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The Richmond Journal of **Philosophy**

Issue **Eleven** **Winter 2005**

In this *issue...*

Keith Crome
on descartes' evil demon

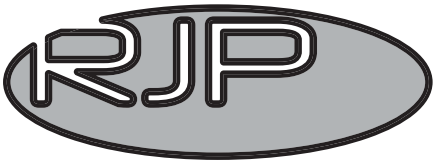
Mat Carmody
on thought and language

Christopher Norris
on knowing what we like

Paul Sperring
on scepticism

Dermot O'Keeffe
on evil

Richmond upon Thames Colleg



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[Editorial]

Welcome to the eleventh issue of the Richmond Journal of Philosophy.

Our first paper by Keith Crome examines Descartes' evil demon. At first glance the notion of evil appears to have little to do with the epistemological concerns of the First Meditation. However the role of the demon as the central figure in the method of doubt raises the issues of the Cartesian conception of evil and the identity of the demon. The topic of our next paper is the relationship between language and thought: is language necessary for thought or perhaps for some kinds of thoughts? Mat Carmody contrasts the cognitive conception of language according to which language is necessary for thought with the communicative conception which holds that thought can exist without language. He also tells us how many words there are for snow in the Eskimo languages. Next Chris Norris explores the ways in which we think about music – what a musical work is and the nature of our response to it. In doing so we engage with the wider debate on whether truth can be understood as potentially transcending the scope or limits of what can be known. From music we turn to scepticism. Paul Sperring scrutinises Peter Unger's argument in favour of a radical version of scepticism and suggests that it does not pose the problem which it first threatens to generate. The final paper of this issue focuses on the challenge to divine existence presented by the problem of evil. Dermot O'Keeffe re-examines the notion of freedom presupposed in much of the discussion concerning the role of human freedom in the analysis of the compossibility of divine existence and the presence of evil. Endorsing a positive conception of freedom O'Keeffe argues that we reject one line of response to the problem of evil which regards evil as an essential element in our moral and spiritual development.

Purpose of the Journal

The motivation for and ambition of the journal is to provide serious philosophy for students who are at an early stage in their philosophical studies. The style and content of the papers will be accessible to students who have yet to become hardened to the more technical and specialised journals of professional philosophy

What do we mean by 'serious' philosophy? First, the content of the journal is not constrained by a remit to appeal to or reach the interested general public. Whilst the papers must speak to the needs of students who are relatively inexperienced in philosophy, they presuppose that their audience is actively engaged in philosophy. Second, the content is serious in its focus on the central areas of philosophy. One must beware of the dangers of trying to impose more precision on a subject than its nature will allow. Therefore, some degree of caution is called for in talking of the central areas of philosophy. Nonetheless, the big or traditional questions of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics will provide the journal's centre of gravity. The third way in which the philosophy is serious is through the scope, variety and depth of analysis that can be achieved by the accumulation of papers over time. Moreover, each paper is not simply an introduction to one of the main topics on A-level, IB or degree courses. Such papers will indeed have a role in the journal, but they will not be the only kind. Our contributors will be offering original papers based on their own research. The journal will be a forum for the kind of critical engagement and debate that characterise the practice of philosophy. The fourth way in which the philosophy is serious is in the contributors themselves. The vast bulk of the papers will be written by professional philosophers engaged in both research and teaching.

About the [Editorial] Board

Dr Stephen Grant is a full-time lecturer in philosophy at Richmond upon Thames College. He has also taught at King's College London where he completed his doctorate on the emotions. His main interests are in ethics, political philosophy and the emotions. He has published on the ontological argument and religious language.

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Paul Sperring is head of the philosophy department at Richmond upon Thames College and has been an A-level examiner in philosophy. He completed his undergraduate and masters studies at Warwick University, studying both analytic and continental philosophy. He is working towards his PhD in Philosophy at Birkbeck College. His research interests are in the areas of mind and metaphysics, and he has published on mental causation and Descartes.

[Editorial]

Keith Crome

Descartes' [Evil Demon]

Introduction

It is perhaps the case that contemporary readers of the *Meditations on First Philosophy* are most taken with the idea of the Evil Demon invoked by René Descartes in the first *Meditation*.[1] In the process of systematically establishing everything which he can doubt in order to discover if there is anything of which he can be certain, Descartes appeals to the figure of the Demon. 'All powerful and cunning',[2] and supposed by Descartes to devote all its energies to deceiving him, the Demon strikes a chord through its numerous parallels in films such as the *Matrix* and *Total Recall*.

Whilst these parallels are testimony to the imaginative richness of the idea of the Evil Demon, they are less obviously a tribute to its serious philosophical status.[3] Certainly the fiction of the Demon is intended to appeal to our imaginations, but in so doing it does not function in a way we normally associate with the imagination, which, as David Hume observes, ordinarily delights in forming monsters and joining incongruous shapes and appearances at the slightest opportunity.[4] As striking as the idea might be, the figure of the Demon does not inflame the imagination and force us to believe things that are not true; rather, it is a device, a means by which Descartes, supposing all he used to think true to be false, holds himself to all the doubts he has legitimately raised concerning those things he has customarily held to be the case and which by force of habit he is wont to continue to believe.

By recognising that it is the imagination that is captured and put to use by the meditating subject in order to pursue his rationally constructed train of doubt and not the meditating subject who is captured by his imagination, we could now begin a philosophically productive enquiry into Descartes' conception of the faculties of imagination and reason and the relation between them. I do not, however, want to pursue directly such an enquiry here for I am interested in another question that is provoked by the figure of the Demon. The *Meditations* are enquiries of an epistemological and ontological kind in which Descartes establishes what it is possible to know, what knowledge itself is and the nature of what is known. Evil, whose realm is commonly regarded as being limited to the sphere of ethics, would appear to have no significant place among such concerns.[5] Nevertheless, the fiction of the Evil Demon places the concept of evil at the very heart of 'the method of doubt'. Given that this is the case, my interest is in determining what evil is for Descartes. I hope additionally to establish the identity of the Evil Demon.

1. The Resolution to Doubt

To discover who the Evil Demon is and what Descartes means by evil it is necessary to confront Descartes' thinking in the first *Meditation* where he sets out on the path of doubt. Descartes begins by invoking his present uncertainty about what he knows to be true. 'Some years ago', he says, 'I noticed how many false things I had accepted as true in my childhood, and how doubtful were the things that I subsequently built on them.'[6] The recognition that the knowledge he had acquired on false grounds is, if not itself necessarily false, at best dubious, leads him to resolve to overturn all his beliefs, everything he once thought he knew. To accomplish this Descartes tells us that it is not necessary for him to show that all his former beliefs are false. This would require a certainty of knowledge as yet unavailable to him and hence would be an impossible undertaking. Instead it is sufficient to withhold assent from anything that is not completely certain and indubitable. Neither is it necessary, he says, to investigate each belief individually. Rather, he need consider only the foundations of his beliefs, since once the foundations are undermined everything built on them will collapse.

The principal and most immediate source for all those things Descartes

has 'accepted as being most true up to now' are the senses.[7] Yet, Descartes recalls that there have been occasions on which his senses have deceived him: things seen from far away have sometimes looked very different when seen close up, and things that were very small have on close inspection appeared otherwise than when they were seen at first glance. On the grounds that it is unwise to trust anything or anyone who has deceived us, if only once, he concludes the senses ought not to be trusted at all.

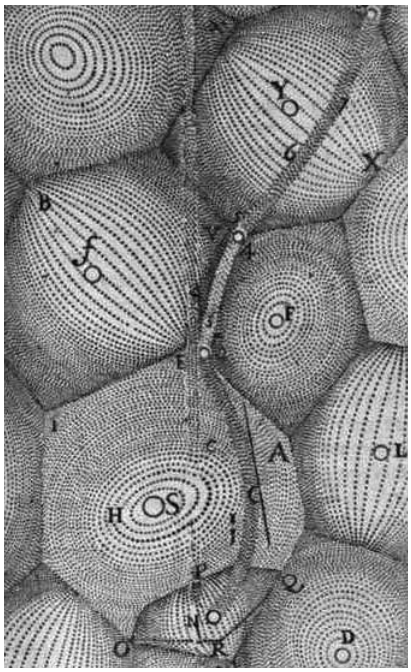
However, having drawn this conclusion, Descartes immediately raises an objection: if it is certainly reasonable to doubt what the senses tell us about those things that they perceive only weakly and faintly, it would nonetheless be incredible to call into doubt much more powerful, striking and immediate perceptions, such as that of the body, the fact of its presence, its actuality here and now. 'How could I deny that these hands or that this body is mine', he says, 'unless perhaps I think that I am like some of those mad people whose brains are so impaired by the strong vapour of black bile that they confidently claim to be kings when they are paupers, that they are dressed in purple when they are naked, that they have an earthenware head, or that they are a totally hollowed-out shell or are made of glass.' [8]

As ready as we might be to assent to this apparently quite reasonable objection we should nevertheless examine it a little more closely. The initial argument for doubting the evidences of the senses is expressed in universal terms: *'Everything'*, Descartes says, 'that I accepted as being most true up to now I acquired from the senses or through the senses. However, I have occasionally found that they deceive me, and it is prudent *never* to trust those who have deceived us, even if only once'.[9] The reason why this doubt is universal and without qualification is that the senses themselves afford no sure criterion by which it is possible to distinguish a true from a false perception. For example, it is not so much that on standing near to a tree I discover it in truth to be much larger than my initial view of it from a distance had led me to believe. Rather, I have two different views of the tree which, with respect to size, are incompatible. At best I can say only that one of the two appearances is false, without knowing which one it is.

The appeal to the experience that one has of one's own bodily presence and along with it those things that derive their vivacity from their proximity to that presence, does not, as far as I can see, provide any reason for limiting the scope of the initial doubt concerning the evidence of the senses. What criterion is furnished by this experience that is absent from those other things which are derived from the senses and which are essentially dubitable? What assures us that our immediate perception of our body and situation is itself true?

It is perhaps the case, then, that we would misunderstand the nature of the appeal to the body if we think of it as simply furnishing evidence that resists doubt. As Michel Foucault has argued, it is not so much the evidence of the *body* that resists being doubted, but everything connected to the currentness of the person in the act of pursuing the method of doubt.[10] For Descartes, between the knowledge that it is necessary to doubt and carrying out the resolution to doubt there is all the difference in the world, and the problem that he addresses when he invokes the sensory evidence of his actual situation is that of *exercising* his reasons for doubt. In effect, what Descartes admits is that his resolve is unsettled by the spectre of madness: if I pursue my doubt this far, he is saying, would I not be effectively mad? And if I were, would I then be able to effectively doubt, would I be able to carry out my resolution consistently so as to discover the truth? What authority would any conclusion carry if the doubt that establishes it is equivalent to madness?

[Evil Demon]



2. The Place of the Evil Demon in the Method of Doubt

Having recognised what is at issue at this point in the First Meditation is a difference between the logical extent of the doubts raised and the willingness to actually exercise such doubts, we are now in a position to understand the structure of what follows and in particular the function played by the Evil Demon in the method of doubt.

If the meditating subject cannot think himself mad and if this appears to prevent him from doubting, it is nevertheless the case that he can readily recall that he is 'a man who is used to sleeping at night and having all the same experiences while asleep or, sometimes, even more improbable experiences than insane people have while awake?'[11] Such a memory enables Descartes to carry out his resolution to doubt by not only calling to mind an entire order of deceptive experiences which replicate in kind the perception he has now, but also by awakening in him a confusion that affects him whilst he is pursuing his current train of thought. Certainly, it at first seems to him that the perception he has of the sheet of paper before him, his head which he shakes and his hand which he opens and feels, would not strike him so forcibly and clearly were he dreaming, but he then recalls previous occasions when he had assured himself that he was awake in just this way whilst he was in fact dreaming. The very clarity that might be supposed to distinguish a real perception from an imaginary one in fact applies equally to both waking experiences and dreams: noting this produces a 'feeling of confusion' which, Descartes says, 'almost confirms me in believing that I am asleep'.[12]

The 'feeling of confusion' sown in him by such memories enables him to carry out his resolution to doubt since he can now suppose himself to be asleep and imagine that not only does he not shake his head or open and feel his hand, but that he has neither head nor hands nor body. By imagining that he is dreaming Descartes is able to doubt all sensory images – the entirety of those things he hitherto believed most true.

But is it not the case that there are truths that are constant, irrespective of whether we are awake or asleep? If there are such truths, they would be the elements that underlie our sensory and imaginary perceptions and from which they were ordered. Accordingly, Descartes considers the possibility that 'physical nature in general and its extension…the shape of extended things; also their quantity, or their size and number, similarly the place in which they exist, the time through which they last…' [13] are real. And, if this is indeed the case, then it follows that those sciences that are concerned with such simple and general things, and which are indifferent to their actual existence, provide us with truths that cannot be suspected of falsity, for as Descartes has it: 'whether I am awake or asleep, two and three added together always make five and a quadrilateral figure has no more than four sides.' [14]

As these truths are of a non-sensory, intelligible kind, any doubt about them must itself be of a like kind. There now opens a series of considerations that lead Descartes to the hypothesis of the Evil Demon. Among his ideas, Descartes recalls one, long fixed in his mind, of an all-powerful God who has created him. Could not he have arranged that the simplest and most universal things such as the earth, sky, extended bodies, shape, magnitude and place all appeared to exist whilst not really doing so? Could it not also be the case that God 'may have caused me to be mistaken… when I add two and three together, or think about the number of sides in a quadrilateral figure, or something even simpler if that can be imagined?'[15]

To such an argument it might be objected that God, whose attributes include benevolence and goodness in the highest degree as well as omnipotence, would not deceive anyone in this way nor allow anyone to be so deceived. In response Descartes reminds us that should it be admitted that God is the author of our being, then it must also be admitted that he has made it so that we are sometimes mistaken or deceived. Since that is the case, it does not follow that it would be contrary to his nature to make it that we are always mistaken or deceived. But why suppose that such a God exists? Might it not be that

the idea itself is fictitious? Even were that the case it would not follow, Descartes argues, that all other purely intelligible truths would be secured from doubt; for 'since to be deceived and mistaken seems to be some kind of imperfection', the less powerful and less perfect the being that created me was, the more liable it is that I am constituted in such a way to be always mistaken.

However, and as Descartes says, recalling what he has already once before been forced to admit: 'it is not enough simply to know this'; it must also be 'kept in mind'.[16] The meditating subject must be induced to hold his doubts present before himself. He must train his attention on them, lest those 'familiar beliefs', which return despite himself and against his will, sway his judgement in so far as it is bound to them 'by established custom and the law of familiarity'.[17] Such an inducement is found in the hypothetical figure of the Evil Demon. On the supposition that this demon devotes all its energies to deceiving him, Descartes imagines that there is no earth, air, sky, no colours, shapes or sounds, nothing external to him and that he has in actuality no hands, no blood, no senses at all, but falsely believes himself to possess such things: body, shape, extension, motion and place are all unreal.

3. The Resolution of Doubt

There are, then, two orders operative in the First Meditation. There is an order of *demonstration*, for which it is a matter of the logical and evidential grounds for the propositions advanced. It consists in the series of negative proofs that structure the method of doubt. The truths Descartes held on the basis of external authorities, those supplied through the senses and imagination, the truths of ideas of a non-sensory and non-imaginative origin are all shown to lack the self-evidence they might have been supposed to contain.

