state[28]. Husserl extends this understanding beyond the confines of mere sensory or emotional states. He posits that even conscious thought is enveloped by this phenomenological quality of experience[29]. In his work, "Logische Untersuchungen II/2", Husserl further asserts that conscious thoughts aren't merely cognitive entities, rather they carry experiential nuances[30]. Each conscious state, be it a perception, emotion, memory, or even an abstract thought, possesses a unique subjective texture — a distinct phenomenological quality that defines the very sensation of undergoing that state.

Self-awareness

Husserl explores the idea that our perception of the world is not limited to what is immediately before us but includes a broader horizon of potential

[24] Thompson, Evan, and Dan Zahavi. "Philosophical issues: Phenomenology." (2007): 74.

[25] Husserl, Edmund. *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy: First book: General introduction to a pure phenomenology*. Vol. 2. Springer Science & Business Media (2012).

[26] Thompson, Evan, and Dan Zahavi. "Philosophical issues: Phenomenology." (2007): 74-75.

[27] Giorgi, Amedeo. "Concerning the phenomenological methods of Husserl and Heidegger and their application in psychology." *Collection du cirp* 1, no. 1 (2007): 69-71.

[28] Nagel, Thomas. "What is it like to be a bat?." In The Language and Thought Series. Harvard University Press, (1980): 159-168.

[29] Thompson, Evan, and Dan Zahavi. "Philosophical issues: Phenomenology." (2007): 76.

[30] Husserl, Edmund. "Logische Untersuchungen II/2," (1901).

perceptions[31]. This horizon is composed of all the perceptions we could experience if we chose to engage with our environment differently. For instance, if we shifted our gaze or moved our position, we would encounter different aspects of our surroundings. This capacity for varied perception underscores the active role we play in shaping our perceptual experience. This concept extends into memory as well. When we recall an experience, we're aware that our past perceptions could have been different had we directed our attention elsewhere. This awareness forms a horizon of alternative perceptions that could have been realized under different conditions. Furthermore, Husserl suggests that every act of perception is linked to a 'horizon of the past'—a realm of potential memories that can be revived or activated based on our initiative. This horizon encompasses a chain of possible memories leading up to the present moment, highlighting a continuous thread of intentionality that connects past recollections to current perceptions. Central to this discussion is the idea of freedom and choice in how we engage with our perceptual field. The phrase "I can and do, but I can also do otherwise than I am doing" illustrates this flexibility in perception and memory. It suggests that while we have the freedom to direct our perceptual and recollective focus, this freedom operates within a context of possible constraints. Thus, our engagement with the world is a dynamic interplay of choice, potential perceptions, and the ever-present horizons of past experiences and future possibilities.

Further underscoring his view on the subjectivity of consciousness, Husserl posits that the very essence of being a subject is rooted in self-awareness. To exist as a subject means to be deeply aware of one's own self, to be intrinsically cognizant of one's own existence.[32] In the realm of self-awareness, being conscious of one's own experience doesn't equate to an external perception of oneself distinct from the experience. Rather, it entails immersing in and living the experience in an intimately personal manner. The subject, or the individual, isn't an external observer, but is intrinsically woven into the fabric of the experience itself [33]. Reinforcing this perspective, a multitude of studies in cognitive science underline the core idea that self-awareness isn't an isolated cognitive act[34]. Instead, it's deeply intertwined with bodily self-regulation, emotions, and affect. This suggests that cognition and deliberate

[31] Husserl, Edmund. *Cartesian meditations: An introduction to phenomenology*. Springer Science & Business Media, (2013): 44-45.

[32] Zahavi, Dan. "Inner time-consciousness and pre-reflective self-awareness," (2003): 160.

[33] Zahavi, Dan. *Subjectivity and selfhood: Investigating the first-person perspective*. MIT press (2008).

[34] Mograbi, Daniel C., Simon Hall, Beatriz Arantes, and Jonathan Huntley. "The cognitive neuroscience of self-awareness: Current framework, clinical implications, and future research directions." *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science* 15, no. 2 (2024): 1670.

actions aren't standalone processes; they are intricately reliant on our emotional states[35]. Experiences don't exist as isolated events. Instead, they're intertwined in the tapestry of consciousness, which is characterized by a unity of experiences. This unity is observed in two dimensions: synchronically, where experiences are interconnected at a single moment, and diachronically, where they link across the continuum of time. Given this dual nature of unity, it's crucial to delve into the temporal coherence and continuity inherent in our conscious experiences. In doing so, we can better understand the framework of consciousness, illuminating how it manages to maintain a sense of coherence and identity across time.[36]

Consciousness and time

In the realm of phenomenology, 'temporality' doesn't merely signify the objective passage of time, as marked by a clock, or even our subjective sense of time's progression. Instead, for phenomenologists like Husserl, temporality — or the internal consciousness of time — represents a foundational structure that underpins consciousness itself. [37] Husserl embarked on a nuanced exploration of this intricate structure with two primary objectives. Firstly, he sought to elucidate how we perceive objects within the temporal framework, as well as how we become aware of our sequential experiences over time.[38] In essence, Husserl's phenomenological inquiry aims to shed light on our awareness of extended temporal units and the manner in which consciousness achieves its own temporal unity. He posited that humans intrinsically possess a direct consciousness of both the transformation and continuity of objects and processes as they perceive them across brief time spans.

The composition of consciousness, according to a dynamic tripartite view, consists of three interrelated components: primary impressions, retentions (sometimes termed primary memories), and protentions.[39] 'Primary impressions' represent immediate, real-time experiences that inhabit the present moment. However, the ephemeral nature of these impressions means that as swiftly as they emerge, they

[35] Freeman, Walter J. "Emotion is essential to all intentional behaviors." *Emotion, development, and self-organization: Dynamic systems approaches to emotional development,* (2000): 209-235.

[36] Thompson, Evan, and Dan Zahavi. "Philosophical issues: Phenomenology." (2007) 78.

[37] Husserl, E. (1991). On the phenomenology of the consciousness of internal time. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

[38] Thompson, Evan, and Dan Zahavi. "Philosophical issues: Phenomenology." (2007): 78.

[39] Dainton, Barry. "Temporal Consciousness." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (2010).

recede into the past. Intriguingly, while they move away from the 'present', they don't vanish from consciousness. Instead, they morph into 'retentions', which stand as representations of the past within our conscious realm. Husserl clarified that retentions aren't mere replicas of ordinary memories; they are a unique form of consciousness, distinctive in their nature and function. Completing the triad is 'protentions'. These are future-facing elements within consciousness, encapsulating our anticipations and expectations of what's yet to unfold.[40]

In his exploration of consciousness, Husserl identifies three distinct facets: firstly, the way consciousness manifests within the temporal framework; secondly, the essence of self-consciousness; and thirdly, the inherent nature of intentionality.[41]

Free will

In the context of Husserl's philosophy, discussions of free will would be framed around the autonomy and activity of the transcendental ego[42]. The ego is the source of all meaning, judgment, and perception, actively constituting the world in consciousness. Husserl's focus on intentionality—the directedness of consciousness towards objects—further emphasizes the active role of the subject in engaging with and interpreting the world. Freedom might be understood in terms of the transcendental ego's capacity to constitute meaning and engage in intentional acts. Free will, from this perspective, is not a simple binary of determinism versus indeterminism but is related to the depth and richness of subjective experience and the intentional structures that underlie consciousness. Husserl's phenomenology, with its emphasis on the first-person perspective and the structures of experience, offers a unique lens through which to examine questions of free will. It invites a reconsideration of autonomy and agency that is grounded in the immediacy of lived experience and the constitutive powers of the transcendental ego, rather than in external causal determinants.

Moreover, Husserl's phenomenological method, especially the epoché or phenomenological reduction, further illuminates the role of the ego in constituting reality. By suspending natural assumptions about the world's existence, the phenomenologist uncovers the transcendental ego's foundational role in giving

[40] Dainton, Barry. "Temporal Consciousness." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2010).

[41] Zahavi, Dan. "The three concepts of consciousness in Logische Untersuchungen." *Husserl Studies* 18, no. 1 (2002): 51-64.

[42] Husserl, Edmund. *Cartesian meditations: An introduction to phenomenology*. Springer Science & Business Media, (2013): 40-55.

meaning to the world. This act of suspension and the subsequent focus on the ego's constitutive functions highlight the ego's freedom to shape its experience of reality.

Husserl's work on intersubjectivity, particularly in the Cartesian Meditations[43], where he investigates the constitution of the Other in the ego's consciousness, contributes indirectly to the conversation around free will by highlighting the complexity of consciousness and the intersubjective dimensions of our lived experience. These investigations into how subjects relate to one another and the world can be seen as foundational to any phenomenological account of agency and freedom.

In "Cartesian Meditations"[44], Husserl offers a profound understanding of free will and decision-making that underscores the significance of subjective experience and the reflective capacity of the ego. He posits that our undeniable, lived experiences serve as the foundational bedrock for any judgments or decisions we make about reality, highlighting how the exercise of free will is intricately woven into the fabric of our experiential reality. The capacity for reflection, which enables the ego to evaluate its stream of consciousness critically, to abstain from immediate judgments, and to deliberate on the nature of the world, is central to the notion of free will. This reflective engagement allows for informed choices, grounded in the authenticity and immediacy of experiences that are given to consciousness with "the most originary originality." Such authenticity ensures that decisions are based on genuine experiences of the present and the past, thereby enabling a more nuanced and informed exercise of free will. Furthermore, Husserl illuminates the ego's active role in constituting its reality through this reflective process, underscoring the individual's agency and autonomy in perceiving, interpreting, and engaging with the world. This active, intentional engagement with experiences not only shapes our understanding of reality but also illustrates the profound autonomy at the heart of free will, where decisions are made based on a grounded, reflective interaction with the lived world. Thus, Husserl's philosophy offers a rich, phenomenological perspective on free will, emphasizing it as a dynamic interplay between the individual's subjective experiences and their capacity for reflective, intentional action in constituting reality and making decisions.

[43] Husserl, Edmund. *Cartesian meditations: An introduction to phenomenology*. Springer Science & Business Media, (2013): 18-38.

[44] Husserl, Edmund. *Cartesian meditations: An introduction to phenomenology*. Springer Science & Business Media, (2013): 19-20.

Decisions

In Husserl's phenomenology, practical philosophy is articulated through explicit ethics, the phenomenology of religion and culture, value theory, the analysis of practical acts, and the methodological considerations of phenomenological reduction and epoché.[45] His Freiburger lectures[46] and Kaizo articles[47] elaborate on ethics and the cultural aspects of phenomenology, while his early Göttingen lectures[48] lay out a value theory. Husserl's manuscripts further dissect practical acts, such as decisions and actions with purposes, differentiating them from theoretical contemplations. Notably, he probes the foundational nature of phenomenology itself, contemplating whether the act of phenomenological reduction is a practical act of radical decision by the philosopher, as posited in his "First Philosophy"[49] and "Cartesian Meditations"[50]. This consideration extends to whether practical acts constitute a distinct realm warranting their own analysis, leading to a more nuanced understanding of what constitutes a 'practical act'. Husserl's approach raises the question of whether the commitment to phenomenology is an act of will or a mere wish, challenging us to reflect on the very basis of phenomenological practice as an action-oriented pursuit. This intricate weaving of ethics, values, practical action, and methodological introspection underscores Husserl's view of wishing and willing as essential components of intentionality, shaping not only our conscious decisions but also the philosophical endeavor itself.

The phenomenological reduction is a method used to gain insights into the essential structures of consciousness by setting aside, or "bracketing," our assumptions and preconceptions about the world. Husserl acknowledges that the motivation to engage in this form of reduction does not arise naturally within the "natural attitude," which is the default mode of consciousness wherein we are absorbed in the world and its affairs. The natural attitude does not question the

[45] Lotz, Christian. "Action: Phenomenology of wishing and willing in Husserl and Heidegger." *Husserl Studies* 22, no. 2 (2006): 122.

[46] Sandmeyer, Bob. "JN Mohanty: Edmund Husserl's Freiburg Years, 1916–1938: Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 2011, 512 pp, $85.00, Hardcover, ISBN 978-0-300-15221-0." *Husserl Studies* 30 (2014): 71-76.

[47] Welton, Donn. "Husserl and the Japanese." *The Review of Metaphysics* (1991): 575-606.

[48] Baltzer-Jaray, Kimberly, and Jeff Mitscherling. "The Phenomenological Spring: Husserl and the Göttingen Circle." In *Symposium*, vol. 16, no. 2, (2012): 1-19.

[49] Husserl, Edmund. *First philosophy: Lectures 1923/24 and related texts from the manuscripts (1920-1925)*. Vol. 14. Springer (2019).

[50] Husserl, Edmund. *Cartesian meditations: An introduction to phenomenology*. Springer Science & Business Media (2013).

existence or properties of things; it simply accepts them as given. However, the transition to the transcendental attitude, which is necessary for phenomenological investigation, requires a radical decision. This decision is not merely an intellectual or theoretical resolution but a practical act that commits the philosopher to a rigorous pursuit of truth. This pursuit is not passive but demands active responsibility for each step taken toward the goal of absolute clarification of our world. It's a commitment to a form of living in which strategic deception, including lying, becomes incompatible with the life of a phenomenologist.[51] In essence, this decision to perform phenomenological reduction is deeply ethical, binding one's life to a quest for pure understanding. It's a self-determined act that roots the philosopher's life in "absolute responsibility," raising the question of whether phenomenology, as such, should be reconceptualized as an ethical project with profound implications for humanity's ultimate destiny. Husserl suggests that by making this decision, the philosopher embarks on a path that has the potential to make one's life blessed, pure, and in alignment with the true essence of being human.[52]

This radical decision transforms the philosopher's life, as it becomes an act not just of the mind but of the whole self, requiring an authentic commitment to living out the implications of the philosophical inquiry one undertakes. It elevates phenomenology from a theoretical exercise to a practical, ethical, and transformative way of life[53].

Moreover, Husserl delves into the nature of conscious decisions, emphasizing their lasting impact on the ego, which is the core of self-awareness and personal identity in his phenomenological framework[54]. He points out that when an individual makes a decision—whether it pertains to values, actions, or will—this decision imprints itself on the ego in a way that endures beyond the immediate moment or context in which the decision was made. This means that even after the specific thought process or act that led to the decision has passed, the decision itself continues to influence and shape the ego. This enduring influence is significant because it contributes to the continuity and coherence of the self over time. Husserl

[51] Husserl, Edmund. Cartesian meditations: An introduction to phenomenology. Springer Science & Business Media (2013).

[52] Husserl, Edmund. *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy: First book: General introduction to a pure phenomenology*. Vol. 2. Springer Science & Business Media (2012).

[53] Husserl, Edmund. *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy: First book: General introduction to a pure phenomenology*. Vol. 2. Springer Science & Business Media (2012).

[54] Husserl, Edmund. Cartesian meditations: An introduction to phenomenology. Springer Science & Business Media (2013).

suggests that the decisions we make are not ephemeral; rather, they become a part of who we are, influencing our future thoughts, actions, and decisions. This process occurs regardless of changes in our state of consciousness, such as falling asleep or shifting our attention to different tasks or thoughts. The decision remains with the ego, reaffirmed and carried forward unless it is explicitly reconsidered or reversed. In essence, Husserl is highlighting a profound aspect of human consciousness and identity: our capacity to commit to decisions that shape our ongoing relationship with the world and ourselves. These decisions become a part of our ego's narrative, reflecting our autonomy and agency. They underscore the active role we play in shaping our lives and identities through the choices we make, demonstrating the deep interconnection between consciousness, decision-making, and personal development.

However, the autonomy of consciousness, as delineated in Husserl's phenomenology, is not merely about the freedom of choice in epistemic endeavors but extends fundamentally to the realm of ethics. This autonomy is the bedrock upon which ethical decisions rest, for it enables the individual to engage with the world not just perceptually but evaluatively, making judgments based on a deep, intentional interaction with the fabric of lived experience. Thus, consciousness's autonomy is central to ethics because it underpins the ability to discern, deliberate, and act upon ethical considerations, which are inherently subjective and bound to the individual's unique perspective and experiences. Furthermore, the intentional structure of consciousness—its directedness towards objects and situations—is imbued with ethical significance, as each act of intentionality involves an evaluative stance, implicitly or explicitly. Therefore, to establish the centrality of consciousness for ethics, one must recognize that the ethical dimensions of our lives are fundamentally shaped by the autonomy of our consciousness. This autonomy allows us to navigate the moral landscape with a sense of agency and responsibility, grounding our ethical life in the rich soil of subjective experience and reflective judgment.

Conclusion

This article delves into Edmund Husserl's exploration of consciousness, particularly focusing on how the mechanisms of conscious decision-making and the role of the transcendental ego articulate a profound understanding of human autonomy and ethical living. Husserl, in unraveling the layers of consciousness and its temporal structure, reveals the intricate ways in which the transcendental ego serves as the fulcrum of meaning, judgment, and perception. Through the lens of

phenomenological reduction and the theory of intentionality, Husserl posits that consciousness is not a passive domain but an active participant in constituting reality, emphasizing the ethical dimensions inherent in the exercise of free will. In this light, Husserl's phenomenology presents a novel understanding of free will and decision-making, underscoring the interconnectedness of knowledge, ethical deliberation, and the autonomy of the ego in the enactment of freedom. It challenges conventional views by situating free will within the complex interplay of knowledge acquisition and ethical considerations, thereby reframing the discussion of autonomy beyond mere capacity for choice to include the depth and authenticity of subjective experience and the intentional structure of consciousness. Husserl's insights urge a reconsideration of autonomy and agency, grounded not in abstract notions of determinism or indeterminism, but in the lived experience and the constitutive powers of the ego.

In conclusion, Husserl's phenomenological investigation into conscious decision-making and the transcendental ego elucidates a complex framework wherein autonomy and ethical life are woven into the fabric of consciousness. This framework not only advances our understanding of free will but also enriches the philosophical discourse on ethics, suggesting that the phenomenological method offers profound implications for exploring the essence of moral autonomy. Husserl's work, thus, stands as a testament to the enduring relevance of phenomenology in addressing the fundamental questions of human existence and freedom.

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Intralinguistic Motivation for Pluralism about Truth

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ABSTRACT. Critics of the scope problem that motivates pluralism about truth have argued that it is a pseudo-problem. If the criticism is correct, then truth pluralism is left unmotivated and potentially bankrupt. In this paper, I argue that closely related to the scope problem is another problem, which I call "the scalar problem." If the property of truth is sensitive to how an agent expresses the truth predicate within a single linguistic discourse and different agents or groups of agents express truth differently within that discourse, then there are different ways of being true within the same linguistic discourse. Given this possibility, even if the scope problem fails, truth pluralism remains fully motivated.

Key-words: alethic pluralism, truth, Quine-Sainsbury problem, experimental philosophy

1. Introduction

Proponents of pluralism about truth have argued that there is more than one way for a truth-bearer to be true, and this view is primarily motivated by the scope problem: the truth of expressions differ in different linguistic discourses (See Edwards, 2013a, 2013b, 2018; Lynch, 2001, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2009; Wright, 1992).[1] I will argue in this paper that there is an additional *intra*-linguistic problem that motivates pluralism about truth. True statements not only differ from one linguistic discourse to another, but even within the same linguistic discourse do the

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1 The 'scope problem' label comes from Michael Lynch (2004). There are other names for it, including the "common denominator" problem (Sher, 1998, Wright, 2005) and the "correspondence puzzle" (Lynch, 2009, p. 79).

truth of expressions vary.[2] If truth is sensitive to how an agent or group of agents expresses the truth predicate within a single discourse and different agents or groups of agents express truth differently, then this represents different ways of being true. What my argument should suggest is that a critic of pluralism may be on shaky ground if their challenge rests upon the scope problem. Critics of truth pluralism have called into question whether the scope problem motivates pluralism about truth properly. Among the harshest critics is Julian Dodd (2013) who has argued that the scope problem is a "pseudo-problem." If his criticism is correct, then there is no incentive to pursue the Wright-Lynch form of truth pluralism who contends the scope problem is a pseudo-problem will have to reconsider this objection in light of the scalar problem.

Here is how the paper will proceed. First, I provide an overview of the scope problem. Then, I turn to two of the most salient criticisms against the scope problem, one provided by Mark Sainsbury and the other by W.V.O. Quine. Once I have laid out the scope problem and criticisms of it, I will then argue that there is good reason to believe intralinguistic domain variance motivates pluralism about truth without succumbing to the Quine-Sainsbury problem. In Section 5, I call upon extant data to support the scalar problem. And, in Section 6, I show that even a modest deflationary approach to truth proposed by Julian Dodd cannot escape the scalar problem. Given the success of my argument, motivation for pluralism about truth remains fully intact.

2. The Scope Problem

On a monistic theory of truth, each expression is true if (and only if) it meets a specified necessary and sufficient condition. On the correspondence theory a proposition is true if and only if it corresponds to fact. Notably, one problem with the correspondence theory of truth is its inability to explain why some propositions are taken to be true but fail to correspond to fact. For example, "the sum of two and two is four" is true, but it does not correspond to fact because numbers do not exist. The mathematical expression is true because it is a correct representation of quantities and relations that are consistent with the rules and framework of arithmetic operations. Similarly, "Sherlock Holmes wears deerstalker caps" is true, but it is not true because it corresponds to fact. It is true because Arthur Conan Doyle authored the stories of Sherlock Holmes where the fictional character

[2] Notably, if my interpretation of intra-linguistic differences is accurate, it sidesteps what Will Gamester (2022) has called the 'individuation problem' while also agreeing with him that removing inter-linguistic differences helps to defuse the problem of mixed atomics.

supposedly wore deerstalker caps. Mathematical and fictional statements may be true, despite that they fail to correspond to fact.[3]

Let's consider three different statements from three different linguistic domains: the empirical domain (*e*), the moral domain (*v*), and the mathematical domain (*m*):

> T_e: "The cat sits on the mat"
> T_v: "Torturing people is wrong"
> T_m: "The triangle has three sides"

T_e, T_v, and T_m are all true, but they appear to be true in different ways. T_e is true when a cat sits on a mat. The cat and the mat exist, and the cat instantiates the relation of being on the mat. T_v is true but not because of what exists and the relations that hold between existent objects. The proposition is true when it is morally wrong to harm others, particularly when that harm is excessive and done for no other reason other than to see victims suffer. Since on the correspondence theory of truth a proposition is true if and only if it corresponds to fact, T_v cannot be true or false because there is no fact which corresponds with the proposition. There is no singular and monolithic property of truth that satisfactorily explains why all of propositions are true. Finally, T_m cannot be true or false on the correspondence theory because triangles are abstract mathematical figures. While there may be many objects that instantiate such abstract figures, T_m does not need to involve any of them.

The inability of a correspondence theory of truth to generalise explanatory scope beyond propositions arising in any one class of sentences suggests against the monistic assumption that there is one and only one property common to all true propositions. This is the primary motivation for accepting truth pluralism, and this is known as the "scope problem" (Lynch, 2009, pp. 2-9).

Let me provide some additional support for the view that the scope problem motivates pluralism about truth and then go on to reconstruct what has come to be known as the Quine-Sainsbury objection. A precise definition of the scope problem might be:

> For any candidate property, ϕ, there are a class of propositions that fail to possess ϕ but are nevertheless counted as being true.

[3] There has been quite a bit of work done on truth in mathematical and fictional discourse. Those debates lie beyond the thesis of this paper. For anyone who may be interested, please see for mathematics: Benacerraf, 1973; Fair, 1984; Putnam, 1975 and for fiction: Armour-Garb and Woodbridge, 2015; Lewis, 1978; Walton, 1990.

If we suppose that the candidate property, ϕ, is about the relationship between truth and correspondence, and we uphold ϕ in a very strict sense (i.e., no proposition can be true unless it satisfies the property ϕ), then T_v and T_m are not true. Nothing corresponds with "wrong" or an abstract "triangle." Of course, we want to say that propositions like "torturing people is wrong" or "triangles have three sides" are true, even if they do not correspond to fact. To do that, however, would be to deny that truth is strict correspondence between what the proposition means or represents and that which is represented. Thus, the view that correspondence satisfies the singular and monolithic property of truth is mistaken.

Propositions from each discourse, T_e, T_v, and T_m, can be true, even if they are "radically different in subject and function" (Lynch, 2009, p. 2). We might say for T_v that nothing would be acceptable or unacceptable if there was no axiological system. Axiological truths are unlike truths of the natural and physical sciences. Thus, we should not restrict ourselves to a correspondence view of truth to accommodate propositions whose subsentential components fail to denote things, events, or actions occurring in the natural world. According to this line of reasoning, pluralism about truth, the view that there is more than one way for a proposition to be true, is well motivated.