On the other hand, there is an order bearing on the *exercise* of meditating itself, in which the meditating subject applies himself to actually doubting. The Evil Demon, as I have argued, is invoked by Descartes in relation to this order. The omnipotence and omni-malevolence of the Demon elicits the application of a controlled vigilance on the part of the meditating subject; through it Descartes is able to counteract the perversity of his judgement which is otherwise and ordinarily led by habit and a kind of laziness back to its old opinions.

However, if the fiction of the Demon serves to exercise and discipline the will of the meditating subject, it is in turn exorcised by the discovery of the *cogito*, a discovery made possible through the very exercise and discipline the Demon occasions. As Descartes observes, for all that there is an all powerful and cunning deceiver dedicated to constantly deceiving he cannot bring it about that I am nothing, because it is indubitable that if I am deceived, I exist. Through the self-certainty of the doubting, thinking subject, what I above called the 'resolution *to* doubt' comes to offer itself as the resolution *of* doubt. Thinking, turning its attention upon itself, becomes apparent to itself in act and in its actuality, and Descartes is thence led to propose 'I think, I am'. Expressing and embodying the presence of thought to itself this proposition is, Descartes says, necessarily true for himself whenever it is stated or conceived by him.

The discovery of the *cogito* brings together, then, both the demonstrative and executive orders at play in the First Meditation, its evidence deriving not from a content or ground exterior to it, but from itself, from its very act. With this discovery, the omnipotence of the Evil Demon is undone; the evidential authority of the *cogito* is such that, as the Second Meditation shows, the 'I' cannot be deceived in everything. If the Evil Demon is not what it is supposed to be – if no sooner than it is invoked it is in fact shown to be intrinsically limited in its power and cunning, what is it? And what does all this tell us about the Cartesian concept of evil?

[Evil Demon]

4. The Nature of Evil and the Identity of the Evil Demon

Given that the Evil Demon's capacity to deceive is limited in the face of the first truth, in order to discover who or what the Demon is, it will be necessary to examine the Cartesian concepts of truth and error. These Descartes advances in the Fourth Meditation, entitled 'Truth and Falsehood'.

Having assured himself of the first truth – *cogito, sum* – in the Second Meditation and in the Third the existence of God, Descartes now argues that God would never deceive. Deception, he argues, is not, as it might seem, evidence of cleverness or power, but of malice and folly and thus it cannot be attributed to God. Certainly, as we have already seen, the intention to deceive is incompatible with absolute intelligence and power since it is impossible to deceive the meditating subject about everything: if I think that I am, I am.

However, acknowledging that God, the author of his being, does not deceive him leaves Descartes with a difficulty, which he states as follows:

> I experience a certain faculty of judgement in myself, which just like everything else that is in me, I received from God. Since God does not wish me to be mistaken he obviously did not give me a faculty such that, when I use it correctly, I could ever be mistaken. There would be no further doubt about this, except that it seems to follow that I can never be mistaken; for if everything I possess comes from God and if he did not give me a faculty for making mistakes, it seems as if I could never be wrong about anything.[18]

In short, the problem that Descartes now faces is how to reconcile our undoubted ability to judge something true when it is not, or similarly something false when it is not, with God's perfection. This he does by distinguishing two faculties, the faculty of knowing, or the intellect, and the faculty of choosing, or the will.

According to Descartes, the intellect perceives ideas, about which a judgement can then be made by the will. Thus, and in contrast to many modern philosophers, Descartes does not think the act of judgement as simply the connecting together of ideas; rather, for him, judgement is the act of assuming a position towards such ideas, of judging them to be correct or not, assenting to them, denying them or, as when one doubts, refraining from either assenting to them or denying them. To take a relatively simple example, my intellect perceives the idea of heat, about which I may then either judge that it is something real and existing or not, or suspend my judgement by choosing neither to affirm nor deny its reality and existence.

Descartes recognises that our intellect is finite, there are perhaps many things of which we have no idea, many ideas we have forgotten, but for Descartes this lack of knowledge is not in itself a cause of error. We could have many more ideas than we do and yet be no closer to the truth for all that; conversely, we could have fewer ideas, but judge truly those we have. Thus, in so far as it merely perceives ideas, the intellect contains no error. It is in judging ideas that errors arise.

If we consider the will, which exercises judgement, then we find, Descartes says, that unlike the intellect, it is infinite and perfect. Simple in so far as it consists in the ability to either to do or not do something – that is to seek or avoid something, affirm or deny something – the will cannot be limited without being abolished; a lesser will would be no will at all.

All our errors occur, Descartes argues, in the discrepancy between the extent of the will and that of our knowledge and our failure to restrain the former within the limits of the latter. If I affirm or deny that which I do not understand perfectly clearly and distinctly to be the case, I over-extend my judgement; I act rashly and hubristically and either fall into error or discover a truth for which I can give no good reasons. And even in the latter case I am at fault, for, Descartes says, 'it is evident by the natural light of reason that the perception of the understanding should always precede the determination of the will'.[19]

Thus, for Descartes, all falsehood originates in and from ourselves: we alone are the source of the errors we make. It is not even the case, as is sometimes asserted, that Descartes holds that our senses or our bodies deceive us; the senses are truth-neutral; it is only in the act of judging the perceptions of the mind, its ideas, that error proper originates. Given that this is the case, the Evil Demon – a figure devoted to deception and inducing error – can only be ourselves, albeit in a guise that we are not able to recognise at first. More exactly, the Demon is simply the subject that does not know its own nature and ground, the subject that has not discovered its true identity or being; that does not know itself as the *cogito*, the presence of thought to itself.

But what, then, is evil for Descartes? Not only is the Evil Demon potentially able to deceive us because of our tendency to judge on matters about which we have insufficient knowledge, it is a figure conjured out of our ignorance of our own essential natures. Descartes does nothing less than situate evil within the domain of knowledge, identifying it in essence with error.[20] Evil, in other words, is for Descartes an epistemological deficiency. As has long been recognised, it is in the primacy accorded to epistemology that the radicality of the Cartesian project resides. With the figure of the Evil Demon, Descartes both sharpens the traditional view of evil and dislocates it. At least since Plato, evil has been thought of as occasioned by ignorance – if I act badly it is because I do not know, or do not correctly understand, what the good is. With Descartes, however, evil is not simply occasioned by ignorance; it is identified with it.

[Evil Demon]

Notes

1 It is possibly the case that Descartes' contemporaries were no less struck by this figure. Certainly, Descartes himself felt the Evil Demon to be his original contribution to the development of scepticism. See J. G. Cottingham (ed.), *Descartes' Conversation with Burman*, 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976). Richard Popkin, in *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) locates the original impetus for the figure of the Demon in the trial at Loudon of a priest, Grandier, 'accused of infesting a convent with devils'. This case aroused a great deal of interest in the demoniac and raised the question of whether someone possessed of such an ability could influence and deceive a judge and jury at a trial. 'In the light of the issues about the reliability of evidence,' Popkin suggests, 'Descartes may have seen that if there can be a demonic agent in the world, apart from Grandier's case, a serious ground for scepticism is involved'. (p. 181)

2 R. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy in Meditations and Other Metaphysical Writings*, ed. D. Clarke, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1998), p. 22.

3 Popkin betrays something of such a concern when, introducing the historical source for the Demon hypothesis, he says that this might serve to explain 'why this sort of scepticism with regard to our faculties might have struck one as a forceful and serious idea' (op. cit. p. 180).

4 See D. Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. T. L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 97. In the passage in question Hume continues: 'And while the body is confined to one planet, the thought can in an instant transport us into the most distant regions of the universe, or even beyond the universe, into unbounded chaos [...] What was never seen, or heard of, may yet be conceived; nor is anything beyond the power of thought, except what implies an absolute contradiction'. Ibid

5 Descartes would appear to corroborate this view in the Prefatory 'Summary of the Following Six Meditations' in which he says 'one should note that there is no discussion there [in the Fourth Meditation] about sin, that is a mistake made in pursuing good and evil, but merely of mistakes that occur in deciding truth and falsehood', op. cit, p. 16. However, as my argument here shows, if Descartes is certainly stating the facts, he is nonetheless disregarding the force of his own insights.

6 Ibid. p. 18

7 Ibid. p. 19

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid. Both emphases are mine.

10 M. Foucault, 'My Body, This Paper, This Fire' in *Michel Foucault: Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*, ed. J. D Faubion (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 2000), p. 407. My reading of this part of the first *Meditation* is largely indebted to Foucault's rich and powerful analysis.

11 R. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, p. 19.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., p. 20

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid, p. 21.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid, pp. 44-5

19 Ibid, p. 49

20 This view is one that is confirmed by Etienne Gilson in his doctoral thesis, *La Doctrine Cartésienne de la liberté* (As Anthony Kenny puts it, Gilson argues that the 'problem of evil presented itself to Descartes above all as the problem of error'. See A. Kenny 'Descartes on the Will' op. cit.)

Mat Carmody

Thought and [Language:] exploring the terrain

Introduction

Some stories are too good to be true. One often finds however that the best-remembered stories, pieces of advice or 'factoids' are those that are too good to be false. Superstitions, urban myths and conspiracy theories can tempt even the most rational of thinkers. A factoid that emerged around a hundred years ago and grew to the status of received wisdom in the second half of the twentieth century was the very large number of words Eskimos have for snow.

How many? Franz Boas, the source of the myth, said four. Benjamin Lee Whorf, of whom much more in a moment, upped the figure to around seven. Roger Brown, a strong critic of Whorf, put the figure at three in his much-read fifties work *Words and Things*. The linguistic anthropologist Carol Eastman plumps for just 'many'. So far, nothing too wild. It is when we step outside the academic sphere that we find the really impressive claims. There are fifty words for snow according to the playwright Lanford Wilson, one hundred according to an editorial in the New York Times and a bewildering two hundred, if a certain Cleveland weather forecaster is to be believed. On the other hand, Schultz-Lorentzen's *Dictionary of the West Greenlandic Eskimo Language* gives just two.[1]

What has this got to do with language and thought? There are some who would argue as follows. Eskimos live in an environment where snow-phenomena play a greater role in their life than ours.[2] By 'snow-phenomena' I mean various manifestations of frozen water, such as snow, snow-flakes, ice, blizzards and so on. I shall continue to talk in terms of 'snow' but 'snow-phenomena' shall be understood. Their language reflects this in their fine categorisation of different words for snow. For example, *aputitaq* means *snow patch*, *nittaalaaqat* means *hard grains of snow* and *siku* means *sea-ice*.[3] But there's more. It is not simply that they have more words for snow. Their finely-categorising language causes them to have a finer set of concepts than we have. They never think about snow. They lack that concept. They can only think about snow patches and hard grains of snow and sea-ice and so on. Finally, this finer structure of concepts affects the way they experience the world. Where we would just see snow, Eskimos would see a rich variety of different types of snow. We English-speakers are 'snow-blind' in the way that some people are colour-blind.

In fact, no-one I know clearly gives the foregoing argument. It is an amalgam of different thoughts on how language is superior to thought because language shapes thought and perhaps experience too. Many people do argue that language is the dominant partner in the language-thought relationship. Others argue that thought comes first and language is the outward reflection of thought. This is not a simple dispute where only one side can be right. The picture is rather more complicated. In this essay, I intend to tease apart different claims so as to present a clear map of the terrain. I shall be looking in particular at the famous Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. In a future essay, I shall continue the exploration by considering the thoughts of modern philosophers, such as Wittgenstein, Davidson and Fodor.

What's In A Word?

How many words are there in this sentence? You should find eight. How did you tell? You counted strings of letters separated by white space. Had I spoken the sentence, you would also have counted eight because you hear the word boundaries. You might think that spoken word boundaries are a form of white space, such as a momentary pause that would show up on a spectrograph. You'd be wrong. Word boundaries have only a 'phenomenal' existence. Real boundaries appear between syllables and the greater the contrast in syllables, the longer the pause as your vocal apparatus changes. The longest boundaries can often appear within words. For example, in 'please stop tickling my feet', there are two (relatively) long moments of silence between (to put things phonetically) 'pleeze' and 'top' and between 'myf' and 'eet'.

This should not be too surprising. First, if you hear a sentence in a language you don't speak, you are usually uncertain where the words begin and end. Furthermore, like many languages, English contains oronyms. Oronyms are pairs or multiples of expressions that are phonetically identical but syntactically distinct. In the sentence '*I scream* for *ice-cream*' or '*I love you* on the *isle of view*', the italicised expressions are pronounced the same but correspond to different words. To know how many words correspond to the sounds, you have to know not just the language but the context.

Long before people started writing, people were aware of the boundaries of words in languages such as English, Latin and Greek. Words can be identified because they are the meaningful elements that compose a sentence. A word is something that can be taken out and replaced with another. You can find alternative words for each of the seven words in 'Bernard sees a badger in his garden'. Indeed, you don't need the white space. You can read and count the words in the following sentence quite easily:

> Emmawoodhousehandsomeclevera ndrichwithacomfortablehomeandh appydispositionseemedtounitesom eofthebestblessingsofexistenceand hadlivednearlytwentyoneyearsinth eworldwithverylittletodistressorve xher.[4]

The need to mark word boundaries so clearly is little more than a thousand years old. Look at old biblical manuscripts, inscriptions on *ostraka*, the Rosetta stone, cuneiform-studded tablets and so on and you will find yourself staring at a seemingly unbroken sequence of characters.

Why did no-one feel the need to mark word boundaries? We tend to forget that the art of reading silently developed a long time after reading aloud. Texts would have been read out and the words heard rather than seen. (It would still often require practice with a text before reading it aloud in order to be aware of possible ambiguities and difficult strings of characters – good sight-reading was rare.)[5] Punctuation was initially developed to facilitate preparation for reading a text out rather than in one's own private company. Early Christian monks developed a writing method known as *per cola et commata*, where the text was divided into lines of sense or paragraphs. After the seventh century, points and dashes were developed as sentence boundaries: today's full stop. Commas and semi-colons followed. By the ninth century, silent reading in monasteries had become sufficiently common for the words to be prised apart to aid reading further.[6]

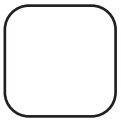
Linguists do not regard words as the smallest meaningful units, however. These units are called *morphemes*. In the sentence 'John walks slowly to the shop', there are six words and eight morphemes. The words of interest are 'walks' and 'slowly'. They each contain two morphemes: 'walk' + '-s' and 'slow' + '-ly'. The morpheme '-s'' is added to the stem 'walk' to indicate that the subject of the verb is in the third person singular and that the tense is present indicative. The morpheme '-ly' is added to an adjective to convert it to an adverb.

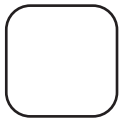
Linguists define an analytic/synthetic spectrum for languages.[7] Analytic languages have few morphemes per word. English is quite analytic. Most English words can't be broken down into smaller parts. We have just seen how we can break down some verbs and adverbs. We can also break down words like 'incommunicable' into 'in', 'communic[ate]' and 'able'. Most European languages are more synthetic. Many more words are composed of more than one morpheme. For example, in French, the verb 'to give' varies its ending depending on person, tense and mood: 'Je donne', 'Tu donnais', 'Il donnât', 'Nous donnerons', 'Vous donneriez', 'Ils donnèrent'. In Polish, nouns change their ending depending on whether they are the subject, direct object or indirect object (amongst other possibilities):

> 'Marek chodzi' - Mark walks (Mark is the subject)
>
> 'Anna widzi Marka' - Anne sees Mark (Mark is the direct object)
>
> 'Anna daje Markowi list'' - Anne gives Mark a letter (Mark is the indirect object)

At the other end are polysynthetic languages, where each word contains a very high number of morphemes.[8] Turkish is a good example. Consider the following sentence:

> 'Evlerimizden gelmiyordum' – 'I was not coming from our houses'





[Thought]

The structure is as follows:

- ev + ler + im + iz + den: 'house' + plural + first person possessive + possessor pluraliser + 'from'
- gel + mi + yor + d + um: 'come' + negative + progressive (tense) + past (tense) + first person.