According to Lynch, all forms of representational theories of truth face the scope problem primarily because proponents of representationalism have suggested that (i) true beliefs are a representation of mind-independent objects that exist (i.e., medium-sized goods) and (ii) our minds are at least indirectly causally responsive to mind-independent objects and properties. For Lynch:

> If you allow yourself to focus only on examples involving physical objects, it is easy to slip into thinking that what goes for thoughts about cats and cars must also go for everything else. But on reflection, that is highly implausible. Consider propositions like *two and two are four* or *torture is wrong*. Under the assumption that truth is always and everywhere causal correspondence, it is a vexing question how these true thoughts *can* be true. That two and two are four is unimpeachable, but even granting that numbers are objects, how can any thought of mine be in causal contact with something like a number? (Lynch, 2009, p. 34)

The scope problem amounts to a rejection of the invariant nature of truth across different regions of linguistic discourse. That the representationalist might have devised an account of truth to handle expressions about the empirical world is indisputable. What is disputable is the application of representationalism to other domains of discourse.

The scope problem is not limited to a concern just for representationalist theories of truth like the correspondence theory. For example, Lynch has pointed out that it seems compatible with a pre-theoretic assumption: "it seems at least as

plausible to think that the truth of, e.g., ethical claims consists in something quite different than the truth of assertions concerning the physical world" (Lynch, 2004b, p. 385). Whatever approach we take to the nature of truth, the scope problem seems to apply (Lynch, 2009, pp. 48-49).

3. The Quine Sainsbury Objection

Not everyone has agreed with the claim that the scope problem is a good motivation for alethic pluralism. Some critics of alethic pluralism have argued that the scope problem is a pseudo-problem and, when properly understood, cannot serve as a motivation for pluralism. The rejection of the scope problem may be derived from two sources: Mark Sainsbury and W.V.O. Quine. For example, Sainsbury has argued:

> [E]ven if it is one thing for "This tree is an oak" to be true, another thing for "Burning live cats is cruel" to be true, and yet another for "Buster Keaton is funnier than Charlie Chaplain" to be true, this should not lead us to suppose that "true" is ambiguous; for we get a better explanation of the differences by alluding to the differences between trees, cruelty, and humour. We could thus be minimalist about what it is for sentences about comedy to be true, some species of realist … about what it is for sentences about morals to be true, without supposing that there is more than one univocal truth predicate. (Sainsbury, 1996, p. 900)

Like Sainsbury, Quine has maintained that we need not believe philosophical terms of art, like 'true' and 'exists', are ambiguous but that we should think of the difference as that between the subject of the expression under consideration. He writes:

> There are philosophers who stoutly maintain that 'true' said of logical or mathematical laws and 'true' said of weather predictions or suspects' confessions are two usages of an ambiguous term 'true'. There are philosophers who stoutly maintain that 'exists' said of numbers, classes and the like and 'exists' said of material objects are two usages of an ambiguous term 'exists'. What mainly baffles me is the stoutness of their maintenance. What can they possibly count as evidence? Why not view 'true' as unambiguous but very general, and recognize the difference between true logical laws and true confessions as a difference merely between logical laws and confessions? (Quine, 1960, p. 131)

If pluralism about truth is unmotivated, then there is no reason to deny that there is something invariant about the property of truth across discourses.

Although the Quine-Sainsbury objection has hit upon an interesting feature in the analysis of expressions across varying domains, it fails to consider whether

expressions occurring within a single domain of discourse might be true in different ways. The scope problem does not seem to accommodate the rich diversity of language present in any single domain of discourse.[4] If, as Sainsbury and Quine have argued, that we can account for the truth of expressions not because of the diversity of the truth-predicate but by the differences in the content of the expressions themselves, then there should be no distinction in the truths of a particular discourse. The aim of the next section is to argue that there are expressions in a single domain of discourse that seem to reveal truth to be multiform not just across discourses but multiform within one and the same discourse.

4. Intralinguistic Domain Variance and the Scalar Problem

As we have seen in the previous section, the Quine-Sainsbury objection gives us reason to deny that the scope problem adequately motivates pluralism about truth. In this section, I argue that the scalar problem presents a viable alternative motivation for pluralism about truth—one that even the deflationist cannot deny. This scalar problem shows how there are propositions that occupy a single discourse but are true in different ways.[5]

The primary focus of pluralists and monists about truth has been the property of truth and whether it functions in the same way across all truth-bearers. Pluralists about truth have pointed out that truth varies from one discourse to the next and they have pointed to practical instances, e.g., T_e, T_v, or T_m, as a means testing our pre-theoretic conception of whether truth is fragmented. Monists, on the other hand, have argued that truth is uniform across all discourses.

Let's begin by considering whether truth operates in the same way within a single given discourse. In other words, we ask monists and pluralists to suspend discussion over whether truth varies from one discourse to the next and instead focus on instances that appear in one discourse. To an extent, then, instead of asking the way in which the property of truth operates between domains of linguistic discourses, we turn our attention to the subject matter of what it is that is

[4] This intuition seems to have been appreciated by Stewart Shapiro in his 2009 review of Lynch's *Truth as One and Many*.

[5] Jeremy Wyatt (2013) has shown that truth pluralists have not been attentive to the fact that one proposition may occupy two different linguistic domains. Given that there are propositions that may occupy more than one linguistic domain, he argues that multiple domain membership not only preserves Lynch's formulation of truth pluralism but also provides a more satisfactory resolution of the problem of mixed atomics. I will not address multiple domain membership in this paper, but I direct the reader to Wyatt's fine paper.

being said within a particular domain of linguistic discourse. If there exist a variety of instances of propositions in a single domain with the same subject matter but that are true in different ways, then we reinvigorate the motivation for pluralism about truth without introducing a second linguistic discourse or multiple discourses. Pluralism about truth seems to be fully motivated, again.

I call this motivation "the scalar problem" because it focuses less on how truth functions differently across different linguistic discourses and more on whether truth functions the same way in any single discourse. The scalar problem recognizes that there is a variety of ways in which truth may be employed by different groups of people who are communicating within the same discourse.

Imagine that we are presented with the following two sentences and asked whether they are true:

(1) Ted Bundy violated the law.

(2) Martin Luther King, Jr violated the law.

It goes without saying that the two propositions are true. Bundy violated criminal law by committing atrocities against young women, while MLK Jr's violated civil disobedience law by speaking out against the injustice of Jim Crow laws towards African-Americans in the American South. It also goes without saying that the two expressions are true in virtue of the legal dimensions of the truth predicate. When Ted Bundy sexually assaulted, raped, and murdered women, he undoubtedly violated the law which prohibited these criminal acts. When MLK Jr openly criticised Jim Crow laws of the American South by demonstrating peacefully in opposition to these unjust laws, he undoubtedly violated the law prohibiting acts of civil disobedience. But are the two propositions true in the same sense? We seem compelled to argue that they are true *in different ways*. After all, one is a heinous act of vengeance and criminal behaviour while the other sought to bring attention to a form of social injustice that had been otherwise ignored by the white majority. They are both legally true, but they are true in different ways.

They are *true in different ways* not because of how they function differently in different linguistic discourses but in the subject matter of one particular discourse, i.e., the legal discourse. Both Bundy and King did "violate the law" but we also note that certain alethic features not present in the respective expressions that make us want to qualify our reaction to the following: *It is true that* Bundy violated the law and *It is true that* King violated the law. To start with, Bundy's violating the law inflicted tremendous physical and emotional damage on the victim, as well as the families and friends of those victims of those who did not survive. Let's agree that it is true that Bundy violated the law in a bad way. King's violating the law, however, helped to emancipate millions of America who had been arbitrarily subjected to penal laws whose sole purpose was to segregate and to

discriminate against a population because of the colour of their skin. It is true that King violated the law but true in a different way.

Perhaps one might claim that the comparison between (1) and (2) is unfair. There are different ways the expressions are true because the name 'Ted Bundy' is negatively valenced and the name 'Martin Luther King, Jr' is positively valenced. Our reaction to the question whether (1) is true is partly informed by the heinous acts of a serial killer, while our reaction to the question whether (2) is true is partly informed by the supererogatory and charitable acts of a zealous advocate of human rights. If it is the positive or negative valence associated with the subjects of the expressions that drive our judgments about whether the expression is true, then we are in some way begging the question against the monist.

It is difficult to take this concern seriously when it is the legal context that is in question. Dodd (2013) has argued that differences in domain is not a matter of different truth-properties but a difference of subject matter. Since the property of truth may differ across subject matters, it goes without saying that what the pluralist has uncovered something of interest. Yet, what they have uncovered is not of interest to the truth-theorist because they would like to see the different functions of truth across linguistic domains. Enter the examples above.

Let's set aside (1) and (2) and consider the following examples:

(3) Torturing people is wrong.
(4) Torturing insects is wrong.
(5) Stealing candy is wrong.
(6) Stealing the Mona Lisa is wrong.

(3), (4), (5), and (6) are interesting examples because they seem to focus our attention squarely upon whether each is true in one way or distinct ways, rather than forcing us into a position of judging whether the expression is true in light of different subject matters. Just as with the legal cases, the four examples are true in different ways, in spite of them being a moral wrong.

(3) and (4) concern the torture of living things. That is their subject matter, so the difference between the two is minimized even further than the legal cases above concerning Bundy and MLK, Jr. However, if we think about the two examples, it may be possible to come to very different conclusions about whether they are true. There seems to be no doubt that it is true that torturing people is wrong. It is wrong to harm other moral agents and torturing is a form of harm, so it is wrong to torture people. However, that torturing insects is wrong is debatable. Even if we say that torturing ants is the same as torturing humans, there are ways in which we may torture insects that may be less objectionable, such as the use of insecticides to rid our house or section of some six-legged invaders, or running over ants in a vehicle like a car or four-wheel all-terrain vehicle. The two propositions are true but differently true.

There is a strong distinction between (5) and (6), too. Stealing candy is a morally wrong act, but it's being true strikes us very differently than stealing the Mona Lisa. Are they true in the same way or in different ways? While (5) may be true given that it is a violation of a social contract, it would not seem appropriate to say that (4) may be true given it is a violation of a social contract. Likewise, we might say that (3) and (4) may be true in different ways if we suppose that there is nothing that a puppy could have done to warrant the torture. This is not to suggest that there might be reason to torture people; on the contrary, "torturing" is morally wrong *sans phrase*, but it is open to debate whether the two statements are true in the same way.

Even within a domain of empirical discourse the truth of propositions differs. For example:

(7) The earth orbits the sun every 365 ¼ days.

(8) The wall is an eggshell white colour.

(9) Humans are bipedal.

While (7), (8), and (9) are propositions in an empirical domain of discourse, we would say that they are true in different ways. Each of them corresponds to fact, but some are mediated by precise laws of nature. For (8), which is relatively imprecise in comparison with (7) and (9), the colour of the wall serves as the representative feature described by the declarative expression. (7) may seem to be precise but it is not *exactly* the length of time it takes for the earth to orbit the sun. In this sense, it is true in a different sense than (8) because (7) is more of an approximation than (8).

In this section, I have tried to show that we can extend the motivation for pluralism about truth in such a way that we encounter the same kinds of difficulties when we are confined to working within one discourse. The scalar problem seems to be further motivation for pluralism about truth, which is distinct from the scope problem. Of course, it would help if we had some empirical evidence for the kind of phenomenon which has been represented in this section of the paper. In fact, there is some empirical work that has already been done, and, in the next section, I will report some of the interesting data Arne Næss reported that supports the view.

5. Næss and the Scalar Problem

Insofar as people use the term 'true' and its cognates—and perhaps use it correctly—in natural discourse philosophers can come to a more thorough understanding of how the term operates in language by engaging with the views of ordinary people and

not repelling them.[6] Næss recognised that philosophers had been ignoring a profitable vein of research (*cf.* Næss, 1953a,b) that employs empirical studies to inform their considered view and believed that philosophers had to undertake a more systematic accounting of how truth functions in natural language if we were interested in the term's ordinary usage. Næss indulged such a call for an empirical study asking respondents open-ended qualitative questions, such as "what is the common characteristic of truth?" or "What is understood by the expression "something is true"?" in one of the earliest experimental studies of its kind (Næss, 1938, p. 24).

When subjects were asked about truth, Næss was surprised to discover at least thirteen different ways in how people expressed their views on truth. Only 7% of the participants thought truth was "agreement with reality" (Næss, 1938, Secs 33-36). Only 5% of the respondents believed truth was "agreement with fact" (Næss, 1938, Sec 36). Næss also reports that his study participants were far more likely to agree with an instance of the T-Schema than with either agreement with reality or with fact (*cf.* Næss, 1938, Figure 97,1). Despite this, Næss did recognize that study participants who received "PAf 148:" "'p' ist wahr, wenn p" the people were divided; it "received much criticism as well as appraisal" (Næss, 1938, p. 148). The cumulative data do not show any consensus on one view of truth. Already, with just this experimental data to go on, we see how one might interpret the folk notion as exemplifying pluralism about truth.

If we ask agents operating in any given discourse, then we may find that they express their views about the property of truth in different ways. Asserting that a proposition is true if and only if it corresponds to fact reflects a correspondence notion of truth. Yet, we would say that a person who states that a proposition is true if and only if its content corresponds with the way the world is seems to reflect a correspondence notion, too. There seems to be no way in which we might restrict the ways in which the property of truth is exemplified in discourse.

Despite that the surface grammar of the two correspondence notions appear to be on the level and in agreement, we quickly see that the two are very different. While a proponent of the first view might not be forced to accept that a

[6] This is not the first time such a topic has been broached by someone interested in the use of true in a discourse. Perhaps the earliest work into such a view came during the time of the Vienna Circle, especially through the work of Arne Næss. The concern might be much older than that. Members of the Lwow-Warsaw School, particularly Twardowski and his major professor Franz Brentano, seem to have alluded to the operation of truth in a discourse as early as 1884 (*cf.* Brentano, 1966; Woleński, 1989). The Austro-Polish 'obsession' with truth did not end with the death of either Twardowski or Brentano. Łukasiewicz, Leśniewski, and Kotarbiński all developed formal understandings of truth, including the somewhat controversial notion of sempiternal truth. Of course, Tarski, Leśniewski's student, seems to be the towering figure in truth theory because of his semantic conception.

proposition is true only when the propositional constituents it denotes exist, leaving this sort of correspondence theorist fully capable of accepting arithmetical truths, a proponent of the second is not so lucky. The proponent of correspondence who claims a proposition's truth or falsity depends upon whether there is something in the world that corresponds with its sentential or subsentential components cannot accept that a proposition referring to abstracta is true. One might contend that Næss' experimental results are inconclusive because all participants fail to converge on one and only one conception of truth. If one were to believe that the ordinary or folk notion of truth is singular and monolithic, then there is something about Næss' results that seem inconclusive. Yet, if one were to suggest that the folk notion is fragmented in a way anticipated by alethic pluralism, then Næss' findings should not come as much of a shock at all. Ordinary people seem to be sensitive to the varying ways in which an expression might be true within natural language.

In a discussion of the questions classified as "Ge1-groups," Næss collected nearly "974 'truths', varying from each other in the most astonishing way" (Næss, 1938, pp. 131-132). The examples of "truths" he collected from 250 participants ranged from the mundane, "It is true that I am now sitting and writing" to the profound, "There is a hell." §38 divides up the examples into four main groupings, Ge1.1: examples containing the term "we," Ge1.2: examples referring to "others," Ge1.3: examples of all sorts of "trivialities" (Næss, 1938, p. 136), and Ge1.4: examples of historical importance. Then, in §83, he compared the frequency of different Ge1-groups. When he analysed the data, he discovered that people who have been asked for an example of a truth more often (60% of all statements) give an example one might consider trivial than a "normative" or "mathematical" claim.

The result is informative for this paper concerning the scalar problem, particularly when we turn to Næss' analysis of how participants responded to the formulations of truth other participants offered. Participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the formulation of another participant in the same study. The formulation appears in the "( )", and the response of the participant outside the parentheses.

> Afr 1,1 (That it agrees with reality.) A good answer.
>
> Afr 9,2 (My own conviction) This conviction does not need to agree with reality.
>
> Afr 59,1 ([Truth] serves life.) "Lies also serve life (may be it is deeper than I can understand)." (Næss 1938: §89)

Næss believes that participants either assent to the formulation of another participant, criticize it, or remain neutral with respect to the other's formulation. It is far more likely that any participant will reject or criticize the formulation of

another participant (77.0%) than the person would assent to the formulation of another participant (14.5%) (Næss, 1938, §91).[7]

Given the wide variety of ordinary notions of truth he has collected using the questionnaire method and given that participants in his studies are far less likely to accept the truth formulation of another person, Næss' results show that there is not one singular and monolithic view of truth operative in natural language among ordinary users. The ordinary notion or commonsense view of truth is a myth. People operating within one discourse express their views about truth in different ways. Not only is it the case, as the truth pluralist has argued, that any given property of truth need not be satisfied by different classes of propositions, but also different agents or groups of agents use the truth predicate in different ways. Therefore, truth is not uniform.

6. The Challenge of Deflationary Monism

Some proponents of deflationary monism have recommended against pluralism about truth on the grounds that the scope problem is a pseudo-problem and cannot be a motivation for undertaking pluralism. If pluralism about truth is unmotivated, then there is no reason to deny that there is something invariant about the property of truth across discourses. In this section, I argue that the scalar problem presents a viable alternative motivation for pluralism about truth—one that the deflationist cannot deny.

Deflationary accounts of truth are theoretically parsimonious because they deny that truth is anything beyond what can be captured by its expressive capacity. If the truth predicate were not a kind of expressive device, then it would not be needed in language. We can explain how the truth predicate acts as an expressive device without thereby also being committed to any other facts about truth. Therefore, according to the deflationist about truth, considerations of theoretical economy demand that we refrain from proposing a metaphysically robust conception of truth.

Deflationary monism about truth, particularly the view originating in Horwich (1990/1998) and developed most recently by Dodd (2013), has it that there is nothing more about truth we need to assume than that "*p* is true" is just an indirect way of saying that *p*. For Horwich, Tarski's material adequacy condition, Convention-T: "*p*" is true if and only if *p* (Tarski 1983, 1944) is something approaching a universal generalization which is inferred from a potentially infinite number of non-paradoxical instances of Conv-T. For example:

[7] The results appearing in Ge1-groups, as well as some of the finer details of Næss' experimental work, have been omitted in recent work that attempts to draw conclusions about how empirical studies bear, or fail to bear, on the philosophic study of truth (Asay 2024, forthcoming).

> "Grass is green" is true if and only if grass is green.
>
> "Serdar Berdimuhamedow is prime minister of Turkmenistan" is true if and only if Serdar Berdimuhamedow is prime minister of Turkmenistan.
>
> "The ideal number of men in a Turkish bath is 17" is true if and only if the ideal number of men in a Turkish bath is 17.

On Tarski's view, these instances or examples of Conv-T are known individually as examples of the "T-Schema." Whereas Tarski devised the semantic conception of truth, which employed two formal conditions: formal correctness and material adequacy (Conv-T), to generalize over all instances of the T-Schema, Horwich believed the biconditionals comprising his minimalist view, i.e., all instances of the T-Schema, to be the fundamental part of his view because our grasp of truth is composed of accepting these biconditionals as the source for everything else we do with the truth predicate and they explain all the facts we need to know about truth (Horwich, 2001, p. 149-150).

Perhaps the most obvious concern with Horwich's minimalism, anticipated by Tarski, is that a universal generalization is not entailed by a set of its instances (*cf.* Armour-Garb, 2004). The less obvious concern, however, is one introduced by the scalar problem. If "our" grasp of truth is somehow settled by instances of the T-Schema, then we should be able to empirically test whether philosophers (and non-philosophers) find the instances of the T-Schema to have something in common and that something which is in common among all instances is the property of truth that agents working within a particular discourse believe expresses something about the truth predicate. This is not to permit decisions about the theory of truth to be decided by consensus of the majority; rather, it is a matter of discovering what property of truth is operative in a discourse.

If it turns out that there is more to truth than merely a set of instances of the T-Schema, then minimalism is missing a fact about truth. Remember that Næss' (1938) findings suggested that among the respondents he tested a form of correspondence seems to have come up in at least 7% of the population he questioned. Barnard and Ulatowski (2013) have shown variance in non-philosophers' responses to questions concerning correspondence truth, and they have shown that non-philosophers may have different conceptions of objectivity when it comes to truth (Barnard and Ulatowski 2021). Mizumoto (2022) has reported cross-linguistic variance in the folk concept of truth between native English speakers and native Japanese speakers (*cf.* Reuter 2024; Wyatt and Ulatowski 2024). Reuter and Brun (2022) have shown substantive variance in how people respond to questions concerning coherence and truth. Also, Ulatowski (2022) has shown that practical variants of the equivalence schema are widely accepted by non-philosophers. The experimental results might not convince us that the property of truth operating in

natural discourse is robust and inflationary, but there are people who agree that it is not deflated in the way that Horwich argues. There is a missing fact about truth minimalism that it is potentially incapable of accounting for. Thus, it seems that a view cannot be founded upon the biconditionals as the source for everything else we can do with the truth predicate or explain all the facts we know about truth.

Somewhat incensed by the problem of universal generalization minimalism faces, Dodd has sought to argue for a more modest version of deflationary truth than Horwich's minimalism. His view aims to settle the concern over how to explain universal generalization by exploiting both standard nominal quantification and sentential quantification. Doing so allows the view to endorse "the finitely stateable claim that can be glossed as follows: any entity *x* is true just in case, for some way things may be said to be, *x* is the proposition that things are that way, and things *are* that way" (Dodd, 2013). According to Dodd, the semi-formal universally quantified proposition that permits him to capture the gloss is:

$$\text{TD: } \forall x\ (x \text{ is true if and only if } \exists p\ (x = \langle p \rangle \wedge p))$$

TD is more fundamental than Horwich's minimalism because any instance of the T-Schema can be proved by appealing to it, and, according to Dodd, TD avoids the universal generalization problem because TD is a universally quantified proposition.

The question is whether Dodd's modest deflationary monism is able to account for the diversity of truth present in a single linguistic discourse. According to the view Dodd presents, the only option he leaves for us is to perform a massive experimental study of people operating within a given linguistic discourse. If TD is more fundamental than the T-Schema, then it should be present within all different expressions appearing in any given discourse. Finding one counterexample would seem to work against Dodd's modest deflationism, or, at the very least, invite us to have a further discussion of what is most fundamental in any given discourse.

7. Conclusion

Proponents of pluralism about truth have argued that their view is motivated by the scope problem, and, although I do not disagree, I believe there is another relevant problem motivating truth pluralism. It is what I have termed the "scalar problem," which suggests that there are a variety of ways truth is employed by agents within a single discourse or across different discourses. If the analysis is correct, and it seems to have been shown to be true in the early empirical studies of Arne Næss, then pluralism about truth is motivated by the scalar problem too. The challenge

some deflationists about truth have presented in opposition to the scope problem seems unable to defend against the scalar problem. If anything, it turns out that these minimalists either will have to perform their own empirical studies to support their view or explain what is meant when they claim their view is the most "fundamental."[8]

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Helmuth Plessner's Philosophy of the Work of Art in Anthropological and Phenomenological Perspective

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ABSTRACT. This paper aims to explore the theme of art in Helmuth Plessner's philosophical anthropology and show the possibilities of its use in the analysis of artistic creation and artwork. The article is divided into three parts: in the first part, it presents the background of Plessner's anthropological project and the intersection of his philosophy with Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. This strategy enables the synergy of both approaches which can be used for reflection of art. The second part displays the scope and ingenuity of Plessner's approach through a selection of texts where he addresses art. And finally, the third part delves into a functional elaboration of the anthropology of an artwork, specifically, using Max Beckmann as an example, into the question of anthropological foundations in art making, and the question of new form in art. For the latter question, I use the approach to architecture as an example relying on corporeality and Umwelt as guiding concepts. This analysis provides, on the one hand, description of anthropologically significant phenomena of artistic production of the first half of the twentieth century, and on the other hand, reveals functional determinations of corporeality, the world, and resonance with the world, the so-called equilibrium, which can be used to understand the artwork, and artistic production in the creation of a new form in art.

Keywords: philosophical anthropology, phenomenology, Helmuth Plessner, Edmund Husserl, Max Beckmann, corporeality, Umwelt, resonance, new form.

Helmuth Plessner, one of the main representatives of philosophical anthropology, was Edmund Husserl's student, studied zoology and philosophy and his contribution is mainly associated with the concept of excentric positionality.