The Inuit and Yupik languages are likewise highly polysynthetic and there simply is no theoretical upper limit on the length of the word.[9] Consider the following sentence-word in standard Inuit:

'Angyarpaliyugngayugnarquq' – 'He can probably make big boats'

The structure here is:

- Angyar + pa +li + yugnga + yugnar + quq: 'boat' + 'big' + 'make' + 'be able' + 'probably'' + third person singular indicative intransitive.

It turns out that many of the so-called 'words' for snow are simply compounds. *Aput* is considered a root word for snow, snow static on the ground. You can see how *aput* is compounded in *apusiniq* ('snowdrift'), *aputitaq* ('snow patch') and *aputiminaatsiaq* ('a piece of snow') – *minaatsiaq* is simply the word meaning 'a piece'. Aput also features in *aput masannartuq* ('slush') and *aput sisurtuq* ('avalanche').[10]

Whereas we say 'hard snow', 'wet snow', 'soft snow', the Inuit are effectively saying 'hardsnow', 'wetsnow' and 'softsnow'. The number of snow-related words is in principle limitless. The important question is therefore not how many words the Inuit have for snow but how many *semantically unrelated root expressions*.

A first problem here is to decide what expressions are in the right field, in this case the field of snow. Alongside words relating to the stuff itself, frozen H_2O, there are words for forms of the stuff, such as icebergs, located forms of the stuff, such as mountain-caps, events involving the stuff, such as snowstorms, qualities of the stuff, such as the quality of being slushy, the stuff in a mode of behaviour, such as drift-snow, the stuff used in a certain way, such as snowman, times when the stuff is expected, such as winter, and so on.

It should come as little surprise that the second problem is essentially unanswerable. Some expressions are centrally snow-related, some less so, some peripherally, some barely related at all, some clearly not at all. The wider we cast our net, the more words we will find it contains. But we shall also find the same thing if we do the same for English. We could include, alongside *snow* and *ice*, the words *sleet, slush, blizzard, hardpack, powder, rime, (hoar) frost, avalanche,* and *mogul*.

If we could answer this question, we'd then have the question of determining semantic unrelatedness. Just because two words are spelled differently, this doesn't mean that they don't have a common semantic history. The words 'glamour' and 'grammar' both come from the same word 'gramarye' (in use about 1320). It meant 'learning'. It developed one way into learning about language and then into 'rules of language'. It developed another way into 'magic' because the learning undertaken by the learned classes included magic and astrology, and then into 'enchantment' and then into its modern meaning. Furthermore, just because two words look similar, it doesn't mean that they do have a common semantic history. The word 'set' meaning *to put firmly into place* comes ultimately from the Germanic verb for to sit. The word 'set' meaning a collection ultimately comes from the Latin word 'secta' meaning *a following* (from which we get the word *sect*).

We might suggest that two words are semantically unrelated if you could understand one but not the other. What about 'snow' and 'snow-storm'? Someone could understand 'snow' but not 'snow-storm' if they didn't understand 'snow'. Yet someone could understand 'snow-storm' but not 'snow' if they didn't realise it was made up of two words.

So we could try: A and B are semantically unrelated if someone could know all the parts of A and not understand B and vice versa. The fact that A and B may share a history is irrelevant. What matters is how many terms an ordinary language user can pick up to describe something and not an etymologist. Working this way, we find that there are fewer than ten unrelated words for snow-phenomena, no more (or not significantly more) than we can find in English.

The Size Of The Lexicon: Words And Concepts

We've just seen how the hypothesis derives spurious plausibility from the difficulties of saying what a word is. We will now question the significance of having many words or few words.

Let us understand by 'word' for the moment what we would call a word in English, namely an expression that typically contains one morpheme and which is a noun ('badger'), adjective ('curious') or verb ('dance') so as to rule out the whole-sentence words of polysynthetic languages. A word is part of a language. Alongside words, we have concepts. Concepts are the ingredients of thoughts. As long as we

are careful not to press the analogy, we may think of concepts like mental words and thoughts like mental sentences. If I have the concept of *badger*, then I have some capacity to think about badgers. This may minimally consist in an ability to identify them and to know a little about them.

(Looking ahead, we shall consider the view that there's really no difference between thought and language. Thinking is just speaking silently inside your head. For the moment, though, we shall separate thinking and speaking.)

Suppose now that the Inuit had a good many semantically unrelated words for snow. Would this show that they had a good many concepts for snow? No. In theory, they could have many synonyms for 'snow'. It often happens that languages contain synonyms when speakers of different dialects or languages or different social levels merge. English contains many pairs where one is from Anglo-Saxon and the other from Latin: *follow/pursue, eat/consume, hang/suspend*...and so on. Perhaps the many words for snow would just be the pooling of the few words from each of the previous languages that merged to make today's Inupiaq.

It is admittedly rare to find one concept expressed by many words in the same language. Why bother to have so many words? So let us suppose that our Inuit have many words for snow and they correspond to many concepts for snow. The difference in words/concepts may be understood as amounting to the following. Suppose 'maq' and 'laq' are words for different types of snow (what we would call 'recently-fallen snow' and 'snow on branches'.) A speaker could understand 'maq' and not 'laq' and vice versa. Would this be an interesting result?

No. The fact is that richer vocabularies are found all the time just when there's a need to introduce precision. The medical profession has over time introduced many names for the different parts of our bodies. Printers have invented many new fonts and given them names. Sailors have invented many different types of knots and names for them. The Inuit, but also skiers and meteorologists, may have many different words for snow and snow-conditions.

The original story also claimed that words are invented in response to one's environment. As the above examples show, this is a perfectly general and unsurprising phenomenon. Perhaps, though, there are two claims that need to be separated:

(1) Languages can develop more fine-grained vocabularies without any conscious effort by speakers.

(2) Languages can develop more fine-grained vocabularies through conscious effort by speakers.

Sailors, printers and doctors illustrate (2), as people had to think up terms. People or committees do however not invent the majority of words. They somehow come into being by themselves, which is what is stated by (1). Let's suppose for the sake of argument then that the Inuit speak a language in which many words for snow have evolved.

This wouldn't show that the language has evolved this many words because of the snowy nature of their environment. It could be a coincidence. One piece of evidence for this is that we do not find a surprising number of words for snow (or myths about them) in the languages of other people who live in similar conditions. A second piece of evidence is that there are examples of languages that seem entirely indifferent to distinctions we think would matter. For example, in Papua New Guinea live people in a rich, multi-coloured tropical environment who only have two words for talking about colours. (The same is true for people in parts of Africa.) Some languages lack words for numbers beyond three or four and yet it seems obvious that numbers matter to everyone (consider keeping track of children and livestock and what seems necessary for the fair exchange of goods).[11]

With the problems of the word 'word' and the environmental influence issue out of the way, we get to the main question of whether a difference in language causes a difference in the way we think about and experience the world.

Sapir, Whorf and the Linguistic Determinism Hypothesis

The claim that language shapes thought is known as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, after Edward Sapir (1884-1939) an anthropologist and linguist who studied the languages of the native North American peoples and his student and colleague, Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941). However, the idea goes back to the beginning of the 18th century and is particularly associated with the philosophers Johann Georg Hamann (1730-88), Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) and Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835). They were challenging the view that we might capture as the *Language-Independence of Reality*:

> (LIR) There is a single, determinate and structured reality that is the subject of experience and thought in the same way by speakers of different languages, different languages being merely different ways of talking about the same thing.

Let us be as clear as possible about what we mean by 'experience' and 'thought'.

To say that you and I experience the world the same way is to say that the colours, tastes, sounds, smells and feels you have are the ones I have and vice versa. We have the same 'phenomenal worlds': if you were in my head, you'd feel the world in just the same way. Now, we have to modify this immediately to take account of the fact that (i) you and I might have different sense-organs and (ii) we can train our sense organs. If you are born with a better nose, then you can distinguish more smells. If I train to be a wine-taster, I will learn to distinguish more tastes. So, let us therefore say that we experience the world in the same way so long as we have similar sense-organs and that we could each learn to make finer discriminations.

To say that there is a common world that is the subject of thought is to say two things: the *Mind Independence of Reality* and the *Common Conceptual Framework Thesis*

> (MIR)There is a structure to the world that the world has by itself and not because our minds have imposed a structure on it.
>
> (CCFT) We each develop or can develop the same concepts with which to capture the world and develop the same concepts to make categorisations not written into the structure of the world.

(MIR) expresses the common-sense thesis that there's a world out there we take notice of. If all human life disappeared tomorrow, there would still be badgers and blackberries and Ben Nevis. (MIR) and (LIR) are very similar: what (MIR) says about thought, (LIR) says about language.

(CCFT) says firstly that everyone's mind has the same capacity to lock onto the structure of the world. So, everyone can learn that there are badgers and blackberries. When I learn to identify badgers as a distinct feature of the world, I have the *concept* of a badger. Perhaps the Inuit don't have that concept because there are no badgers in Alaska. Nevertheless, they could gain that concept if they moved to a badger-rich environment. (CCFT) says secondly that there are concepts that we do invent to categorise reality and that we have equal abilities to learn them. Whereas it seems obvious that water and weasels are just parts of reality there for us to take notice of, students and sequins are not. We have invented the concept of a student and the concept of a sequin. They exist because of institutions and practices we have developed and not because the world gave them to us.

In short, some concepts reflect what's in the world and some we invent to go further and categorise where the world doesn't. In both cases, (CCFT) says that we each have the same capacity to learn the same concepts. Once again, we shall observe that this requires us to have the same minds and sense-organs. A blind person cannot form the same concept of red as I can. So long as you and I are built the same way, then, we have the same concept-forming capacities.

Hamann, Herder and von Humboldt were then claiming that language structures how you experience and think about the world. Sapir writes:

> Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection (1929, p. 209).

Our language affects how we perceive things:

> Even comparatively simple acts of perception are very much more at the mercy of the social patterns called words than we might suppose. ...We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language

> habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation (p. 210).

It shapes how we think about the world:

> The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same worlds with different labels attached (p. 209).

Whorf writes:

> We are thus introduced to a new principle of relativity, which holds that all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar, or can in some way be calibrated. ...The relativity of all conceptual systems, ours included, and their dependence upon language stand revealed (1956, p. 214ff)

> We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds--and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds (p. 213).

From their writings, it is customary to distinguish two hypotheses, a stronger and a weaker, or the Linguistic Determinism Hypothesis and the Linguistic Relativism Hypothesis.

(LDH) Your language completely determines how_you think about the world.

(LRH) Your language influences how you think about the world.

In Polish, there is no verb 'to go'. If I say, 'John went to the shops', I have to consider how he got there: on foot, with a vehicle, by air or by sea:

> 'John poszedl do sklepów'
> John went ON FOOT to the shops
>
> 'John pojechal do sklepów'
> John went BY VEHICLE to the shops
>
> 'John poplynàl do sklepów' John went BY WATER to the shops
>
> 'John polecial do sklepów' John went BY AIR to the shops.

If the LDH is correct, then Poles cannot think of motion in general but only specific motion. What would this mean? It would have to mean that they couldn't grasp our general concept of motion. For if they could learn our general concept, then they would be thinking about the world in a way not available in their language. Of course, they can do this just because they can learn English. Furthermore, as perhaps you have realised, if the LDH were true, I couldn't have explained the Polish verbs because their fundamental divisions of motion are not captured by basic words in English.[12]

So (LDH) must entail the Impossibility of Translation Thesis (IT):

> (IT) Unless two languages dissect the world in exactly the same ways, neither language can be translated into the other.

English speakers can learn Polish and vice versa. Either this means that our languages do dissect the world in the same way or (IT) is false. Since we know they do dissect the world differently, (IT) is false. Since (LDH) entails (IT), (LDH) is false. The intertranslatability of languages shows that (LDH) is false.

Before turning to (LRG), we shall consider a weaker version of (LDH). Instead of saying that *any* difference between a pair of languages means that they are not intertranslatable, we shall consider the thesis that where two languages differ over how they dissect some part of the world, they are not intertranslatable with respect to that part. I'll call this the Local Impossibility of Translation Thesis:

> (LIT) Where two languages work differently in some field, there can be no translation between them with respect to that field.

The extent to which communication will be possible depends on how many fields we overlap on. Let's distinguish a vertical axis and a horizontal axis of categories. Consider the categories: WEASEL, OTTER and STOAT. These are low-level categories into which fall animals of a very particular type. Moving up a level, we'd have a common category for all of them: MUSTELID. Moving up again, we'd have MAMMAL, then ANIMAL, then LIVING OBJECT then OBJECT. (We've

missed out many possible intermediate stages). The vertical axis is from high-level or very general categories to low-level or very specific categories. At any level, we can think horizontally of categories of the same granularity. For example, perhaps CUP, MUG and GLASS are on the same level as WEASEL, OTTER and STOAT. MUSTELID is alongside HOUSEHOLD DRINKING VESSEL, MAMMAL alongside DRINKING VESSEL, ANIMAL alongside CONTAINER and then we're back to a common OBJECT.

We can then say that if two languages overlap on categories a long way down the vertical axis, then they are largely intertranslatable. Let us suppose there is a language, SMINGLISH, which agrees with us that there are objects and living things and mammals but divides up the mammals into categories that we somehow can't get our heads around (which is why we can't translate them). Not much of a problem. If there is a problem with many other low-level categories, it gets a bit worse. For example, suppose they divide up household kitchen objects, birds, items of clothing and so on in a different way as well as mammals. But if they disagree with us on dividing up animals into MAMMALS, BIRDS and FISH (say), we can understand them to a much lesser degree.

Where would it end? Well, what are the basic categories? Philosophers have wondered about this. Aristotle famously produced ten basic categories. Amongst these are **substance, property, location** and **time**. A substance is a particular thing belonging to a kind, such as Socrates (a man) or Jaws (a shark). A property is a feature of a thing. Properties of Socrates are that he is short, snub-nosed, clever and fond of arguing. If a language didn't divide the world into objects and kinds and properties that have locations in time, we would surely be at a loss to understand it.

Whorf claimed that many North American native languages do differ from us over the most basic categories.[13] He argued that the Nootka language has a basic category of event.[14] Where we have a basic division of subject and predicate – 'the water falls' – they have a word that captures the event – 'waterfalling'. The literal translation of how to say 'the boat is grounded on the beach' is, Whorf said, 'it is on the beach pointwise as an event of canoe motion': we are to think of a pointy-canoe-happening.

Of the Hopi, Whorf wrote that their language contains 'no words, grammatical forms, constructions, or expressions that refer directly to what we call 'time', or to past, or future or enduring or lasting.' This showed that they did not think in terms of a linear notion of time where past and future meet at a present. How do they see the world? It is hard to say. Whorf suggests that there is a difference between an actual world of real happenings and future or mythical worlds of unreal happenings.

Unfortunately, Whorf was guilty of two faults. First, it is claimed he spent very little time or no time with actual speakers of the language. He merely analysed written recordings of their language. Of course, people do this with long-dead languages like Etruscan and Hittite but nothing beats real communication for narrowing down possible interpretations.

The more serious mistake, which was spotted soon after Whorf's revelations, was that he was guilty of failing to provide a proper argument. He argued that the Hopi must think differently because their language expresses things differently. But so long as you just rely on language, you can't rule out the possibility that they think like we do but use a different form of words. To rule this out by pointing to the oddity of their language would of course be to argue in a circle.[15]

But then how could we find out what they thought except by their language? We can watch what they do. If we find that Hopi speakers plan meetings, keep calendars and have sundial-style timekeeping devices, then that suggests they have a similar concept of time to us. This is exactly what more recent research has shown. In general, a lot of research has been done since Whorf into the languages of the native peoples of North America and it is almost always damning of Whorf's outlandish speculations as to the metaphysical frameworks of these unfamiliar peoples.

A second way to find out is to ask them in a different language. There are speakers of these languages who are bilingual with English. It turns out that they tell us that they see the world pretty much the same way that we do.

People learn different languages and we have no example of any language not being translatable into any other. Even if we accept that languages overlap most of the way down, we might still wonder if there are particular islands of untranslatability in different languages. Of course, the greater the overlap, the harder this will be. Suppose that Paul uses a word 'glyr' in his native language and tells us that he can't explain what it would be in English. Given that we can understand so much of what each other says, I can ask him all sorts of questions about what a glyr is. It would be very strange if I could not get a very good idea of what a glyr is given all the enquiries I could make.

It is a commonplace to say that you can't translate a novel from one language to another because nuances are lost in translation. But in asking about what a glyr is I am in effect learning a word in Paul's language. The best we can do in search of non-translatability is to find words that express concepts that are very hard to learn. The English word 'posh' is a good example of a word foreigners find hard to master. This is because the word relates to a very particular segment of people and society and someone who is unfamiliar with the social fabric of Britain across the last one hundred years will not really grasp the meaning. But this impediment is not an insurmountable one, as is shown by the existence of fluent speakers who have mastered the term.

Current evidence suggests that human beings have a window in which first language learning is possible. If a child goes beyond the age of ten without being exposed to people speaking a language, it will find it hard or impossible to learn to speak thereafter. I am a native English speaker and perhaps I have learned some features of English in that window that no-one who learns English as a second language in school can latch onto. It may be that there are certain nuances that only native speakers are sensitive to.

I say 'perhaps'. The evidence suggests that people can master English as a second or third or even fourth language. It may be that it is much harder to master all the nuances if you have missed the window. But this is no different from saying that it is very hard to master some words without knowing a lot about the culture and history of the people.

So far, we have no reason to believe that different languages lead people to think so differently about the world that they cannot understand one another. We have established a very unexciting linguistic relativity thesis:

> **Linguistic Relativity of Expressions:** Different languages categorise the world in different ways via different words. (cf. Polish verbs of motion)

Alongside differences of words, we should likewise note an equally unexciting relativity of syntax.

> **Linguistic Relativity of Syntax:** Different languages categorise the world different ways via differences of syntax (cf. gender / mood differences.)

I shall illustrate this with a couple of examples

A first example concerns gender. In many European languages, you have to pay attention to the gender of a word. The French for 'book' is '*le* livre' not '*la* livre' (the latter means *a pound*, as in a *pound of sausages* or *three pounds fifty pence*). Books are masculine in French but feminine in Polish ('book' = 'ksiàzka'. It is neuter in German ('book' = 'das Buch'). But speakers don't 'see' anything masculine, feminine or neuter about them. In Polish, the words for 'baby' ('niemowl´e) and 'child' ('dziecko') are neuter, yet speakers are quite aware of whether they are dealing with a boy or a girl.

A second example concerns mood. The mood of a verb concerns the relationship it has with reality. The indicative mood 'I am boiling an egg' presents a fact whereas the interrogative mood 'Am I boiling an egg?' asks whether something is a fact and 'Boil an egg!' asks for reality to be a certain way. In French, there's a subjunctive mood that is used in a wide range of circumstances where you want to express uncertainty, possibility, wishes, concerns and obligations. If I say, 'I know John will come' and 'I doubt John will come', I use the same verb form in English. In French, it is different. When I say that 'I know John will come', I am in effect stating a fact, and we use the indicative form of the French verb 'venir': 'Je sais que John *viendra*.' When I say 'I doubt that John will come', I use the subjunctive because I am conveying uncertainty: 'Je doute que John *vienne*.'

In the Tuyuca language of Brazil and Columbia, there's an 'evidentiality' mood.[16] When you convey information, you have to modify the verb to show how you came to know the information. For example, these are all variants of what we would express as 'He played soccer'.

1. díiga apé-wi (I saw him play soccer): visual
2. díiga apé-ti (I heard him but didn't see him play soccer): non-visual
3. díiga apé-yi (I have evidence that he played soccer (e.g. footprints) but I didn't see him play): apparent

4. díiga apé-yigi (I got the information from someone else): second-hand
5. díiga apé-híyi (It is reasonable to assume he played soccer): evidential.

Yet despite the need to use words a certain way, the same ideas are available to all. It is just that where some languages use a little suffix, others have to use a whole clause.

Speakers of Nootka and Hopi do have grammatical categories that seem odd from an Indo-European point of view but that is as deep as it goes. In the case of Hopi, the anthropologist Malotki, showed that 'Hopi speech contains tense, metaphors for time, units of time (including days, numbers of days, parts of the day, yesterday and tomorrow, days of the week, weeks, months, lunar phases, seasons, and the year), ways to quantify units of time, and words like 'ancient', 'quick', 'long time' and 'finished''. The author of that sentence, Steven Pinker, wonders how Whorf managed to miss so much evidence and suggests that 'his limited, badly analysed sample of Hopi speech and his long-time leanings towards mysticism must have contributed.' [17]

Linguistic Relativism: Colour, Place, Number

Are there any theses left concerning how thought might shape language worthy of investigation? There are.

(EDGE) Does 'having a word for it' give you the edge over people who don't have a word for it?

(NLT) Is language necessary for thinking?

(ERT) Does language extend the range of thoughts?

(NLT) and (ERT) will be examined in the second part of this paper. In this final section, I'll introduce some recent evidence in favour of edge.

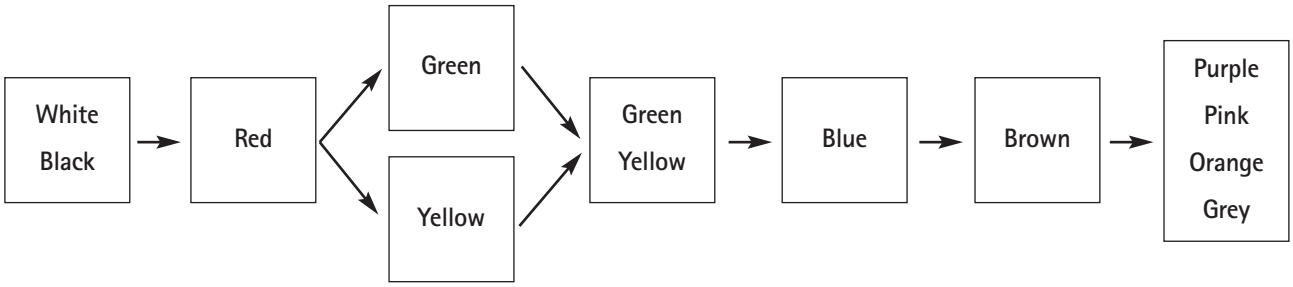
One promising area to test the Sapir-Whorf thoughts is in the understanding of colour terms. The colours form a complex space with no obvious boundaries: red fades into orange and then into yellow, for example. Do all languages nevertheless share similar colour words that impose some structure on the space?

As noted above, there are languages with only two colour words. The Jalé of the Highland group of Papua New Guinean languages which has 'sil' and 'hóló'. The Dani of Western Papua New Guinea have 'mili' and 'molo'. It is not easy to translate these terms. In the past, people have offered 'cool/dark/black' and 'warm/light/white'. We might do better with 'black/green/blue' and 'white/red/yellow'. If we look to a language such as Tiv, a Bantoid language of Nigeria, we find three colour words: 'ii', 'pupu' and 'nyian'. The areas of colour space that these pick out are roughly: 'ii'' – dark shades, especially dark blues, greens and greys; 'pupu' – lighter shades, especially blues, greens and greys; 'nyian' – reds, yellows and browns.

We can find languages with four colour terms, then five, then six...Where does it end? In one sense, nowhere. Look at a catalogue of paint-colours to see thousands of colour names: 'Coventry blue', 'Otter brown', 'Quiet obsidian' and so on.[18] Even without special names, you can generate lots of colour expressions by stringing together terms: 'sky blue', 'bottle green' and so on. If we look for basic, semantically unrelated terms, something surprising happens. At least, this is what was claimed by

Berlin and Kay in 1969.[19] They examined speakers of twenty different languages in the San Francisco area. They showed them a chart that displayed a spectrum of colours. In effect, speakers had two tasks. They had to consider their basic colour words. In English, these would be words like 'red', 'green' and 'blue'. Speakers had to identify the reddest red, the bluest blue, and so on. Such colours we call the focal colours. Speakers then had to circle the colours that fell under their colour terms: to circle all the reds, the blues, and so on.

Berlin and Kay claimed that their survey of languages showed that there were at most twelve basic colour terms. They then argued that there was a distinct pattern to what colours a language would choose to name. Any language with two terms made a division between blacks/greens/blues and whites/reds/yellows. A language with three terms introduced a term that covers reds/red-browns and red-yellows. A language with four terms will *either* introduce a word for greens *or* for browns. A language with five colour terms will have words for both greens and browns. In other words, *no* language with three colour terms would have a basic term covering the greens, for example. Furthermore, they found that speakers agreed on focal colours. A language with three and a language with twelve will have a word for 'red'. Speakers will agree on what they consider to be focal red.



Above is the diagram illustrating the various stages. (Note that this diagram is based on the original study. The development pattern has been substantially revised by subsequent studies.)

Berlin and Kay argued that this was evidence that all people share the same perceptual systems and the relativistic idea that the colours could be divided up in theory any old way was false.[20] Their research was developed by the psychologist Rosch Heider in 1972.[21] Rosch looked the Dani people, whose language has just two colour terms. She wanted to know whether the Dani were nevertheless sensitive to the same focal colours as English speakers. She taught them new words for different colours. She found that the Dani were much better at using new colour words for focal colours than for non-focal colours. The implication was that the Dani found some colours more memorable than others and these were the same colours that we found memorable. This in turn implied that our ability to find these colours easier to identify was *not* due to the fact that our language has words for them, for the Dani did just as well without words for them. In conclusion, it is not language but the design of our perceptual systems that determines how we divide up the colours.

Since these and similar results, many people have undertaken research, half of which argues for a relativism and against the Berlin-Kay-Rosch 'universalism' and half of which argues for the reverse. A proper survey cannot be undertaken here. What is noticeable is that no-one really disputes the view that, given the large number of possible ways languages could divide up the colours, the number of actual ways is very small. No language exists where beige is a basic colour. Red is a very important colour category in every language. What is disputed is whether speakers with few language terms really are more sensitive to the same focal colours as us. Some studies claim to have shown that speakers with no word for blue (for example) are no better at identifying or remembering our focal blue than non-focal blues. In other words, it does help to have learned the English word 'blue' because it will have created a concept *blue*.

In the 1990s, evidence was put forward for a language-based difference in our understanding of spatial relations.[22] There are three ways we can specify location:

Intrinsic:
location of object A is given by reference to an intrinsic feature of object B: *the card is in front of the house*.

Relative:
location of object A is given by reference to the speaker's position: *the car is to the left of the tree*.

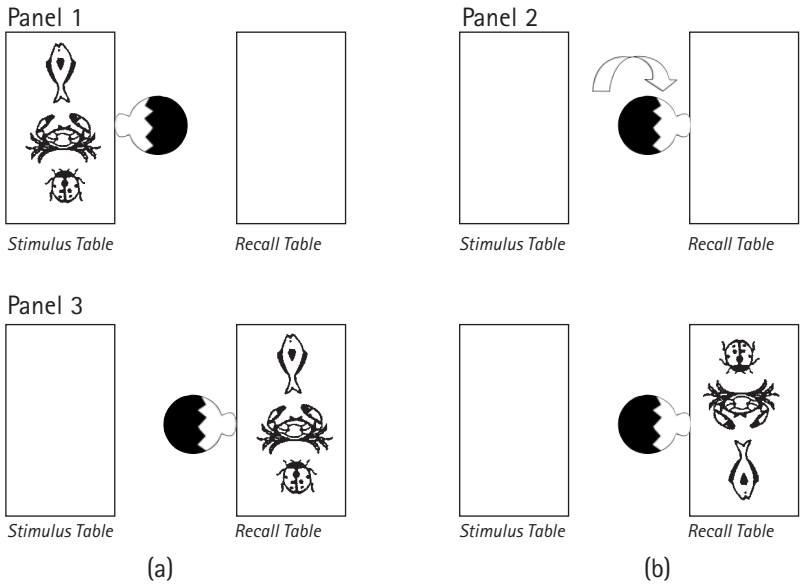
Absolute:
location of object A is given by reference to an invariant system of co-ordinates: *the car is to the north of the garage*.

Suppose I put three objects on a table in a row: a spoon, a sock and a sausage. If I asked you to describe the position of the spoon, you would say that it is on the left or to the left of the sock. You would not say that it is to the west of the sock. This is because English-speakers use relative spatial terms. This is not a universal preference. For example, in the Tzeltal-speaking Tenejapa community in Mexico and the languages Longgu and Arrandic, speakers use an absolute system. The Tenejapans have a three-term system: 'downhill' (≈ north), 'uphill' (≈ south) and 'across' (≈ east/west).

The Tenejapans were compared to Dutch speakers, who use a relative system like us, via the following experiment, a diagram for which is below.[23] You are sitting on a swivel chair facing a table on which are three plastic animals: a ladybird, a crab and a fish. As you see things, the animals are lined up behind each other in a row, all pointing to the right (Panel 1). You are asked to memorise what you see. You are then spun round 180˚ to face a empty table (Panel 2). You are given the plastic animals and told to make the table the same as the previous one. (Speakers who asked what was meant by 'the same' were not given any help.)

If you imagine yourself doing this, I expect you find that you would line up the animals in the same order, again pointing to the right (Panel 3b). The Tenejapans lined them pointing to the left. They had memorised the absolute direction in which the animals were pointing (let us say *north*) and re-created that order on the other table (Panel 3a).

Does this show that a difference of language causes a difference in how we conceive of spatial relations? If so, it wouldn't be a big one. The results have however been challenged.[24] The Tenejapan were tested outside, where they could use their environment to know what was north and south, just by being aware of the incline of the land. The Dutch speakers were tested in a laboratory with no windows (at least, no uncovered windows), so that they couldn't see the world outside. Experiments on English speakers inside a similar laboratory showed that they behaved like the Dutch. Experiments conducted when speakers could look outside or conducted actually outside were much less clear. Some speakers did switch to an absolute system, fixing their co-ordinates by salient landmarks. It may be that speakers in an environment where there are landmarks use them to create a co-ordinate system and that it is only when there are no useful reference points do relative systems come in. The Tenejapan have not developed relative terms because they live in a village on a hill and therefore have the incline of the land as a fixed, free and obvious marker.