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This concept is introduced in his book *Levels of Organic Life and the Human* which is one of his most significant writings, and it is divided into three parts dealing with the plant, animal and human spheres respectively. The final chapter presents three anthropological principles which later become essential for his further investigations of man, corporeality, relation to the environment, behaviour, sociality, and expressivity. These are: natural artificiality, mediated immediacy and the utopian standpoint. This paper attempts to demonstrate that Plessner's conception represents a *heuristic approach* useful for capturing anthropologically significant phenomena manifesting in a particular structure of an experience, description of which may be done using phenomenological resources present in Plessner's work.[1] This approach will then be applied to works of art and artistic creation.

Intersections between phenomenology and anthropology

The hypothesis I am drawing from is the interference of Plessner's anthropology and Husserl's phenomenology which is confirmed by biographical contexts[2], as well as overlaps of the ideas.[3] Let us examine the possibilities of convergence and functional cooperation between phenomenology and anthropology from both sides, i.e. from both Plessner's and Husserl's perspectives.

The philosophical and scientific background against which Plessner's major work of 1928[4] can be interpreted, both positively and critically, is extremely rich. Here, I aim to highlight the connection with Husserl's *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure*

[1] Originally a medical student, Plessner, under the influence of Hans Driesch and his lecture "Philosophical Psychology," took up biology and philosophy and studied with Husserl in Göttingen (Driesch, for example, writes to Husserl: "Plessner is primarily influenced by you," see Carole Dietze, *Nachgeholters Leben. Helmuth Plessner 1892-1985,* Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2006, p. 34).

[2] See ibidem.

[3] See Thiemo Breyer, "Helmuth Plessner und die Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität," in *Bulletin d'Analyse Phénoménologique*, 8(4), 2012; Maren Wehrle, "Medium und Grenze: Der Leib als Kategorie der Intersubjektivität. Phänomenologie und Anthropologie im Dialog," in Th. Breyer (ed.), *Grenzen der Empathie. Philosophische, psychologische und anthropologische Perspektiven*, Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2013, pp. 217-238; Jaroslava Vydrová, "The Intertwining of Phenomenology and Philosophical Anthropology: From Husserl to Plessner," in P. Šajda (ed.), *Modern and Postmodern Crises of Symbolic Structures*, Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2021, pp. 41-62.

[4] Plessner also mentions the context of his work in the two introductions to the editions of *Levels of Organic Life and the Human* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019, pp. xv-xxxv). "It is too early, incidentally, to decide which forces have been most significant in the emergence of the new philosophical disciplines, whether it is psychoanalysis or *Lebensphilosophie*, cultural sociology or phenomenology, intellectual history [*Geistesgeschichte*] or the crises in medicine" (p. xvi).

Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy II. Despite not being published during Husserl's lifetime, and despite Husserl constantly revising his manuscripts, their theme resonated profoundly. Husserl was engaged in exploring the concept of "units of constitution of things, the body and the soul,"[5] while also aiming to clarify the relationship of phenomenology with natural sciences, psychology, and spiritual sciences.[6] These discussions sparked debates in academic circles, shaping a research theme evident in the works of other contemporaneous thinkers. The central inquiry revolved around capturing the subjectivity of experience and knowledge in a manner that is both appropriate and plausible, without resorting to reductionism.

Husserl played a significant role in fostering these discussions, which were also apparent in anthropology during that period. However, he was also reacting to the works, which he believed were straying from the phenomenological agenda. In 1933, at the invitation of the Kant Society, he wrote the text "Phenomenology and Anthropology," where he positioned himself against the trend of anthropologizing philosophy. While critical, this text can also be viewed as instructive, emphasizing the importance of refining the method of addressing questions about human being and maintaining focus on phenomenology. In text about the meaning of anthropology from 1932 Husserl asserts that "the science of man appears to be a specific science. Man is in the world and does not himself contain the world, and the science of the human being, without going beyond the human being, qua human being, encompasses all the sciences."[7] On one hand, the human affairs cannot be interpreted solely from the perspective of the world or of the objectification. Man exists within the world, but not merely as a component of it that can be fully comprehended from it. On the other hand, there are certain commonalities underlying the disciplines that focus on the world from a human perspective, leading to the study of human being. This affinity wouldn't be possible without "reasons in the subject matter itself."[8] How to establish a science that isn't reductionistic or naturalistic, doesn't lose sight of the subjective perspective, and yet remains rigorous? Husserl's phenomenology distinguishes itself from the naivety of natural attitude as well as the naturalization of subjectivity. Through the phenomenological method, he elucidates these insights,

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[5] Marly Biemel, "Einleitung des Herausgebers," in Husserl, Edmund, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Zweites Buch*, The Hague: Martin Nijhoff, 1952, p. xvii.

[6] The second volume, included in Husserliana IV until 1952, underwent further collaboration with Edith Stein, who handled transcriptions and Husserl's textual enhancements between 1916 and 1918, and Ludwig Landgrebe, whose final transcription formed the basis of the edition. See Maren Biemel, "Einleitung des Herausgebers." The new edition (*Ideas II* and *Ideas III* volume) is now announced within the Husserliana.

[7] Hua XV, p. 481.

[8] Hua XXVII, p. 180.

bracketing them while also acquiring a new phenomenological and personalistic attitude. The origins of this knowledge lie within subjectivity and the new exploration of personal and spiritual realms, with a particular emphasis on behaviour, agency, cognition, being of the self in its environment (*Umwelt*), and with other people, in how one expresses oneself and creates—in specific analyses of possibilities, performances, experiences and human relations. These inquiries revolve around intentionality and motivation, not causality.[9] Furthermore, this is the place where the fundamental intersection of phenomenology and anthropology lies as well, viewing anthropology as a spiritual science.[10]

As for Plessner, his references to phenomenology are occasional,[11] however, he implicitly values the phenomenological approach in multiple ways. He does not want to use phenomenology in the sense of a scientific method that provides a foundation ("foundation-securing")[12] or in the sense of a theoretical interpretation. Its use is more important in uncovering the original phenomena:

> Anthropology had at its disposal—and this is crucial—the means of phenomenological analysis, which made it possible to bring both empirical and philosophical accounts back to their original starting points. Wherever the danger arises that theories run into dead ends or that problems become dogmatic, where problems and theories fail, a pre-theoretical, direct, "demonstrative" (*anschaulicher*) contact can be acquired. In doing so, it is completely indifferent how phenomenological practice is interpreted.[13]

After Husserl's departure from Göttingen to Freiburg in 1916, however, Plessner no longer follows his teacher, and the reason is transcendental idealism. He himself dates this departure from phenomenology to 1918.[14] While it may seem that Plessner's inclination towards the excentricity, towards the idea that the self's foundation lies off-center clashes with Husserl's ego-sphere, which strips the self of all

[9] Hua IV, pp. 189, 195

[10] Husserl differentiates between: "Man in the sense of *nature* (as an object of zoology and natural scientific anthropology)—Man as a *spiritual real* and as a member of the spiritual world (as an object of the human sciences)" (Ibidem, p. 143).

[11] Exploration in the original human experience ("the way it lives and not the way it presents itself to scientific observation"), thus "phenomenological description must step in here and lead the way to and stay with original intuition" (*Levels of Organic Life and the Human*, p. 20).

[12] Ibidem, p. xvii.

[13] Helmuth Plessner, "Immer noch Philosophische Anthropologie?" in *Condition Humana,* Gesammelte Schriften VIII, 3rd ed., Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2017, pp. 235-236.

[14] Helmuth Plessner, *Levels of Organic Life and the Human*, p. xvii.

transcendent impositions, a more nuanced understanding of Plessner's confrontation with transcendentalism in phenomenology is feasible today, given new research and ongoing debates regarding transcendental phenomenology.[15] Since transcendental subjectivity is not merely theoretical or empty but intertwined with intersubjective and corporeal dimensions, consequently this contradiction appears more surmountable. Transcendental phenomenology delves into the fundamental structure of experience, its progressions, and configurations, leading to inquiries into motivation, corporeality, and intentionality—examining experience in both its active and passive constitutions. Moreover, posing the initial investigative question appropriately aids in identifying convergences and avoiding imprecise analogies—specifically, in our case, regarding the notions of expression and corporeality, focusing on the connections with *Ideas II*. Husserl endeavours to explore the grammar of expression, where "this manifold expression in corporeality (*Leiblichkeit*) appresents mental *existence*, all this constitutes a double unified subject matter (*Gegenständlichkeit*): the human being—without 'introjection'."[16]

Although initially exploring Kantianism for answers—unlike Max Scheler, for example—Plessner ultimately refines his anthropological framework by revealing unique phenomena that fundamentally characterize human being: its expressivity and behaviour. Plessner provides insights into the structure of these distinctive experiences, shedding light on phenomena rarely addressed in philosophy but crucial for understanding the complexity of human being. Prominent examples include laughter and crying as distinct expressions of human being, alongside, for example, sport and role-playing, which serve as exemplary cases in anthropology. Additionally, Plessner delves into various forms of social interaction, examining the behavioural dynamics of diplomacy and tact or the roots of social radicalism. This is often intertwined even with what is seen in the paintings as artistic solution made by artist. From this follows that art and art-making can emerge as foundational inquiry in anthropology rather than mere additional reflection of human activity.

[15] See Dan Zahavi, "Phänomenologie und transzendentalphilosophie," in G. Figal, H.-H. Gander (eds.), *Heidegger und Husserl. Neue Perspektiven*, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2009, pp. 73-99; Sara Heinämaa, "On the transcendental undercurrents of phenomenology: the case of the living body," in *Continental Philosophy Review*, 54, 2021, pp. 237-257; Iulian Apostolescu, Claudia Serban (eds.), *Husserl, Kant and Transcendental Phenomenology,* Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2020. Each of these approaches offers its unique perspective on Husserl's transcendental inquiry.

[16] Hua IV, p. 166.

Art in Plessner's philosophy: introductory remarks

Plessner's engagement with the question of art can be approached on three levels. Firstly, there are instances where Plessner directly addresses art; secondly, art-making intersects with other anthropologically significant phenomena; thirdly, Plessner's own anthropological principles can be applied to analyses of art-making. While each area provides intriguing insights, I will focus primarily on the two latter levels after briefly surveying the first. This is because they provide valuable insights into the phenomenologically significant contexts surrounding the structure of artistic production.

In examining Plessner's texts, we encounter numerous passages where he grapples with the question of art. This includes critical contemporary analyses and explorations of visual perception, auditory experiences, and the relationship between hand and eye[17] in artistic creation—exploring the *what, how*, and *why* behind artistic expression, as seen in painting, for instance. The covered topics range from expressivity and play in various contexts to discussions on music, modern art, the avant-garde across different domains, and the societal role of art. Additionally, Plessner's engagement with architecture, particularly in the design of his own house, offers further insights. The subtopics explored in his texts encompass concepts like kitsch, fashion, humour, and others. According to Carole Dietze, Plessner's deeper understanding of art history was fostered during his auxiliary civil service in 1917, where he worked at the museum in Nuremberg, aiding in the collection of Renaissance coins and commemorating the Reformation anniversary. Building on this experience, he later published text "On the philosophy of the history of the visual art since the Renaissance and Reformation."[18] However, the main texts focusing on art emerged later and reflect Plessner's own philosophical-anthropological framework, such as *The Unity of the Senses (Die Einheit der Sinne), Levels of Organic Life and the Human*, writings on socio-political issues, and texts on expressions, laughter, and crying. Additionally, Plessner's personal proximity to the art world, including interactions with artists and architects—such as his appreciation of Max Beckmann (1884-1950) whose three paintings he also owned—also informs us about his perspectives on art.

[17] See Joachim Fischer, "'Ästhetische Anthropologie' und 'anthropologische Ästhetik'," pp. 79-82.

[18] See Carole Dietze, *Nachgeholters Leben*, p. 37; Helmuth Plessner, "Zur Geschichtsphilosophie der bildenden Kunst seit Renaissance und Reformation," in *Ausdruck und menschliche Natur,* Gesammelte Schriften VII, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003, pp. 7-49.

It is Max Beckmann who can provide us with an *immedias res* entry point for philosophical analysis. Although Plessner addresses him only minimally in theoretical terms, Beckmann's works are philosophically intriguing and, as we'll endeavour to illustrate, particularly significant for analysing corporeality.[19] Notice especially those works produced after the First World War, a transformative period marked by the emergence of new artistic and social formations as well as formations of ideas, along with the discovery of fresh avenues of knowledge and creation, yet also witnessing an emerging crisis of the image of human being. What does such art express? For Plessner, the question of art and creation always arises within the context of human life in the world, in society, and amidst historical circumstances that shape possibilities for action and expression. On the one hand, art captures the spirit of the times—the atmosphere in which humans live—which is on the other hand shaped by their expressions and creations. However, this general statement doesn't merely linger on the surface of observing social conditions and art's development; rather, it becomes more precise when examining the structure of the experience at hand and the ways in which it manifests itself.

The dynamic structure of "artist—work—time and space" must be interpreted in Plessner's framework within the context of *excentric positionality*. The paradox inherent in this concept encapsulates human existence within the dynamics of experiencing (already existing in the world, taking part in a situation, undergoing experiences) and feeling it in relation to its integration into the context of life, other experiences, expectations, and memory. Human experiencing, feeling, and living unfold in correlation with the space and time one inhabits, similarly to all living organisms. Yet, in the case of humans, this doesn't occur in a purely centralized or purely external manner, distinguishing them from animal and vegetative modes of existence. However, it also doesn't happen in a fully transparent manner; even though humans understand their position, they cannot anchor their essence in a stable manner. Consequently, humans must grapple with their nature, as a matter that forces them to take a stance towards it and navigate their lives accordingly. This grappling with oneself, viewed through the lens of the three anthropological principles, reveals that human beings are both natural and artificial; they enact their nature by creating and utilizing various artifacts to navigate their situations—here, the hand serves as a prime example in its creative collaboration with materials.

[19] Plessner is also linked to Beckmann by the fate of an emigrant who found refuge and internment in the Netherlands for a time. On the contrary, in his theoretical analyses, Plessner did not elaborate on Beckmann (see Carole Dietze, *Nachgeholters Leben*, p. 221). I am aware of one passage in Plessner ("Über die gesellschaftlichen Bedingungen der modernen Malerei," in *Schriften zur Soziologie ind Sozialphilosophie,* Gesammelte Schriften X, 2nd ed., Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006, pp. 276-277).

Humans experience both immediately and through mediated relationships with their environment and with others, all while embedded in their corporeality and experiencing immediacy. Hunam beings are drawn towards home, rootedness, and dwelling, yet simultaneously face uncertainty regarding their being in the world, continually confronting the question: What is my place in the world?

The conduct of life materializes in actions, creative endeavours, communication, and relationships; it manifests itself in the world. Human beings become themselves, emerging from concealment into the realm of manifestation, yet remaining partially veiled.[20] Here lies a distinctive characteristic of humans—their doubleness (according to Plessner the man is also *Doppelgänger*).

> We want ourselves to be seen and to have been seen as we are; and we want just as much to veil ourselves and remain unknown, for behind every determination of our being lies dormant the unspoken possibility of being different. Out of this ontological ambiguity arise, with iron necessity, the two fundamental forces of psychological [*Seelischen*] life: the impetus to disclosure—the need for validity; and the impetus to restraint—the need for modesty.[21]

Starting from these principles, art becomes means of expressing one's identity through the dynamics of revelation and concealment in artistic expression, and as a form of creative activity, art serves as an expression of man's self-understanding. Just as a tangible object comes into existence through the utilization of a diverse array of tools, techniques, and means that individuals have at their disposal and have created for this purpose, an artist employs specific colours, techniques, and approaches to material, among other factors, in this endeavour. The significance of 20th-century art lies in the innovative techniques and forms of depiction crucial for deconstructing and rejecting imitative tendencies, aiming to lead both artists and viewers towards a true vision free from representational constraints.[22] Consequently, art can become "devoted

[20] Plessner further delves into concepts like rootlessness, indeterminacy, unfathomability, and unanswerable nature of humanity's foundational question, labeling man as *homo absconditus* ("Homo absconditus," in *Condition Humana,* Gesammelte Schriften VIII, 3rd ed., Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2017, p. 357).

[21] Helmuth Plessner, *Limits of community: A Critique of Social Radicalism.* New York: Humanities Press, 1999, p. 109.

[22] One of Beckmann's most striking paintings is The Falling Man (1950), which in many ways captures the situation of man in Plessnerian determinations, although it is usually interpreted in the context of Heidegger's philosophy. Art can "liberate a person divided by life and enable to see into invisible spaces," it is a bridge to the unseen, but where the true reality lies (Beckmann in František Mikš, *Braque, Beckmann, Kokoschka, Balthus,* Brno: Barrister and Principal, 2013, pp. 136-141).

to vision," rather than ideas that underpin it.[23] This underscores the rootedness of creative activity in perceptual experiences (eye, hand, ear), as noted by J. Fischer.[24] These means are therefore not external constructs but are deeply intertwined with human nature as embodied beings.

Art encapsulates an image of the man, which is not merely a representation or external rendition of the inner experiences, or conventionalization of ideas. Instead, artistic creation as the activity of the subject is embedded in her corporeality, experience, and existence in the world. Art and creative activity are thus connected to Husserl's aforementioned concept of expression of mental activity, which he describes as an expression in corporeality expressing mental existence.[25] We can adopt a combination of anthropological and phenomenological approaches to further explore this connection.

The issues of corporeality in art: being a body and having a body

Central to this exploration is the concept of corporeality and the question is what understanding of corporeality does Helmuth Plessner bring to the forefront? He builds upon the phenomenological concept of corporeality and the distinction between the living body and physical body, grounded in the subjectivity of corporeality evident in self-experience, perception, and interactions with others. Husserl addressed corporeality in various contexts, and to elucidate, let's consider the three levels delineated by Sara Heinämaa in her conceptual clarification: "First, definitions that operate by the distinction between the *first-person perspective* and the third-person perspective; second, definitions that resort to the distinction between *being* and having (or *existing* and possessing); and, third, definitions that draw from the distinction between *subjectivity* and objectivity."[26] Phenomenology thus addresses the issue of corporeality from multiple angles, aiming to prevent the reduction of the body and to avoid the pitfalls of objectification and dualism. These challenges profoundly impact our understanding of the body across various fields, particularly scientific ones, where disembodiment or the degradation of corporeality can occur. Such issues may also arise in art and creation, such as in an overly

[23] Helmuth Plessner, "Über die gesellschaftlichen Bedingungen der modernen Malerei," p. 274; "wurde aus einer Kunst hingegebenen Sehens eine Kunst der Hingabe an das Sehen" (ibidem, p. 274).

[24] Joachim Fischer, "'Ästhetische Anthropologie' und 'anthropologische Ästhetik'," p. 79 f.

[25] See footnote 16 in this text; Hua IV, p. 166.

[26] Sara Heinämaa, "On the transcendental undercurrents of phenomenology: the case of the living body," p. 241.

idealized focus on interiority. As Thomas Fuchs explains, the relationship to the body can manifest itself in two problematic forms: "On the one hand, the subjective body is objectified as a mere physical thing; on the other hand, the bodily subject is hypostasized as a pure ego-consciousness."[27] Drawing on Plessner's insights, Fuchs demonstrates that consciousness and intentionality are deeply anchored in corporeality, body as the subject at the level of the proto-self, forming the foundational sensation of life.[28] In other words, this refers precisely to the fundamental enactment of life or the actions of living organisms within their environment.[29] Phenomenology emphasizes the significance of the pre-reflective and affective dimensions, which are essential for various aspects of human experience, including attention, movement, perception, and behaviour, in which all other higher symbolic systems are rooted.[30]

What makes Plessner's contribution significant is his depiction of the body within the dynamics of excentric positionality, representing both the body we are and the body we possess—*als Leib im Köper*—as Heinämaa articulates in the second definition of being and having. The terms *Leib-Körperlichkeit* or *Körper-Leiblichkeit* convey the interconnectedness of these two aspects, shaping the expressions and configurations of bodily experience and behaviour. Consider activities such as playing the accordion or learning to write with a pen, where physical abilities like muscle strength and coordination are important, especially hand muscles, back muscles, sitting balance, and coordination of parallel muscle actions are crucial as they affect the mastery of moving the instrument and the delicacy of the hand movements in writing. Muscle memory is particularly important in playing the accordion because hand movements cannot be visually controlled; however, these activities transcend mere physicality through creativity, synergy, spontaneity, subjectivity, and autonomy. Moreover, environmental interactions and affordances influence the formation of corporeality itself, as it actively integrates obstacles, mistakes, and unexpected events. In the act of creation or learning, subjectivity remains intertwined with the world and its tools. A mastered piece is the result of the interplay of the fingers, the instrument, the composition, where the subject no longer perceives her body in the pressure of the keys or in the grip of the pen (as *Körper*), but the body cooperates with the instrument, and allowing itself to be guided by the action the instrument

[27] Thomas Fuchs, *The Phenomenology and Biology of the Embodied Mind*. Oxford University Press, 2018 p. 73.
[28] See ibidem, p. 117.
[29] Ibidem, p. 138
[30] Ibidem, p. 145.

directs the hand (as *Leib*).[31] In general, practical knowledge and skills are manifestations of living corporeality, enactive and holistic, embodying a comprehensive engagement that cannot be reduced to individual components.[32]

If, then, the configuration of bodily experience entails one's interaction with the environment and with one's own corporeality, the inquiries in the realm of art-making about "what" is worthy of depiction and "how" it should be depicted naturally engage with the appropriate understanding of corporeality. On one hand, corporeality evolves within the environment and thus within the cultural context[33] and on the other hand, the representations, images of the body itself reflect the situation of man and perceptions of body. Essentially, "the body plays an important role in the relation of a person towards his or her culture, not only in the sense that cultural expressions often involve the body, but also in that the relation towards the body is influenced by culture."[34] Let's delve into specific examples of art and how the artists of this era perceive corporeality as expressed in their work.

Here, the body takes on two distinct forms, with notable examples of neutralizing, maintaining a distance from, and objectifying it. This is evident in the sterile depiction of the body (as sterile body schema) in various activities, including social interactions, role-playing, sports, and body display. In *Limits of Community: A Critique of Social Radicalism* (1924), Plessner discusses tactlessness in relation to art, bodily hygiene, emotional exposure, and extends this to tactlessness in relation

[31] "the realized function of writing itself is only possible in the functional cycle of perception and movement, which ties organism, pen, and paper together into a dynamic unit" (ibidem, p. 128, see p. 131: "the-pianist-with-his-piano-in-the-soundscape," p. 144).

[32] See works of Fuchs (ibidem), Gallagher ("Surprise! Why enactivism and predictive processing are parting ways: The case of improvisation," in *Possibility Studies & Society*, 1(3), 2023).

[33] "The resulting spatial proportions are adjusted for by the brain during early development. Such cuboid structures, however, are characteristic of urban cultures and rarely found in natural environments. As it turned out, in members of African round hut cultures the Müller-Lyer illusion in fact does not occur, or at least much less frequently" (Thomas Fuchs, *The Phenomenology and Biology of the Embodied Mind*, p. 143).

[34] Kirsten Pols, "Strangely Familiar. The Debate on Multiculturalism and Plessner's Philosophical Anthropology," in J. de Mul (ed.), *Plessner's Philosophical Anthropology. Perspectives and Prospects,* Amsterdam University Press, 2014, p. 273. As stated by Wulf: "his practical knowledge also includes the body movements that are used to stage scenes of social action. Discipline and control of body movements result in a disciplined and controlled practical knowledge which is stored in the body memory and enables human beings to enact the corresponding forms of symbolic and scenic actions. This practical knowledge is based on the social forms of action and performance established in a particular culture, and is therefore a pronounced but specific knowledge, limited in terms of its historical and cultural horizons" (Christoph Wulf, "The Creation of Body Knowledge in Mimetic Processes," in G. Etzelmüller, Ch. Tewes (ed.), *Embodiment in Evolution and Culture*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016, pp. 256-257).

to others and oneself.[35] While the body is indeed present in art and often emphasized, even seemingly transparent,[36] it is observed in a specific disembodied sense as an object. Plessner notes that the ambition of art is quickly exhausted and satisfied through schematism and quick fixes, whether through shock value (*le choc pour le choc*) or empty experimentation. The formalization of relationships, suppressed or unbridled emotionality, and inadequate attitudes toward one's own body provoke the opposite need—a quest for ways to reconnect with the body, to experience one's own corporeality, to be true to oneself. Examining Beckmann's works and those of his contemporaries reveals corporeality depicted in unconventional settings such as the circus, trapeze, cabaret, and taverns. They often serve as common themes for avant-garde artists, representing a release, a display of corporeality in its raw, elemental form since they are not the formal public spheres, nor are they the intimate spaces of private relationships, instead, they are transitional or escape spaces, and unofficial realms. In society of that time, both public and private spheres suffer from the pressure to publicly express emotions while simultaneously repressing and mismanaging intimacy, as diagnosed by Plessner. Conversely, disorder and lack of organisation are permitted in peripheral social spaces, contrasting with the sterile environments of cities and industrial architecture. The juxtaposition of the mundane, the ordinary, and the extraordinary is evident in the emphasis on certain objects or figures, such as a harlequin, bottles, musical instruments, and a funambulist.[37]

They serve as the catalyst for a corporeality that, while outwardly constrained by conventions, inwardly disturbed in unprocessed phenomena. In 1918, Beckmann said: "I do not weep: I loathe tears, for they are a sign of slavery. I concentrate on my work—on my leg, my hand… on the relationship of straight and bent lines, on the interesting placement of small, variously and interestingly rounded shapes, next to flat surfaces, walls, tabletops, wooden crosses and housefronts."[38] Beckmann grapples with an emotional depth that, within the realm of his artwork, evades being fully understood and objectified; simultaneously, it escapes also from experiencing only in the intimacy and subjectivity of a person without corporeality. He aims to delve into a deeper layer of bodily existence, focusing on the purity of the form—the

[35] Helmuth Plessner, *Limits of community: A Critique of Social Radicalism*, p. 167.