Finally, it has been suggested that languages with few or no number words have speakers who are poor at distinguishing numerical quantities over three or four.[25] It has been argued that the language of the Pirahã people of the Lowland Amazonia region of Brazil is such a language. They have the following quantity words: 'hói' (one/small size or amount), 'hoí' (two/somewhat larger size or amount) and 'baagi'/'aibai' (many).[26] The following experiment was conducted. The experimenter sat one on side of a table and the Pirahã subject on the other. A stick running east-west divided the table into two. The experimenter would line up on his side a number of objects (batteries) in a row. The subject would then have to produce the same number of objects (nuts) on his side. The data showed that they were able to do this for numbers 1-3, poorer for 4-8 (correctly done about 75% of the time) and unable to do it for numbers beyond 8 (correctly done 0% of the time). Other matching experiments confirmed this limit. A further experiment worked as follows. Subjects watched as the experimenter put a number of nuts, one by one, into a can. The experimenter then removed the nuts, one by one, asking after each removal whether there were any nuts left in the can. The data here showed that subjects were scoring only just about 50% for numbers 2 and 3, with a correctness rate of 25% for 5-9.

The interpretation offered was that, lacking number words, Pirahã speakers lacked number concepts. It has been suggested that the data supports the opposite conclusion: lacking number concepts, they lack number words. They lack number concepts because

they have no need for them. There are only around 200 speakers living in small villages of 10-20 people, who rarely have contact with outsiders and use 'primitive pidgin systems for communicating in trading goods without monetary exchange'. Their relative success with numbers 1-3 can be put down to the 'subitising module' of the human brain. It has been argued that we are able to immediately apprehend or 'subitise' the numerosity of collections of one, two, three and possibly four objects without needing to count because our brains are designed this way.

Conclusion

The debate continues over whether some form of linguistic relativism holds. Does having a word for it make things easier? One can argue that in having a word, one has a public label for a concept and hence that language cannot add anything. You can't name what you aren't somehow already aware of. Nor can it help with re-identification. My ability to re-identify something publicly with 'that's a badger!' requires me first to have identified it as falling under the concept of a badger.

On the other hand, language may make things easier by introducing a finer grain. Suppose I live in an environment where I am the only mammal. If badgers, weasels, squirrels and so forth were introduced to my environment, I would be aware of some differences between these new creatures. Would I make the distinction between a squirrel and a weasel? Perhaps not. Perhaps I would treat them as the same kind of animal. By learning that there are (say) twenty names for the new creatures, I would know that I have to be more discriminating if I am to learn to name the animals properly. Words would not make any new differences appear. In collapsing the squirrel/weasel distinction, it would not be that I didn't see any differences but that I didn't attend to the differences as differences. In the same way, when I tell you that the small plastic sheath at the end of your shoelace is called an *aglet*, I make you notice something that you could and did see before but didn't attend to. It is rather that words would make me more discriminating.

In the next paper, we shall consider whether thought is possible without language or whether language is necessary for thought. On the one side, we have those promoting a *communicative conception* of language, according to which thought is primary and language is the means by which it is made public. Locke, Russell, Fodor and Chomsky take this view. On the other side, we have the *cognitive conception* of language, according to which language is necessary for thought because language is the vehicle or medium of thought: we think in language. Here we shall find Wittgenstein, Davidson, Dennett and McDowell. As you may have realised, this positions suggest that animals and young children cannot have thoughts because they don't have language. As we shall see, proponents of this position accept this consequence.

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Notes

1 All the data above come from Martin (1986) and Pullum (1991), pp. 159-171.

2 'Eskimo' is considered by some to be an outdated term today, 'Inuit' being the proper term. It is true that some Inuit find 'Eskimo' an offensive term as it comes from an Algonquin word that means 'eaters of raw flesh' (the Algonquin speakers being the peoples abutting the Inuit to the south-west on the American mainland). However, one should note that the people traditionally called 'Eskimo' are now divided into two groups: the Inuit, whose language is Inuit-Inupiaq or Inuktitut from which the various words for snow are predominately drawn, and the Yupik. These two languages form one branch of a family, the Eskimo-Aleut family. For more on the ethnography, visit http://college.hmco.com/history/readerscomp/naind/html/na_011300_eskimo.htm

3 See Fortescue (1984) and Jacobson (1984).

4 The sentence is the opening line of Austen's Emma.

5 Of St. Ambrose, a fourth-century bishop of Milan, St. Augustine relates in admiration: 'When he read, his eyes scanned the page and his heart sought out the meaning, but his voice was silent and his tongue was still. Anyone could approach him freely and guests were not commonly announced, so that often, when we came to visit him, we found him reading like this in silence, for he never read aloud.' (From Augustine's Confessions, Quoted in Manguel (1997)).

6 See Manguel (1997), pp. 48-50 for more detail.

7 Note that this analytic/synthetic distinction has nothing to do with the analytic/synthetic distinction whose existence is a key disputed topic in the philosophy of language, an analytic sentence being true/false solely in virtue of the meaning of its parts and form, such as 'a vixen is a female fox' and a synthetic sentence being true/false in virtue of the meaning of its parts, its form and extra-linguistic reality, as with 'there is a vixen in your garden'.

8 See Lyovin (1997) pp. 1-28 for more information.

9 Polysyntheticity is a feature of many Native American languages.

10 See Fortescue (1984) and Jacobson (1984).

11 See Heider (1972a) and (1972b) for further details. Refs for all three.

12 This is an example only used for illustration of a bad thesis but, nevertheless, one might wonder whether English has distinct verbs after all: go, drive, swim/sail, fly. It does, but the point is that you can still use 'go' instead: 'I went to the shops', 'I have to go to Bristol tomorrow', 'I went up and down the Thames', 'I went around the world last year.'

13 For more on Whorf and strong criticism, see Pinker (1994), pp. 55-67.

14 Pinker mistakenly takes some of the data to be from Apache. It is in fact from Nootka.

15 Lennenberg (1953) and Brown (1958) are the standard references for the first criticisms of Whorf.

16 Nettle & Romaine (2000), p. 60.

17 Pinker (1994), p.63

18 I should point out that I have made these names up.

19 Berlin and Kay (1969).

20 They didn't imply that we draw the boundaries in the same place. A language with three colour terms will include much more under 'red' than English.

21 Rosch (1972a), (1972b); Rosch & Olivier (1972)

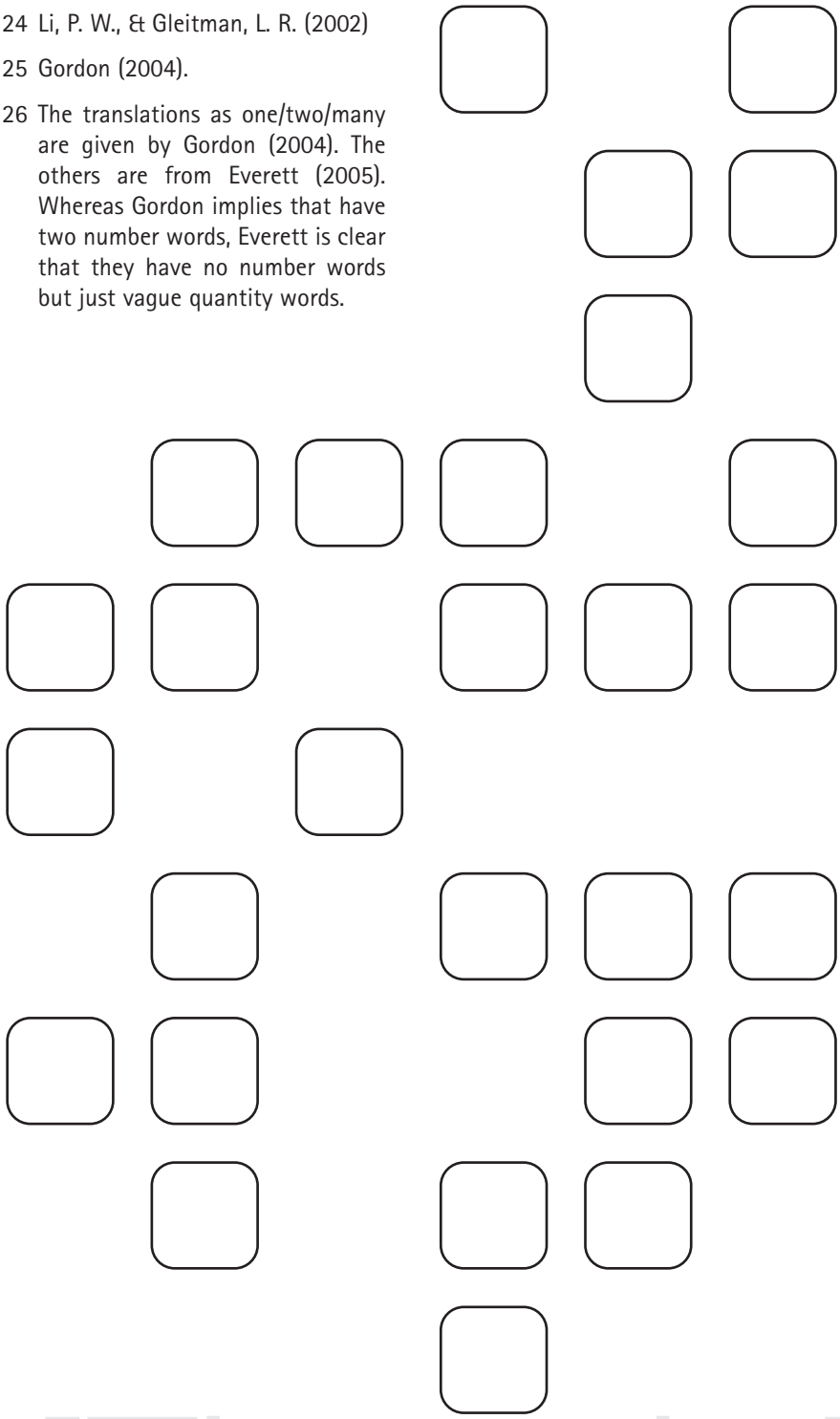
22 Levinson, S. C., & Brown, P. (1994), Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (2000), Levinson, S.C. (2000), , Pederson, E., Danziger, E., Wilkins, D., Levinson, S. C., Kita, S., & Senft, G. (1998).

23 The diagram is copied from some notes for a linguistics course by Professor Philippe Schlenker: they are available at http://www.linguistics.ucla.edu/people/schlenker/LING1-LN-2A.pdf

24 Li, P. W., & Gleitman, L. R. (2002)

25 Gordon (2004).

26 The translations as one/two/many are given by Gordon (2004). The others are from Everett (2005). Whereas Gordon implies that have two number words, Everett is clear that they have no number words but just vague quantity words.



Christopher Norris

On Knowing What We Like: music, ['best opinion'] and evaluative warrant

Abstract:

In this essay I suggest that certain ways of thinking about music – about the ontology of musical works, the nature of musical response, and the issue of truth or validity in musical judgement – can offer useful guidance in other regions of philosophical debate. More specifically, such thinking can help to focus attention on the main points at issue between realist and anti-realist approaches in epistemology and philosophy of mathematics, logic, and the formal sciences. Thus, for instance, it brings out the problems with any middle-ground stance – like that adopted by response-dependence theorists – which stops short of an objectivist, i.e., recognition-transcendent conception of truth and appeals to the assent of well-placed, competent subjects under normal, standard, or (at the limit) ideal epistemic conditions. Here I put the case that philosophy of music has to negotiate a path between two, seemingly opposed but jointly indispensable modes of thought. On the one hand is the Platonist conception of musical works as objectively existent (though abstract or supra-sensuous) entities whose structures, properties and salient features fix the truth-value of our various statements and judgements concerning them. On the other is the basically phenomenological (rather than downright subjectivist) approach that makes due allowance for the involvement of human perceptual and cognitive responses in any properly musical experience. Thus my essay takes music as a highly problematic but, for just that reason, a revealing test-case with regard to the current debate as to whether truth can be conceived as always potentially transcending the scope and limits of attainable knowledge or accredited best judgement.

I

What I want to explore in this essay is the notion of response-dependence – or of response-dispositional attributes and qualities – as applied to our experience, knowledge, and judgement of musical works. I go on to put the case for a qualified Platonist approach to philosophy of music which I think does better justice to our standing intuitions in this regard and also faces up more squarely to the very real problems involved rather than taking refuge in any such attempted compromise or middle-ground position. Moreover this approach has significant implications for our thinking about wider issues in ontology, epistemology, and philosophy of mind.

Up to now the debate around response-dependence in the analytic (i.e., mainstream Anglo-American philosophical) literature has been focused chiefly on issues in these areas.[1] It has sought to provide the conceptual groundwork for a theory of knowledge that would somehow avoid both the Scylla of full-fledged anti-realism, or a conception of truth as always epistemically constrained, and the Charybdis of a hard-line (objectivist) realism which – so it is argued – ends up by placing truth beyond our utmost epistemic reach and hence falling prey to the ravages of sceptical doubt. This it claims to do, in brief, by striking a middle-ground stance according to which the criteria for certain kinds of statement can be specified in terms of whether or not those statements would normally elicit assent from well-placed respondents with properly functioning sensory equipment or cognitive faculties when exposed to the relevant kinds of stimulus under the right sorts of ambient condition. On this account, so advocates claim, one can have both an adequate measure of objectivity – adequate for any but the hard-line realist or his shadow self, the hard-line sceptic – and a decent, even 'realistic' allowance for those various factors that promote or hinder the quest for knowledge and truth. It then becomes a matter of testing just how far the theory might extend beyond its paradigm case, i.e., that of sensory perception as regards the Lockean 'secondary qualities' of colour, sound, taste and smell to other, on the face of it less amenable (since more objective) areas of discourse such as mathematics, the natural sciences, or – arguably – morals.[2]

In these latter instances there is much disagreement concerning the relevance or applicability of a response-dispositional approach to statements whose truth-conditions would appear to demand a more robustly realist (non-epistemic or recognition-transcendent) mode of specification. Still it is often held that the approach can be tweaked – suitably adapted or adjusted – by building in various further refinements or provisos so as to stop short of full-fledged objectivism about truth while meeting the realist more than half-way on the need to explain why those other discourses cannot be response-dependent to the same degree or in quite the same way. Crispin Wright has done most to promote this adaptive strategy through his introduction of epistemically beefed-up terms such as 'cognitive command' and 'superassertibility' as a kind of full-stretch anti-realist concession to the weight of realist counter-arguments.[3] These are intended to capture – or at least to accommodate – our stubborn realist intuitions with respect to certain areas of discourse which seem to demand such treatment without, in the process, going so far as to embrace an outlook of full-strength ontological realism and thereby invite (as the anti-realist would have it) the standard sceptical riposte. However, and to just this extent, they fail to meet the realist's main objection: that unless we endorse her conception of truth as objective, recognition-transcendent, or epistemically unconstrained we shall have no means of accounting for the possibility of error and hence, by the same token, no means of explaining or justifying our knowledge or the growth of knowledge.[4] For once truth is conceived as subject to the scope and limits of human cognitive grasp – whether on the strict anti-realist view or the more flexible kinds of approach adopted by Wright and the response-dependence theorists – it then becomes impossible to square the circle by restoring that dimension of objectivity that realism takes as the *sine qua non* of knowledge as distinct from certainty or epistemically warranted belief. In which case these purported third-way alternatives fail to offer an escape-route from the realist/anti-realist dispute or the chronic oscillation between objectivism and scepticism that anti-realists are fond of remarking – justifiably or not – in their opponents' position.