[36] Lipták ("Body, Music and Electronics: Pierre Schaeffer and Phenomenology of Music," in *Studia UBB. Philosophia*, 67(1), 2022, p. 54) highlights the spectrum of bodily expression, ranging from transparency to opacity.

[37] They serve as a "collision of the 'ordinary' with the 'mysteries of the extraordinary' and exemplify the lay metaphysics of everyday life" (Oskár Čepan, *Oskár Čepan and visual art*, Bratislava, 2018, pp. 570-571).

[38] See https://www.ft.com/content/31620d29-548e-48da-990e-160e39b50c09.

concentration on the hand and the leg—seeking therein an authentic resonance with the world and its circumstances. Thus, we can reinstate an excentric positionality here, being the body and possessing the body:

> "I am, but I do not have power over myself." This characterizes the man within his corporeal being. Speaking, taking action, and various forms that require the control of one's own body, a skill learned and continuously maintained. This sense of distance within oneself and toward oneself allows for the potential to transcend it. It doesn't imply a division or splitting of the fundamentally indivisible self, but rather serves as a prerequisite for being oneself (*selbständig*).[39]

From a phenomenological perspective, this situation presents a body that simultaneously reveals itself and exists in an unofficial, transitional state, enabling the artist to depict the body as an *ambiguous performance of boundaries* of the body schema *Leib im Körper.* It highlights the problem character of transparent manifestation when it obscures the nature of bodily manifestation, which led to its distortion or erasure in certain avant-garde works.[40] However, the subsequent cancelling of the body—reflecting the impossibility of its objectification or disembodiment in an exposed subjectivity—is not the sole outcome, as affirmed by Beckmann himself, who does not entirely forsake figuration.

New forms of art

Specific locations depicted in paintings lead us to explore themes of resonance with the world, the so-called equilibrium, where corporeality serves as the "resonant surface." This leads us to inquire about Umwelt, anthropologically delving into spaces, environments, and the human world, while simultaneously, in a phenomenological sense, considering Umwelt "for me" as a person, as the focal

[39] Helmuth Plessner, "Die Frage nach der Conditio humana," p. 190.

[40] Lipták (in "Body, Music and Electronics: Pierre Schaeffer and Phenomenology of Music," p. 60) highlights the exploration of quasi-Leib and quasi-Körper in avant-garde music, stating: "We see that one of avant-garde methods is removal of this quasi-Leib, its reduction to Körper. And if it succeeds, there is in return no modified, neutralized quasi-Körper in such non-idiomatic musical work; Körper can be, at best, extraneously imagined." An example of the dissolution of bodily form can be seen in the hygienic artworks of Z. Rykr, where the female body appears to morph into an amoeba-like shape (Jaroslava Vydrová, "Man as a Being of Hygiene in a Phenomenological and Anthropological Perspective," in *Phainomena*, 32(124-125), 2023, p. 162).

point of environment, as elaborated in *Ideas II*.[41] We've established this as the second leading clue of our analysis. Plessner values the concept of Umwelt as the unique space of the individual or living organism within which they interact, establish corporeality, and develop experience. Urban spaces are particularly significance here. As Beckmann articulates, the artist's role resides within the city, "a large organism that is the city."[42] Furthermore, the works of artists from this period increasingly incorporate urban and technical structures like buildings, railways, and bridges. These artistic choices reflect changes in social, economic, and political conditions, as well as the new opportunities of human being through advancements in science, technology, and progress of knowledge.

At the foundation of modern art, Plessner raises a fundamental question regarding the issue of form which involves the search for an appropriate form of depiction and creation as an expression of resonance with the times, society, and the world in which art exists. It manifests in individual approaches that collide with the collective mediocrity of what "should be" created according to the fashionable style. In this context, let's recall Plessner's seminal text *Rebirth of Form in the Technical Age* (1932), written on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Deutscher Werkbund, which praised architectural works that engage with space, the landscape's face, and the human living environment.[43] Plessner raises the question: if form is a certain *relation, measure, equilibrium*,[44] how is this balance established in the era of modern technology, amidst new stimuli, discoveries, and rapid changes the man is facing? Unlike sceptical and closed attitudes toward technology, here we encounter the possibility of how humans can authentically navigate in new conditions and perceive the technological age with openness. It is

[41] See Hua IV, §§ 34, 50 et seq.

[42] František Mikš, *Braque, Beckmann, Kokoschka, Balthus*, pp. 96, 95. They appear in both in his literary texts and his paintings. "It has been observed that his idea of a fulfilling evening entailed sitting alone at the bar of a luxurious hotel, wearing a suit, and quietly observing people while sipping champagne from a glass, drawing inspiration for his paintings" (ibidem, p. 79).

[43] Plessner's text operates on multiple levels, delving into political and economic contexts, the evolution of art and architecture, and subverting anticipated interpretations. His appreciation for modern artistic endeavors must be understood within the framework of that period, reacting to figures like H. Wölfflin (*Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*) and his notion of the impossibility of open form in architecture, as well as various perspectives on technology (e.g., F. Dessauer's *Philosophie der Technik*—see Peter Bernhard, "Plessners Konzept der offenen Form im Kontext der Avantgarde der 1920er Jahre," in *Arhe*, 4(7), 2007, p. 239 ff.). Simultaneously, the text is structured as a speech, suggesting that further analysis of the outlined issues requires consulting Plessner's other works. For the present discussion, I will focus on the theme of form.

[44] Helmuth Plessner, "Rebirth of Form in the Technical Age," p. 39.

a fact that technology represents a force that transforms social relationships and human perceptions—for example, the relationship between the craftsman and his product, between the buyer and the product, the space in which people work (factory) and live (city) changes—"the intimacy and privacy of these relationships are dissolved and surrendered to a cold and neutrally objective public realm."[45] The new world is brimming with impersonal mass-consumption goods, alongside the art market's new expectations and demands, which give rise to contradictory manifestations in art such as de-aestheticization, formalism, consumption, and the emergence of kitsch. This initial uprooting of humans and their relationships, which can no longer adequately respond to changed conditions by establishing some stable position or seeking escape and closure into positions of "being for oneself," can also play a positive role in the challenge of reconciling with the past and with old forms. Those were in art and architecture focused on the optical aspect, watching, aesthetic pleasure, submission to predefined styles, rather than on dwelling, usage, life activities inherent to human being. What is functional seems to stand in contrast to style, and vice versa. Therefore, new artistic approaches in this period attempted paradigmatic changes, which also mean sensitiveness, loosening tendencies of grasping and objectifying, freeing of vision itself. Moreover, in Plessner's thinking, this consideration was influenced by his sensitivity to the positive aspects of the connection between the avant-garde and science, which concern organicity, environment, the connection with biology and technology in the form of functionally biological and living spaces.[46] They are focused on the environment where humans naturally live, and where they unfold their possibilities.

Therefore, Plessner directs his attention towards the *creation* of form and the pursuit of *novelty*—not merely a refreshed or reinvigorated variation of what came before. If a new form is to emerge, it must be rooted in the circumstances of life relevant to human being, rather than derived from the past or driven by the necessity for a specific style or ideal, which represents the notion of closed form. In essence, we observe a threefold movement here:

> Three stages in the contestation of artistic consciousness, formal consciousness, and the formation of works with technology: the first epoch being an epoch of flight into past formal values; the second epoch being an epoch of flight into a new

[45] Ibidem, p. 40.

[46] See A. Behne's article *Biologie und Kubismus*. "The avant-garde partially embraced the analogy between plant structures and technical construction principles. The primary objective of the avant-garde's biotechnical maxim of formation was ultimately to pursue creation in accordance with the laws of form found in nature" (Peter Bernhard "Plessners Konzept der offenen Form im Kontext der Avantgarde der 1920er Jahre," pp. 241-242).

> world of forms, into a new world of style; the third epoch being a resolute about-turn and the subjugation of all considerations of spatial design to the purposes of technology.
> So has the hour of the rebirth of form already come?[47]

The question of novelty hinges on grappling with new situation through a free interplay (*Mitspielen*) with the outcomes, the products of labour, or resonance (*In-Einklang-sein*) with what technology offers—an openness to the possibilities confronting humanity in this era rather than resignation or opposition. If form is the measure, then, according to Plessner, we must acknowledge that in the age of modern technology, we may not even have a measure at our disposal; the real balance might precisely be the loss of balance, or a state of seeking equilibrium (these concepts are found in both Plessner and Merleau-Ponty), constant rebalancing, or resonance (as described by Uexküll). They are based on the correspondence between human beings and their environment, the world they inhabit, thus, "on the basis of existing capacities, a new *situational coherence* of organism and environment is created."[48] As Husserl asserts, human beings are the subjects of a specific Umwelt, and the Umwelt is "the world for me," the "Umwelt of *its* I-subject, the world experienced by it or otherwise conscious, posited in its intentional experiences with a particular sensory content... is, in a sense, in constant flux, in constant self-creation through transformations of meaning and always new formations of meaning."[49] Phenomenologically speaking, the reconfiguration of experience regarding the environment and its transformations does not occur causally or schematically, but through the situational resonance of the living body and what Husserl terms the being in the world of our life. Assessing affordances and meanings can turn this process into a creative endeavour because the presence of new artefacts and technology in this world does not necessarily imply only bodily uprooting but can also signify the opening up of new spaces for new possibilities, for use, for dwelling, for practice, for spaces suitable for the man and the things she or he manages, creates, things which have "a membrane, a physiognomy, an appearance, and a face!"[50]

[47] Helmuth Plessner, "Rebirth of Form in the Technical Age," p. 47.
[48] Thomas Fuchs, *The Phenomenology and Biology of the Embodied Mind*, p. 101.
[49] Hua IV, p. 186.
[50] Helmuth Plessner, "Rebirth of Form in the Technical Age," p. 48.

When examining our living spaces, they are intricately tied to the dynamics of urban life, encompassing buildings, homes, neighbourhoods, nations, and the global community; they are spaces that are "seldom in equilibrium."[51] This system isn't merely a static arrangement, straightforward configuration, but rather a dynamic, living, and creative relationship between humans and their environment, situated in a unique setting. If the diagnosis of this situation is openness (nonconfinement, anarchy) and instability, dynamics of spaces and relations, then the response to this situation is the renunciation of claims and criteria. This not only creates a risky spaces which often embarrassingly result in schematism or experimentation, as seen in the architecture of the former communist states of Central Europe with their reservoir of housing estates, monumental "culture houses," concrete playgrounds but also the potential for seeking a new form—or its resurgence—not by rejecting or overcoming old norms and styles, which would essentially place us in a similar situation of searching for different norms and styles, but by engaging in an open, playful relationship with the environment and its elements, as Plessner suggests (*Spielverhältnis)*. New creative possibilities aren't detached from reality but are intertwined with the way individuals create and perceive themselves, their societal position, their way of life, and where they call home, whether as inhabitants, citizens, philosophers, artists, and so forth.[52]

Conclusion

In scrutinizing Plessner's interpretation of artwork, anthropological aesthetics, and its intersection with phenomenology, several approaches for exploration arise, each posing its own initial inquiry. One such approach involves the anthropological perspective, in detail examined by Joachim Fischer, which traverses the realms of aesthetic anthropology and anthropological aesthetics. According to Fischer "the former examines the centrality of art within the *conditio humana*, whereas the latter investigates specific manifestations of art grounded in philosophical

[51] "given the flows of matter, energy, money that pass into them" (DeLanda cited in Robert Mugerauer, "Bi-Directional Boundaries. Eccentric Life and Its Environments," in J. de Mul (ed.), *Plessner's Philosophical Anthropology. Perspectives and Prospects*, Amsterdam University Press, 2017, p. 219).

[52] "Plessner was actively engaged in this ethos, collaborating with Werkbund member Lucy Hillebrand to develop the design for his residence. The result was a modern, functional home tailored to the needs of a modern professor, featuring large windows that provide uninterrupted views" (Carole Dietze, *Nachgeholters Leben*, p. 361).

anthropological assumptions."[53] This analysis elucidates how Plessner contributes to aesthetic anthropology through *Die Einheit der Sinne*, while concurrently offering an innovative examination of modern art within the framework of anthropological aesthetics.

A second approach could involve adopting a phenomenological perspective by examining Husserl's approach to artwork (in the perspective of modification of neutrality) and phenomenological aesthetics, particularly in how Plessner uses it. Although this would entail a different line of interpretation and comparison, it remains a viable avenue for exploration. This assertion is supported by the findings of the study, which underscore, within the context of Husserl's philosophy, the "vitality" of artwork and "its ability to always reinvigorate our aesthetic perception. Aesthetic experience therefore does have strong critical potential, it does have the ability to subvert and undermine the established patterns of life; ... The critical potential of aesthetic experience is inherently tied to its rupturing of our common lived experience."[54]

The approach this study has used was driven by the lineage of philosophical anthropology intersecting with phenomenology, particularly in the context of *Ideas II* and the significance of the body and the environment. The aim was to conduct an examination of anthropological insights to gain a deeper understanding of the structure of experience and the creative process. In doing so, I sought to assess the heuristic of Plessner's approach, which, in my perspective, provides a starting point for exploring the possibilities inherent in creativity. Plessner sheds light on the essence of creativity as the formation of new forms rooted in resonance with the Umwelt and the embodied existence of the man. Thus, my investigation delved into two main aspects: firstly, exploring creative potentials by capturing corporeality as a manifestation of the boundary of the schema *Leib im Körper*, and secondly, examining the resonance stemming from the original motivational context of "Umwelt for me," leading to the creation of new connections in the environment in the technical age. The era in which both Plessner and Beckmann lived was very volatile, and unfixed, regarding a singular image of the man and the world.[55]

[53] Joachim Fischer, "'Ästhetische Anthropologie' und 'anthropologische Ästhetik'," p. 76.

[54] Michal Lipták, "Husserl and the Radical Individuality of the Aesthetic Object," in *Husserl studies*, 2023.

[55] "The technical world is... precisely by virtue of an intrinsically incomplete and open character with regard to the products he surrounds himself with, with regard to the space he puts these products in, and with regard to the time for which these products are supposed to be effective. Technology is characterized by the coming of this entirely new consciousness, the coming of an openness towards the endlessness of space and time" (Helmuth Plessner, "Rebirth of Form in the Technical Age," p. 44).

It called for a nuanced response from both the artist and the philosopher—not merely preserving established paradigms, nor outright rejecting the previous. While Plessner identified key concepts that encapsulated the artist's complicated situation and creative output in the early 20th century—such as the quest for a new form as a means of resonance and grappling with corporeality—the relevance of these concepts today stimulate a new debate. The question whether they remain applicable or if a different framework is needed to explore anthropological conditions is appropriate. This study pursued an interpretation open to the former possibility, seeking new artistic forms rooted in equilibrium, resonance that aligns with the interaction between individuals and their environment. This brings about affordances which, according to Thomas Fuchs—and he does this within the framework of phenomenology and the biology of the embodied mind—may result in "new situational coherences."[56]

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BOOK REVIEW

George Bondor, *Dansul măștilor. Nietzsche și filosofia interpretării* (*The Dance of Masks. Nietzsche and the Philosophy of Interpretation*), ed. a 2-a, reviz. (second edition, revised), Editura Spandugion, București, 2020

In the very first page of "Note on first edition" there is a remark not to be missed by a quick reading. *The Dance of Masks. Nietzsche and the Philosophy of Interpretation* is an extract or, in Bondor's words, "the processing of the doctoral dissertation" called *From Metaphisics to Hermeneutics. Fredrich Nietzsche.* In other words, the philosophy of interpretation or the dance of masks is not only the "path" from metaphysics to hermeneutics but, to a certain extent, "the final point". Of course, the leading figure that takes us on this journey with, I might add, in my eyes not in Bondor's, no final destination is Fredrich Nietzsche. But, setting apart my one idiosyncrasies, we must see how George Bondor constructs the road, mediated by Nietzsche, from metaphysics to hermeneutics or, better yet, from

metaphysics to interpretation (and, perhaps, we might also see what all these has to do with the "dance of masks").

From where to begin, how to begin? Is there something more presumptuous except this word, almost unusable today, metaphysics? Are we not in this post-everything (modern, culture, human etc.) era, that we live in, once and for all, freed by any (how to call it?) specters of metaphysics? Don't we know already from Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault, Vattimo and so on, that metaphysics is dead? Of course, and we also "sense", reading the same authors, who killed it: Nietzsche. But, from Bondor's book we don't "sense" it anymore, we know it for sure. Truth to be told - *The Dance of Masks. Nietzsche and the Philosophy of Interpretation* shows us in the most rigorous manner possible how Nietzsche killed metaphysics and "invent" interpretation. Of course, "invent" is not a suitable word for many reasons (although Deleuze will assert that an "invention" took place here), the first being that Nietzsche didn't invent it, but crafted it with meticulous attention and infinitesimal precision. And is Bondor's tremendous merit that we now see how interpretation becomes the new metaphysics (without, of course, being metaphysics). Still, not without a reason I named interpretation the new metaphysics giving the fact that hermeneutics (the other name of interpretation), at leas until the last part of the XX century, caried the burden, through Heidegger but even more through Gadamer, of metaphysics. Now, this is not the case with George Bondor how is not interested in hermeneutics, as neither Nietzsche is, but in this, let us call it, "concept" named interpretation which is not often associated with Nietzsche. Not until Bondor's book, because, at least for me, interpretation, from now one, will carry the name of Nietzsche.

But how? How does Nietzsche constructs (invents, crafts, creates, forms etc.) such a concept? Let us give two examples (of course, the examples are from Bondor). (1) What does a rock do? "Acts" and "reacts" in front of something that borders it. Of course, that "border" "acts" and "reacts" in return. Thus, two "centers of force" "act" and "react" one upon another. To call it "perspectivism" is a bit too much, tells Bondor, but to call it, and we will see very soon way, "interpretation" (pp. 99 -103), is the most suitable thing to do. (2) What is "being"? Bondor reading Nietzsche: "The most known form of being is life, starting from which it was constructed the abstract concept of «being»" (p. 264). Nietzsche: "Life, as the most known form of being, is a will to accumulate force -: all the processes of life find here themselves the proper lever: nothing wants to be conserved, everything sums and accumulates" (Nietzsche *apud* Bondor, pp. 264-265). "To accumulate force" as the most inner will of life, or, more proper, will to power is, in Bondor's words, "interpretation" (p. 266). Thus, to put it bluntly, if in question is "a rock" or "Being",

interpretation prevails. But then again, how? Are we entitled to assume that for a "rock" or for "Being" (setting aside, fore some eyes, the unsuitable joining of rocks and being) interpretation is everything? We must take a step back and listen to Bondor: "The conceptual framework (…) composed by key-concepts such as force, will to power, life, value, evaluation and power, brought us in front of the task of clarifying the central concept of Nietzsche's philosophy (…) *interpretation*. This concept designates in an equivocal manner – but this is way fertile from a philosophical perspective – *the act as such of the will to power*." (p. 85, the last underlying is mine).

Perhaps if we are not paying enough attention to the fact that the act as such of the will to power is interpretation, we will miss the entire thesis of Bondor. Let us repeat: *the act as such of the will to power is interpretation*. Now, we don't have to read Bondor's book to understand that "the will to power" is central to Nietzsche's philosophy, but we must read it in order to understand that "the act as such" or, more proper, "the doing of" the will to power is interpretation. But why, why this "doing" is so important? Only because in this "doing" everything that we know as we know it emerges. Acknowledging or, better yet, admitting (if we do) that the will to power is to be found everywhere (from the inorganic world to being) it is obviously the act as such i.e., interpretation, is to be found everywhere. Not only that it is to be found everywhere, but whatever something is, is because of it. Let us stress, nothing metaphysical occurred here, only an observation: the act as such of the will to power does (produces, creates, crafts, makes etc.) everything.

Maybe is a bit too much, let us take another step back to fully understand the thesis of Bondor. One of the most important ideas of Bondor is that we must not, under no circumstances, transform "the will to power" in a metaphysical concept. If we do, as we are used to do being philosophers, we miss the entire endeavor of Nietzsche. The will to power is not the new "I" or "Consciousness" or "Spirit" or "Substance" or "The Thing in Itself" or "The World" or "Being" or "Cause and the Effect" or "Law and Necessity" or, finally, "God" (see the entire p.30). The will to power must be understood, tells Bondor, following Nietzsche, in a "plural manner". A plural manner without "unity, in-essentialist and non-substantialist" (p.20). A plural manner where "fluidity", as life itself, becomes the only place where we can ground ourselves but only to realize that, being fluid, we must take a step forward. A sort of continuous "becoming" (and coming back, again and again) were nothing ever stops. Setting aside the poetic and anthropomorphic implications, something else is important: the will to power is not a metaphysical concept. "Becoming", "fluidity", "plurality", "restlessness", "interaction", "facticity", are more

suitable words to fully grasp the meaning of "the will to power". All that being said (and known) we must see how the will to power acts. Because, let us repeat, *the act as such* is *interpretation*.

Digging beneath "the will to power" Bondor shows that "[e]very object – be that a natural thing, a concept, an idea, a representation etc.- constitutes itself due to the universal game of forces. To perceive as correctly as possible this process, we can imagine the world being formatted by numerous forces that interact by chance with each other" (p.43). Thus, if we are to speak, in a proper manner, about "the world" the only way to do it is by appealing to the never ending "game" between "center of forces". If somewhere, somehow, something wins (and becomes, what we may call, reality) is only because somewhere, somehow, something losses. To put it more precisely: the never-ending "game" (battle?) between center of forces constructs reality. Let us recall - beneath the will to power stands force. Thus, "a natural thing", "a concept", "an idea", "a representation" etc., that we know is only a force (the will to power) that managed to win (in this never-ending battle of forces) in front of "a natural thing", "a concept", "an idea", "a representation" etc. But, and here is were interpretation (or the *act as such*) becomes central: " This « will to power» expresses itself through interpretation, by the form in which the force consumes itself." (Nietzsche, *apud* Bondor, p. 89). Thus, "every will to power interprets", or, coming back from where we started, as Bondor says: *the act as such of the will to power is interpretation*.

To sum, in terms that we are already use to, but never properly understood, interpretation constructs reality. Or, better yet (at least for me, from now on), in Bondor's words: "interpretation, we might say, is the means by which domination arises" (p.90). From here on propositions such as "the world is an interpretative process – encompassing but undefined" or "the reality has an interpretive character" or "interpretation is immanent to reality" etc. etc., are only, natural effects of *the act as such of the will to power.*

Nevertheless, a question may appear: what does all this have to do with the dance of masks?When an interpretation prevails (let us say, for obvious reasons, a metaphysical one such as "the unconditioned") and becomes, and Bondor explains in details way and how (see pp.77-79), the most undeniable reality of the world, we must understand it as (and the name of it should be enough) an *interpretation*. By chance or, more properly, by force "the unconditioned" becomes "the truth" or "reality". But Bondor following Nietzsche names it by her actual name: *mask*. A mask because only in and only through the conditioned the unconditioned may appear. The "conditioned" or the "appearance", the "ground" of the world, the

"flesh" of man, are the places were, and from were, al the "masks" "dance" claiming their own truth as they should (being *the act as such* i.e, interpretation, of the will to power).

I would like to make one last remark. I am not pretending that my reading of Bondor's book is complete. By far, the book in itself surpasses my limited interpretation. It is not easy to sum up all the exhaustive excavations that Bondor does on Nietzsche, and, after all, all the exhaustive excavation that Bondor does in one of the most important moments in western culture. However, I would like to end my attempt on George Bondor book, *The dace of masks*. *Nietzsche and the philosophy of interpretation*, with a quote: "we could say that the description of the world as the play of forces and of wills to power is a simple ontic explication, meanwhile the explication of the meaning of the world and of man, through the universal operator called interpretation, represents the ontological stake of Nietzsche thought." (p.323)

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