All the same the response-dependence thesis does have a certain *prima facie* plausibility when applied to issues on its original home ground, i.e., those having to do with the criteria for correct ascription of sensory attributes or Lockean 'secondary qualities'. Thus for instance, in the case of colour-perception one can truly assert that an object is red just so long as that assertion would be borne out by the response of any observer whose eyesight was unimpaired, whose optical cortex was likewise in good working order, and who viewed the object clearly during daylight hours in the absence of any proximate light-source which might exert a distorting effect on their powers of accurate perception. More technically: one can always construct a quantified biconditional statement to the effect: '"*x* is red" is true if and only if *x* is reliably perceived as red by any normal observer under normal conditions', where what counts as 'normal' in both respects is given a substantive rather than a vague or all-purpose, 'whatever-it-takes' specification. Yet its proponents also claim – problematically, I would argue – that this approach comes up with an answer to the realism/anti-realism issue by combining that substantive specification with a force of *a priori* self-evidence which derives from the impossibility of doubting the truth of the duly provisoed and quantified biconditional. That is to say, we must take it as intrinsic to the very nature of

colour-perception – and likewise for the other secondary qualities – that what counts as an accurate description, response, or statement concerning them *just is* what any normal and well-placed perceiver would assent to, or again, that the validity-conditions for such reports just *cannot come apart* from the consensus of judgement amongst those best qualified to judge. However, as I have said, there is a problem here in so far as the theorist can't have it both ways, on the one hand claiming the kind of *a priori* warrant that could only apply to analytic statements or tautologous truths-of-definition while on the other purporting to fill out the biconditional with a range of informative or non-trivial specifications. Indeed what seems to operate here is a kind of inverse-proportional relationship whereby the formula gains such content only at the cost of losing its *a priori* status while retaining that status of logical self-evidence only at the cost of foregoing any claim to genuine, substantive content.

II

I shall now put the case that a suitably modified version of the response-dependence thesis has more to offer when applied to issues in philosophy of music than it does when applied – as by most of its present-day advocates – to issues concerning the truth-conditions or standards of assertoric warrant for statements about basic, i.e., purely sensory modes of cognition. In the latter case, to repeat, the argument works out as a trivial thesis to the effect that, for any given area of discourse, those standards equate with the deliverance of best judgement or optimised response under ideal epistemic conditions and discounting for any localised sources of perceptual interference. In the case of music, conversely, any adequate statement of just what is required in order for some given work to warrant a certain kind of response or for some given mode of response to be warranted in relation to this or that work will need to provide much more by way of detailed specification. A bare-bones response-dispositional account might perhaps take the form: 'work *x* has property or quality *y* if and only if that judgement is such as would gain the assent of any subject with sufficiently acute and well-developed musical responses, when listening under suitable (non-distracting or attention-conducive) conditions, and in the absence of any psychological or cultural factors that might create interference'. However this tells us precisely nothing about what constitutes *either* the property/quality in question *or* the particular kind of responsiveness, i.e., the aptitude or proven capacity for sensitive listening and musically-informed judgement that qualifies some (and not other) subjects as authorities in this regard. That is to say, the biconditional amounts to just a roundabout or needlessly complicated way of asserting the empty (tautological) claim that property *x* is correctly attributed to work *y* just so long as it would be so attributed by someone ideally (or infallibly) placed to pronounce on the matter.

Such is at any rate the standard take on the Lockean topos of secondary qualities amongst those – chiefly the response-dependence theorists – who would claim to derive a more general lesson as regards other areas of discourse, such as morals or even mathematics, where the realist versus anti-realist dispute has run into something of a brick wall.[5] It is also the conclusion reached by some of these same thinkers on the basis of Plato's 'Euthyphro contrast', that is to say, the issue as to whether certain acts are pious in virtue of the gods' deeming them so, or whether the gods are constrained so to deem them on account of their own, infallibly truth-tracking powers of moral judgement.[6] Here again the advocates of response-dependence think that there is some insight to be had – or epistemological mileage to be gained – by remarking that the class of pious acts is co-extensive or numerically identical in each case. There is no difference, in this regard at least, between the realist account which takes best judgement as *responsive to* what is truly and objectively virtuous and the response-dependent account according to which best judgement is in some sense *constitutive of* what counts as a virtuous act. Thus the Lockean and Platonist analogies serve as a handy way of putting the case for their proposed *via media* between the two scepticism-inducing extremes of a realist conception that places truth

forever beyond epistemic reach and – in stark reaction to that – a Dummett-type anti-realist approach that reduces truth to the compass of human evidential, epistemic, or assertoric warrant.[7] However, as we have seen, this is a 'solution' that in fact solves nothing since it works out either as a straightforward (truth-preserving but vacuous) tautology or else as a more substantive (more adequately specified) set of provisos on the right-hand of the quantified biconditional which *for that very reason* carries nothing like the requisite force of *a priori* self-evidence.

My point is that this whole debate around response-dependence has been slung between the poles of a drastic dichotomy whose terms are dictated by the fixed idea that one cannot have *both* objectivist (i.e., recognition-transcendent) truth *and* humanly attainable knowledge, at least on any definition of 'knowledge' that meets the classical specification of justified true belief. Hence what will seem, on the face of it, an odd or even quite absurd suggestion: that taking music as a test-case instance (rather than colour-perception or the other standard Lockean *topoi*) might help to point the way through and beyond these epistemological perplexities. After all, could one seriously wish to maintain that such deep-laid problems might find their answer in an area of discourse where value-judgements are as prone to dispute – or to the vagaries of subjective response – as is often the case with musical appreciation, or even with the more technical varieties of music analysis? Or again: why abandon the (relatively) safe ground of those widely-shared basic perceptual responses – the Lockean secondary qualities of colour, sound, taste, and smell – only to venture much farther afield into areas of phenomenological enquiry that offer no such reliable hold for normative standards of epistemic warrant or widespread consensual judgement? However this is just my point: that by raising these issues in a different, more problematical context but one less prone to various kinds of reductive or trivialising approaches we may then be placed to address them more productively in other (standard or familiar) contexts of debate.

Thus the question with regard to music, its ontological status or mode of existence *vis-à-vis* the register of normalised or optimised listener-response, is one that strongly resists any treatment purporting to resolve it in any of the three main directions (realist, anti-realist, or response-dispositional) which currently dominate the philosophic field. Rather, it requires that these issues be tested *both* against our given musical intuitions *and* against our standing philosophical concepts, not only as regards their applicability to the case in hand but also – crucially – as regards their pertinence (or lack of it) to other areas of discourse. What the instance of music brings out to particularly striking effect is the necessity of drawing a clear-cut distinction between areas such as mathematics, logic, and the formal sciences where an objectivist (even Platonist) account is at any rate a plausible contender and areas such as the human and social sciences where it applies, if at all, only when subject to certain crucial provisos and qualifications.[8] At the same time it may sharpen the debate by avoiding the sorts of fuzzy compromise 'solution' – like the response-dependence thesis in its more generalised, less discriminate forms – that purport to achieve a *modus vivendi* between realism and anti-realism by extending those provisos and qualifications well beyond their appropriate sphere.[9] Thus music, or the discourse on music, would seem a *prima facie* eligible candidate for treatment in response-dispositional terms in so far as it self-evidently does involve certain modes of more-or-less sensitive, refined, or competent listener-response. Yet it also leaves room – arguably at least – for the Platonist claim that there exist certain intrinsically valuable modes of musical experience and certain correlative features, structures, or attributes of the musical work that might always transcend or elude the grasp of even the most responsive, well-equipped listener.[10]

The special interest of music in this regard is that it offers useful grounds for comparison with other topics or areas of discourse that either lay a stronger claim to treatment in realist (objectivist) terms or else give no adequate hold for any such treatment. So, for instance, it would strain the case for musical Platonism if one pressed too hard on the analogy between music and mathematics and argued – perhaps with Bach primarily in mind – that the greatest works should be thought of as discovered, not created, since they exhibit a kind of formal autonomy or structural objectivity that is otherwise found only in the realm of mathematical truth. As concerns Bach, this notion has been most powerfully challenged by Adorno who sees in it not only a failure to grasp the music's dynamic and expressive qualities but also another melancholy sign of the reifying grip exerted on its present-day reception through the near-universal dominance of late-capitalist commodity culture.[11] Still it would be wrong – a reactive swing in the opposite, so to speak 'consumerist' (or subjectivist) direction – to deny that Bach's music does gain much of that same expressive power from its extraordinary sense of formal perfection and the quasi-mathematical working-out of possibilities somehow latent or inherent in its basic thematic material.

What gives the analogy an added force is the fact that anti-realists are apt to put their case in terms of the metaphorical contrast between knowledge conceived as resulting from the exploration of hitherto uncharted but none the less real or topographically objective terrain and knowledge as the outcome of a process which, more like the artist, shapes or re-fashions a landscape in accordance with certain creative-imaginative ends. Thus, on Dummett's account, any talk of 'discovery' in connection (say) with some new mathematical proof or some striking development in number-theory should be abandoned in favour of the anti-realist (or intuitionist) view that mathematical 'truths' exist only in so far as we are able to specify their formal validity-conditions.[12] Rather than conceive such truths as awaiting discovery in a timeless Platonist or Fregean realm of absolute ideal objectivity we should think of them as subject to a constant process of invention or creative elaboration which may indeed involve the highest standards of formal rigour but only in so far as those standards are set by the proof-procedures in question. So it is wrong – just the product of a misconceived ontology – to take mathematics as a paradigm instance of the realist/objectivist claim that truth can always come apart from knowledge, or again (more precisely) that veridical knowledge can always come apart from the deliverance of present-best or even future-best-possible judgement. For this is to assert (nonsensically, Dummett believes) that we can somehow have legitimate or rational grounds for claiming that a certain class of statements – the 'disputed class' – can be known to possess an objective truth-value despite our lacking any adequate proof-procedure or means of resolving the issue either way. Such is the realist's basic supposition that well-formed yet unproven theorems (such as Goldbach's conjecture that every even number greater than 2 is the sum of two primes) are either true or false – objectively so – even though we don't yet, and indeed might never, be able to supply the requisite formal proof. On the contrary, Dummett maintains: it is strictly unintelligible that truth-values should exceed our best capacities of proof or verification since *ex hypothesi* we should then be in no position to acquire, manifest, or recognise the truth-conditions for any statement, conjecture, or theorem concerning them.

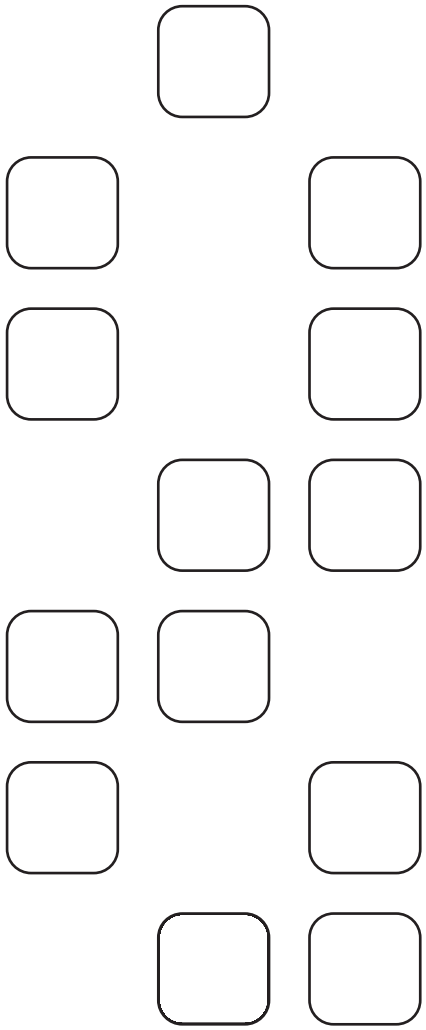
It is on these grounds that Dummett prefers the analogy between mathematics and painting (or the creative arts in general) to that between mathematical discovery and the explorer who ventures into unknown country and notes the location of various lakes, mountains, forests, and other such topographical features. For the realist, conversely, Dummett's line of argument runs up against insuperable problems, among them – not least – its failure to explain how longstanding issues (like the truth or falsehood of Fermat's Last Theorem, or the possibility/impossibility of its ever being proved) may at last gain a passport out of the 'disputed class' through some dramatic new advance in the scope and methods of formal proof.[13] Besides, so the realist will claim, there is something highly counter-intuitive – even absurd – about any theory which limits the other (i.e., truth/falsehood-apt) class of statements to those in respect of which there happens to exist some humanly achievable means of ascertainment. Such a claim can only strike the realist as a straightforward instance of the anthropocentric fallacy, one that equates the limits of truth with the limits of attainable knowledge, and these in turn with the highly restricted range statements that are plausibly up for verification by our best epistemic, conceptual, or investigative lights.[14]

My main interest here – with a view to its bearing on issues of musical ontology – is in Dummett's anti-realist approach to mathematics, logic, and the formal sciences. However it is

worth noting that he extends this approach to empirically-based disciplines or areas of discourse such as that of historiography where it works out as a flat denial that we could ever have grounds for asserting the objective truth or falsehood of statements that we – or the community of expert historians – are in no position to verify or falsify. Thus any 'gaps in our knowledge' must also be thought of as 'gaps in reality', regions whose *epistemically* inaccessible character deprives them of any determinate features onto which our statements or hypotheses could possibly latch, and thereby consigns them to a limbo of unreal (since to us unknowable) 'facts' or 'events'.[15] The same applies to well-formed though unverifiable scientific conjectures – such as 'there exists a solar system with a planet inhabited by organic life-forms in some remote (radio-telescopically invisible) region of the expanding universe' – which must likewise be viewed as failing to meet the standard for meaningful, truth-apt or warrantable statements and hence as revealing not only a lacuna in our knowledge but also a 'gap in reality'.[16] That is to say, if one accepts the logic of Dummett's anti-realist case then there is simply no escaping the ultimate conclusion (as realists would have it: the ultimate *reductio ad absurdum*) that the scope and limits of human knowledge are also, and by very definition, the scope and limits of truth as concerns every aspect of physical reality.

III

It is here precisely that philosophical reflection on music – on its mode of existence *vis-à-vis* the capacities of human perceptual and cognitive grasp – might offer some help in sorting out these epistemological issues. On the one hand there is clearly a whole dimension of musical experience that belongs to the phenomenology of human responsive powers and capacities, and which therefore finds no place in any purely objectivist (response-independent) ontology of musical works. Hence the disanalogy – the sense of a false or misleading comparison – between music and mathematics, or the sense of 'invention' that would seem most aptly to describe what occurs in the process of musical composition and the sense of that term which applies to mathematical proof-procedures or other such formal, no matter how 'inventive' (i.e., resourceful and conceptually ground-breaking) modes of thought. On the other hand this comparison does have a certain force, especially when set against the prevailing wisdom in various circles of present-day 'advanced' musicological theory. Such is the claim that any talk of musical value – or even of 'the work' as somehow existing quite apart from the various ups and downs of its cultural reception-history – is best explained (or explained away) entirely in terms of that same history.[17] My point is that we sell music short *either* by espousing a pure-bred Platonist (or formalist) doctrine that would lift it clear of any involvement with the contingencies of culturally inflected listener-response *or* by adopting one of those current (e.g., deconstructive or New-Historicist) approaches that would treat music as nothing more than a product of certain ideologically determined 'discourses' or mindsets.[18]



The tendency to swing between drastically opposed positions of this sort is a prominent feature of much recent thought across a range of disciplines, from epistemology and cognitive science to philosophy of language and logic. It is most pronounced in those areas of philosophic thought where the problems with old-style logical empiricism – especially in the wake of Quine's celebrated attack – gave rise to various, equally problematic attempts to close the gap between concepts and sensuous intuitions, or logical structure and empirical content.[19] The latest such attempts very often involve a 'naturalised' version of Kantianism which claims to deliver the epistemological goods – i.e., to explain how knowledge comes about or how precisely that gap might be closed – without any appeal to the transcendental subject and other such 'metaphysical' excrescences.[20] Response-dependence theory is very much a product of this same conjuncture, one that seeks salvation more directly from the Lockean empiricist than the Kantian idealist quarter, but which none the less draws (in company with thinkers like John McDowell) on the notion of a *via media* between all the vexing dualisms of subject and object, mind and world, or internalist and externalist accounts of knowledge-acquisition.[21] It is here, to repeat, that philosophical reflection on music – on its distinctive ontology as well as its epistemological aspects – might well have something of importance to contribute. More specifically, it raises the issue as to just where music stands in relation to those other 'areas of discourse' that have figured centrally in recent debate. What sets music decisively apart from mathematics on the one hand and the vagaries of purely subjective experience on the other is the fact that any adequate theory of music involves an irreducibly phenomenological component – an appeal to the register of normalised (or maybe optimised) listener-response – but also, beyond that, a presumed grounding in formal or structural features of the work which cannot be reduced without remainder to any such response-dependent account.

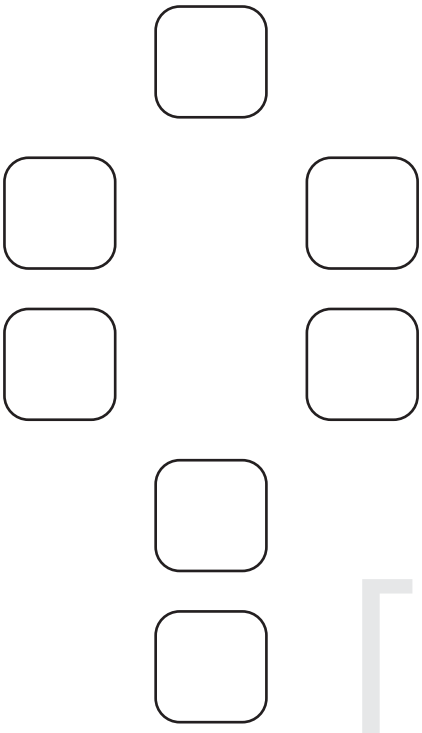
Thus music provides the most striking since hard-to-categorise instance of an ontological domain whose very elusiveness requires that we define just how and where it differs from those other object-domains or areas of discourse. All the more so, I would suggest, since the sorts of confusion which often arise in that particular case are closely akin to the sorts that arise elsewhere in the philosophic literature. This is evident when Dummett recommends, in keeping with his anti-realist outlook, that we should change our view of so-called mathematical 'discoveries' and treat them as something more closely analogous to the process of artistic creation than to the process of geographical exploration. One possible line of response to Dummett is that artworks themselves have an aspect of discovery – of 'invention' in the other, etymological sense of the term – which renders his comparison doubly problematic. That is, it can be seen both to over-estimate the kinship between mathematics and art, taken (as Dummett clearly intends) by way of a riposte to the claims of mathematical realism, and at the same time to under-estimate the strength of art's claim – albeit in a different way – to discover certain kinds of hitherto unrecognised formal, structural, or expressive possibility. The difference here of course has to do with the last of these aspects, i.e., the expressive dimension of art and its relation to those formal structures with which it is closely bound up at every level but which tends very often to elude the grasp of analysis in formal or structural terms. This issue has been central to aesthetic debate since Plato and Aristotle, and has lately been pressed with particular force by those – Derrida among them – who find it posed most sharply in the conflict of priorities between phenomenology and structuralism. Thus, according to Derrida, what is here being played out is an issue of the utmost consequence not only for aesthetics but also for epistemology and the philosophy of logic, mathematics, and language.

This is not the place for a detailed exposition of Derrida's remarkably subtle and acute early readings of Husserl where he pursues the various deep-laid aporias that emerge through the latter's intensive engagement with foundational issues in each of these disciplines.[22] Sufficient to say that they result from the strict impossibility of resolving those issues and from the fact that any rigorous enquiring-back – such as Husserl undertakes – into the grounds and history of the formal sciences will always, at some point, encounter this aporetic moment. With respect to mathematics (and, in particular, to Husserl's late text on 'The Origin of Geometry') it takes the form of a constant oscillation between the claims of *a priori* knowledge or 'absolute ideal objectivity' on the one hand and, on the other, those of a genetic account that would make room for the progressive unfolding of geometrical thought through its various historical stages of development.[23] Hence the antinomy of 'structure' and 'genesis' that Derrida finds everywhere present in Husserl's project, and which he treats not so much as a defect or failing but rather

as a sure sign of the analytic rigour – the exemplary willingness to think these issues through with the greatest conceptual precision – that Husserl brings to bear in the course of his logico-mathematical investigations.

At this point I should like to cite two rather lengthy passages from Derrida's essay '"Genesis and Structure" and Phenomenology', since they bring out not only the aspects of Husserl's thinking that Derrida wishes to emphasise but also the precise character of his (Derrida's) critical engagement and – beyond that – their bearing on those issues in analytic philosophy of logic, mathematics and language that have been my main focus of discussion so far. Thus:

> [i]f Husserl gives up the psychological route when confronted by all the difficulties of accounting for a structure of ideal meaning on the basis of a factual genesis, he no less rejects the logicizing conclusion with which his critics wished to corner him. Whether in the then current Platonic or Kantian style, this logicism was preoccupied above all with the autonomy of logical ideality as concerns all consciousness in general, or all concrete and non-formal consciousness. Husserl, for his part, seeks to maintain simultaneously the normative autonomy of logical or mathematical ideality as concerns all factual consciousness, and its original dependence in relation to a subjectivity in general; in general, but concretely. Thus he had to navigate between the Scylla and Charybdis of logicizing structuralism and psychologistic geneticism (even in the subtle and pernicious form of the 'transcendental psychologism' attributed to Kant). He had to open up a new direction of philosophical attention and permit the discovery of a concrete, but nonempirical, intentionality, a 'transcendental experience' which would be 'constitutive', that is, like all intentionality, simultaneously productive and revelatory, active and passive . . . . Husserl will attempt to prepare an access to this common radicality through the diverse 'reductions', which are presented initially as neutralizations of psychological genesis and even of every factual genesis in general. The first phase of phenomenology, in its style and its objects, is structuralist, because first and foremost it seeks to stay clear of psychologism and historicism. But it is not genetic description in general which is disqualified, but only the genetic description which borrows its schemas from naturalism and causalism, and depends upon a science of 'facts' and therefore on an empiricism; and therefore, concludes Husserl, depends upon a relativism incapable of insuring its own truth; therefore, on a scepticism. The transition to the phenomenological attitude is made necessary, thus, by the impotence or philosophical fragility of geneticism when the latter, by means of a positivism which does not understand itself, believes itself capable of enclosure by a 'science-of-facts', whether this be a natural science or a science of the mind. The expression 'worldly genesis' covers the domain of these sciences.[24]



[Knowing]

I must forego any detailed commentary on this passage and content myself with just a few remarks concerning its relevance to the topic in hand. Perhaps most striking – *à propos* the realism/anti-realism debate – is Derrida's insistence (following Husserl, though pressing somewhat harder on the various antinomies here opened up) that one cannot resolve the structure/genesis problem by straightforwardly endorsing one approach and declaring the other irrelevant, unworkable, or philosophically off-bounds. Thus a twin necessity imposes itself: that of acknowledging (*contra* anti-realists like Dummett) the claims of mathematics, logic, and the formal sciences to be concerned with a realm of objective, verification-transcendent truth quite aside from the various episodes that have marked their development to date, while none the less allowing that those disciplines *do* have a history – a 'genetic' aspect – which cannot be ignored or bracketed out since it constitutes the very condition of possibility for grasping that development along with its latest (present-day) stage of advance.

The second passage from 'Genesis and Structure' may help to clarify what is involved here. Thus, as Derrida reads Husserl:

> an eidetic descriptive science, such as phenomenology, may be rigorous, but it is necessarily inexact - I would rather say 'anexact' - due to no failure on its part. Exactitude is always a product derived from an operation of 'idealisation' and 'transition to the limit' which can only concern an abstract moment, an abstract eidetic element (spatiality, for example) of a thing materially determined as an objective body, setting aside, precisely, the other eidetic elements of a body in general. This is why geometry is a 'material' and 'abstract' science. It follows that a 'geometry of experience', a 'mathematics of phenomena' is impossible: this is an 'attempt doomed to miscarry'. This means in particular, for what concerns us here, that the essences of consciousness, and therefore the essences of 'phenomena' in general, cannot belong to a structure or 'multiplicity' of the mathematical type. Now what is it that characterizes such a multiplicity for Husserl, and at this time? In a word, the possibility of closure . . . . What Husserl seeks to underline by means of this comparison between an exact and a morphological science, and what we must retain here, is the principled, essential, and structural impossibility of closing a structural phenomenology.[25]

It should be evident that Derrida is here broaching, by way of Husserl, a range of ontological, epistemological, and (not least) metaphysical issues that have likewise preoccupied philosophers in the analytic tradition from Frege and Russell to the present day. Chief among them is the issue – most provocatively raised by Dummett – as to whether certain statements belonging to the 'disputed class', i.e., statements that are well-formed and (apparently) meaningful yet for which we possess no formal proof-procedure or means of empirical verification can none the less be thought of as true or false (objectively so) just in virtue of the way things stand in reality and quite aside from any such epistemic considerations. For the realist about truth the answer is plainly 'yes'; for the Dummettian anti-realist 'no', perhaps hedged about by some qualifying clauses with respect to how far the verification-principle might be stretched to accommodate various conceivable but so far unachieved methods of proof; and for stakers-out of a middle-ground, e.g., response-dispositional approach a suitably provisoed 'yes/no' according to the area of discourse in question and its presumed degree of truth-aptitude.[26]

Then again, for a Kantian revisionist such as McDowell – one who proposes a 'naturalised' reading of Kant shorn of the whole transcendental apparatus but retaining the idea of an active reciprocity between mind and world or knowledge and the objects of knowledge – the answer would seem to be another 'yes/no', but more to the effect that this problem simply doesn't arise so long as we refuse to mount the dualist seesaw.[27] However it is scarcely resolved by McDowell's claim that we can best avoid the residual dualism in Kant's talk of sensuous intuitions that must somehow be 'brought under' concepts of understanding through the simple expedient of switching to Kant's alternative idiom of 'receptivity' and 'spontaneity', these latter envisaged as powers of mind whose mutual inter-involvement prevents any such dichotomy from getting a hold. For it is clear from the problems that McDowell has in striving to maintain this position – from the often tortuous phraseology and signs of extreme conceptual strain – that the switch is more a matter of cosmetic appearance than a genuine working solution.[28]

IV

The point of my above brief detour *via* Derrida on Husserl was to signal the existence of another approach to the realism/anti-realism issue that avoids the kinds of unproductive deadlock or evasive middle-ground solution

produced by a great deal of current analytical (or 'post-analytical') debate. What Derrida brings out most forcefully in his readings of Husserl is the necessity of thinking these issues through to the point where 'a certain structuralism' can be seen as 'philosophy's most spontaneous gesture', while none the less acknowledging that this project meets its limit in 'the principled, essential, and structural impossibility of closing a structural phenomenology'.[29]

It would not be hard to show, given time, that analytical debate on these matters has been hobbled by the turn it took through Frege's rejection of Husserlian phenomenology as just another species of thinly-disguised psychologism.[30] This view was further reinforced by Gilbert Ryle's dramatic change of mind – from a well-developed interest in Husserl's work to a dismissal of it on similar grounds – and again (most recently) by Dummett's rather grudging concession that there might be something of interest in Husserl though only to the extent that his thinking bore limited comparison with Frege's altogether more adequate approach.[31] The result has been precisely that drastic polarisation of views according to which one can either espouse a notion of objective and recognition-transcendent (hence unknowable) truth or else make do with a scaled-down conception of Dummettian warranted assertibility or 'truth' as epistemically constrained. What Derrida's readings of Husserl hold out is the prospect of steering a critical course between these poles that would neither accept the terms of that putative dilemma nor seek to defuse it by adopting some middle-ground approach which finally reduces to the trivial thesis whereby truth equates with whatever counts as such according to normalised or optimised best judgement. The above-cited passages should make it clear that Derrida is far from rejecting the Platonist view, i.e., the basic realist premise that there exists a vast range of unproven or perhaps unprovable statements and theorems in mathematics, logic, and the formal sciences that must be thought of as objectively true or false despite our inability to settle the issue either way. Yet at the same time Derrida is keenly aware – like Husserl before him – of the need to take account of those various epochal stages of advancement or knowledge-acquisition that constitute not only the background history but (in some sense) the enabling context and prior condition of possibility for any further such advances.

Other commentators – Follesdal and Mohanty among them – have argued that the problems confronted by post-Fregean philosophy of mathematics and logic, in particular its having given rise to these intractable dilemmas, might well have been avoided were it not for that unfortunate parting-of-the-ways between the two traditions.[32] More specifically: it might not have witnessed the emergence of a strongly reactive movement of thought which took the problems with Fregean objectivism (i.e., its purportedly placing truth beyond the utmost reach of attainable knowledge) as a pretext for adopting the kinds of extreme or more moderate anti-realist approach exemplified by Dummett and the advocates of response-dependence. To be sure, Dummett never goes quite so far as L.E.J. Brouwer, the most influential philosopher of mathematics to have espoused an intuitionist approach that rejects the idea of objective (recognition-transcendent) truth in favour of equating truth with knowledge, knowledge with provability, and the latter with just those sorts of construction that strike the enquirer as possessing intuitive conviction or plausibility. Thus, according to Brouwer, it is wrong to suppose that 'mathematics, when it is made less formal, will pay for it by a loss of "exactness", i.e., of mathematical "truth"'. On the contrary, '[f]or me, "truth" is a general emotional phenomenon, which by

way of "Begleiterscheinung" [accompanying phenomenon] can be coupled or not with the formalistic study of mathematics'.[33] Yet Dummett is well within hailing distance of this *echt*-intuitionist approach – albeit treated with a decent measure of British reserve as regards such extravagant talk – if one considers his clearly stated preference for the analogy between mathematical thought and artistic creativity as against the Platonist/Fregean analogy between mathematics and the exploration of a pre-existent (i.e., objective or mind-independent) conceptual domain.[34]

What is most characteristic of these debates is a curious loss of ontological bearings, a tendency to confuse 'areas of discourse' – or the kinds of criteria that properly apply in this or that area – so that even mathematical truth seems in danger of floating off into some realm of ultimate unknowability unless brought back within human grasp through a response-dependent or 'humanised Platonist' approach.[35] Hence the idea that any progress in these matters will have to start out by conceding the logic of the anti-realist case – that objectivist truth and attainable knowledge just don't mix – and then work out some viable or face-saving solution along just such conciliatory lines. Hence also, I would suggest, the strange way in which discourses like that of mathematics that would appear prime candidates for treatment in Platonist (or verification-transcendent) terms are subject to a kind of analogical transfer or metaphoric displacement whereby such treatment is made to seem inappropriate, misconceived, or philosophically downright absurd. Thus when Dummett invites us to consider the business of proving a mathematical theorem as more like an act of artistic creation than a geographical discovery – or when Alex Miller proposes his 'humanised Platonist' idea as a reasonable middle-ground stance – it is clear that, for many present-day thinkers, anti-realism is the default option and realism one for which the best, perhaps only credible line of defence is a fallback to some such quasi-realist or compromise solution.[36]

No doubt this situation has come about very largely in consequence of various problems in mathematics and philosophy of mathematics over the past century and more. These will be familiar enough to most readers and require only a brief rehearsal here. Among them are the advent of non-Euclidean geometries which dealt a sizeable blow to the Kantian idea of synthetic *a priori* knowledge and to aprioristic truth-claims of whatever kind; the later emergence of non-classical, i.e., many-valued or 'deviant' logics; the paradoxes of classical set-theory as first revealed by Russell; Gödel's incompleteness-theorem along with its wider, likewise unsettling implications for mathematics, logic, and the formal sciences; and the various problems with regard to our knowledge of a (supposedly) objective real-world domain thrown up by quantum mechanics on the orthodox (Copenhagen) interpretation.[37] Yet if one thing is equally clear it is the fact that mathematics has long served *both* as the paradigm instance of objective, recognition-transcendent truth *and* – from the time of Galileo up to and including the quantum revolution – as a chief source of knowledge or better understanding as regards physical reality. So it is very much a case of putting the philosophic cart before the scientific horse when sceptical or anti-realist doctrines purport to show that these beliefs are ungrounded or that truth and knowledge cannot both be had except on pain of manifest self-contradiction.[38]

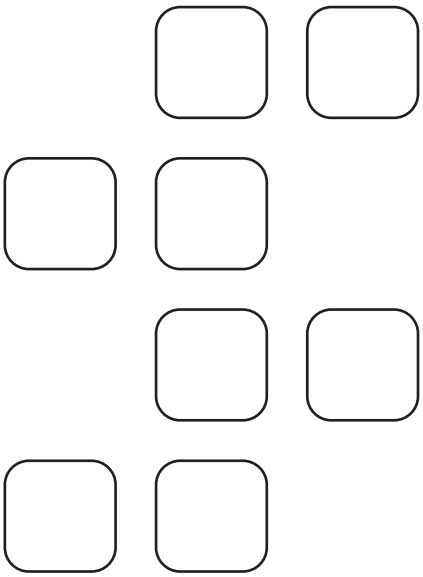
Thus, as David Lewis pointedly remarks, '[i]t's too bad for epistemologists if mathematics in its present form baffles them, but it would be hubris to take that as any reason to reform mathematics . . . . Our knowledge of mathematics is ever so much more secure than our knowledge of the epistemology that seeks to cast doubt on mathematics'.[39] And again: '[c]ausal accounts of knowledge are all very well in their place, but if they are put forward as general theories, then mathematics refutes them'.[40] What Lewis here has in mind is the sort of 'reliabilist' or causally-based epistemology which requires that all legitimate claims to knowledge be grounded either in perceptual acquaintance with the objects or states of affairs concerned or else in some unbroken and reliably informative chain of transmission with a good (i.e., truth-preserving) pedigree. By these lights any Platonist (or realist) philosophy of mathematics, logic, or the formal sciences is *ipso facto* a non-starter since it cannot explain how we could ever have the right kind of causal contact with abstract entities such as numbers, sets, truth-functions, propositional contents, and so forth. To which Lewis responds, once again, that in that case we had better junk the causal theory of knowledge-acquisition at least with regard to those areas of discourse – chief among them mathematics and logic – where it clearly doesn't apply. No doubt there are deep, philosophically recalcitrant questions as to why and how such abstract entities should have proven to possess so impressive a degree of descriptive,

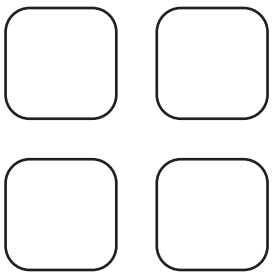
predictive, and even explanatory power in the development of the physical sciences. Hence Eugene Wigner's expression of wondering puzzlement at the 'unreasonable effectiveness' of mathematics as a strictly indispensable source of knowledge concerning real-world objects and events on every micro- to macro-physical scale.[41] However there is something distinctly perverse about raising that puzzlement to a high point of doctrine and then declaring either, like the anti-realists, that we are faced with a flat, non-negotiable choice between mathematical truth and mathematical knowledge or else – the currently favoured line – that the only way out of this impasse is to opt for some middle-ground (e.g., response-dependent or 'humanised Platonist') approach.

Jerrold Katz puts the case for mathematical realism in a passage that will bear citing in extenso for its clarity and force

> [t]he entire idea that our knowledge of abstract objects might be based on perceptual contact is misguided, since, even if we had contact with abstract objects, the information we could obtain from such contact wouldn't help us in trying to justify our beliefs about them . . . . In virtue of being a perfect number, six must be a perfect number; in virtue of being the only even prime, two must be the only even prime. Since the epistemic role of contact is to provide us with the information needed to select among the different ways something might be, and since perceptual contact cannot provide information about how something must be, contact has no point in relation to abstract objects. It cannot ground beliefs about them[42]

The importance of getting things right with regard to such ontological distinctions may be gauged from some of the more *outré* consequences when this kind of realism as applied to abstract entities or the object-domain of mathematics and the formal sciences is carried across into other, very different areas of discourse. Thus Lewis has a larger quarry in view when he argues that the objectivity of mathematical truth – and the security of our knowledge concerning it – will always trump any challenge brought by the sceptic or the advocate of a causal-reliabilist approach to epistemology. In brief, his purpose is to put the case for an outlook of uncompromising realism with respect to all those 'possible worlds' or counterfactual scenarios that modal logicians are wont to invoke as a matter of descriptive or explanatory convenience, but which Lewis holds to be fully as real as those which we inhabit in our everyday lives, only non-actual in so far as they occupy some other (to us epistemically inaccessible) region of the modal multiverse.[43] So, for instance, when historians or scientists routinely deploy counterfactual-conditional modes of reasoning – 'had event *x* not occurred, then neither would event *y*' – in order to explain why event *y* did in fact occur, they had better accept his modal-realist account since otherwise they are trading on a false licence and have no right to draw such often far-reaching explanatory consequences from merely suppositious or fictive premises. Moreover, should it be objected by exponents of a this-world (actualist) or causal-realist approach that Lewis has created a wildly profligate ontology replete with objects and events that must, by very definition, lie utterly beyond our epistemic ken he can always come back – as in the above-cited passages – with the argument-by-analogy from mathematics.





[Knowing]

Thus Lewis's trump-card is again to remark that abstract entities such as numbers, sets, and classes are likewise both causally inert and beyond any means of sensory-perceptual acquaintance and yet – perhaps for that very reason – have a strong claim to count among our surest items of *a priori* knowledge. In which case, he concludes, actualists about modal logic – those who take possible-worlds talk as just that, a convenient *façon de parler* for explicating notions of possibility and necessity – are merely trying to have their cake and eat it.[44] Were it not for their perverse refusal to accept the logic of their own arguments they would perforce come to see that it entailed the reality (i.e., the non-actual but objective existence) of all those counterfactual situations, or might-have-been-otherwise turns of event, which alone give genuine explanatory content to talk about causes, necessary conditions, decisive historical conjunctures, and so forth. Yet clearly this involves a pretty massive conflation of distinct ontological domains, among them – crucially – the trans-world necessary truths of logic and mathematics and the various contingent or world-relative, whether actual or unactualised states of affairs that concern historians and (arguably) most if not all physical scientists. Thus it is hard to conceive how Lewis can extract his mind-boggling range of 'really' existent possibilia from the analogy with a discourse – that of mathematics – whose object-domain on the realist (Platonist) view is defined precisely by its abstract nature, its character of absolute ideal objectivity. and therefore its utter remoteness from any such contingent order of events.

Hence the widespread resistance to Lewis's ideas, not only amongst thinkers who stress the relevance of modal logic to issues in epistemology and philosophy of science, but also amongst philosophers of mathematics who acknowledge – like Katz in the passage cited above – that any adequate account of mathematical truth will need to respect its autonomy as well as its singular effectiveness in physics and the other sciences. After all, this is the only plausible answer to proponents of a hard-line causal epistemology who argue that, since we cannot have perceptual contact with intangible 'objects' such as numbers and sets, therefore those objects must either be thought of as inherently unknowable or else brought back within the compass of knowledge by treating them as so many constructs out of our various methods of proof or well-established formal procedures.[45] Thus Katz might seem in agreement with Lewis as regards the basic modal-realist claim that there exists a vast range of objective though abstract realia whose properties – along with the truth-value of any statement concerning them – have nothing whatever to do with our state of knowledge, let alone with our somehow (impossibly) being able to access them via some kind of perceptual 'contact'. However this agreement runs out at the point where Katz makes his cardinal claim: that what distinguishes logic, mathematics and the formal sciences from other (say historical, natural-scientific, or everyday-investigative) fields of enquiry is their concern with an order of necessary truths whose character of absolute ideal objectivity places them forever and intrinsically beyond reach of empirical disconfirmation. That is to say, *contra Lewis*, they cannot provide a legitimate basis for arguments concerning the reality of alternative, non-actual 'possible worlds' since these must surely be similar to our own at least in so far as they contain all manner of strictly contingent (i.e., trans-world variable) happenings, histories, and turns of event, as well as a great range of likewise contingent physical objects along with their various world-relative properties, dispositions, causal powers, and so forth. Indeed it is the point most forcefully made by 'this-world' realists like Saul Kripke and Hilary Putnam that modal logic is a useful means of picking out just those essential properties – e.g., subatomic, molecular, or genetic-chromosomal structure – that distinguish various intramundane natural kinds such as 'gold', 'acid', 'water', or 'tiger'.

Hence Putnam's famous series of 'twin-earth' thought experiments, designed to bring out its crucial relevance to issues in metaphysics and epistemology as well as in philosophy of logic and philosophical semantics.[46] Thus if twin-earth 'gold' looked and behaved very much like its earthian counterpart but turned out not to be the metal with atomic number 79, or if twin-earth 'acids' were not proton-donors, or if twin-earth 'water' had the molecular composition XYZ rather than H_2O, or if twin-earth 'tigers' were found to have an entirely different genetic constitution then any visitor from earth, when confronted with the evidence, would surely conclude that these were *not* in fact genuine (as opposed to like-seeming) samples of the kind in question. Moreover, the process of finding this out would involve the same sorts of investigation or the same techniques for looking beyond surface appearances that have typified the conduct of this-world scientific enquiry, such as that which led from 'gold = yellow, ductile metal soluble in *aqua regia*' (thus failing to distinguish it from 'fool's gold', or iron

pyrites) to 'gold = metallic element with atomic number 79', and likewise *mutatis mutandis* for my other examples. What Kripke and Putnam deduce from all this is that such discoveries have to do with an order of *a posteriori* necessary truths, that is to say, truths which are clearly not *a priori* (self-evident to reason) but which none the less obtain as a matter of necessity in this world and all other close-by possible worlds whose constituent kinds are compatible with ours in the relevant physical (e.g., microstructural or genetic-chromosomal) respects.[47] As I have said, this puts them squarely at odds with that other, ontologically profligate form of modal realism propounded by Lewis according to which it is merely a sign of parochial prejudice to treat the world that we 'actually' inhabit as any more 'real' than the numberless counterpart worlds wherein things have worked out differently across the entire range of alternative (logically conceivable) possibilities. For there could then be no arguing, in Kripke/Putnam mode, from certain distinctive features of the way that our language picks out natural kinds along with their essential properties, structures, or attributes to a metaphysical-realist worldview wherein they set the truth-conditions for our various statements, theories or hypotheses concerning them.[48]

Thus 'actualism' is not so much the product of some drastically restricted ontological purview as a necessary means of drawing the line between issues properly amenable to treatment from a philosophical or scientific standpoint and issues that belong more to the realm of science fiction or the possible worlds of a writer like Jorge Luis Borges. This is the sort of objection to Lewis's argument that is apt to count strongly with the realist about matters of empirical fact or natural-scientific truth. However there is a kindred objection to be raised from the mathematical-realist quarter since a further consequence of that argument is to blur the ontological distinction between trans-world necessary truths (those that pertain to logic, mathematics, and the formal sciences) and the kinds of contingent truth that pertain in our own and other (to us non-actual but to their denizens actual and in any case equally real) possible worlds. That is to say, Lewis's case for his ontologically extravagant variety of modal realism is one that involves a confusion of properly distinct ontological domains and which hence falls plump within the sights of a sceptical or anti-realist approach. For, as we have seen, a chief plank in many such arguments is the claim that truth cannot possibly exceed the bounds of attainable knowledge while this must involve some kind of perceptual or quasi-perceptual contact between knower and known. Katz once again provides a succinct explanation of why this idea is philosophically so wide of the mark. Thus:

> [t]he epistemological function of perceptual contact is to provide information about which possibilities are actualities. Perceptual contact thus has a point in the case of empirical propositions. Because natural objects can be otherwise than they actually are (non obstante their essential properties), contact is necessary in order to discover how they actually are . . . . Not so with abstract objects. They could not be otherwise than they are . . . . Hence there is no question of which mathematical possibilities are actual possibilities.[49]

All of which suggests that getting straight about these modal distinctions – as between the actual, the possible, and the necessary – is important not only for philosophy of language, mathematics and science but also for other disciplines where ontological issues have a real bearing on our sense of what counts as a defensible truth-claim or evaluative judgement.

V

Now it is time – well past time, the reader may be thinking – to bring these various lines of argument together and explain just how they might relate to questions of musical ontology. I propose to put the case for a 'qualified Platonist' approach that would treat some (not all) musical works as being comparable in some (not all) respects to the kinds of abstract entity such as numbers, sets, propositions, logical functions, and so forth, that make up the object-domain of the formal sciences. Where this comparison hits the mark, I suggest, is in the sense that these works are best thought of as discovered rather than created, or at least as involving more in the way of access to certain standing possibilities of musical expression, form and development than finds any room on commonly received – especially romantic and post-romantic – accounts.

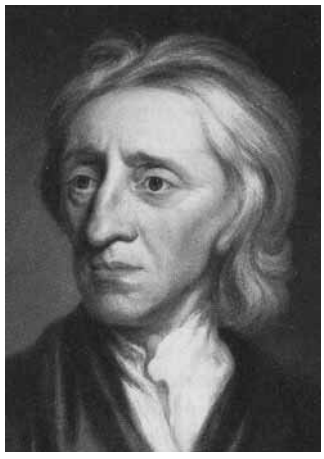
This is not to say that all music aspires to the condition of mathematics, or that the best music – prototypically that of J.S. Bach – is the kind that most readily lends itself to quasi-mathematical or ultra-formalist ideas of structure and development. For one thing, that conception ignores the most basic difference between music and mathematics: that whereas mathematics, at least on the Platonist view, has to do with abstract or ideal entities that inherently elude the utmost reach of human perceptual grasp, music must by its very nature involve our sensory-perceptual responses before we can make a start with the business of formal or structural analysis. Thus any such analysis will have to meet the test of matching (even if it also deepens and refines) the intuitions of a competent listener, just as – in a different though related field – any theory of grammar, no matter how technically advanced, will have to chime with the standing intuitions of competent native speakers. In the case of music that requirement is all the more difficult to satisfy since musical responses are subject to a far greater range of variation from one listener to the next, so that what counts as 'competence' in this regard – as providing the relevant standard for assessment – is that much harder to specify. This is another reason why any Platonist approach to issues of musical ontology and value has to be qualified by the caveat that it cannot do more than approximate the sorts of truth-condition that apply to statements about mathematics, logic, or the formal sciences. Still the qualification need not involve falling back to some equivocal midway stance, such as that adopted by the theorists of response-dependence or by the advocates of a scaled-down 'humanised' Platonism which amounts to much the same thing under a different, more robust-sounding description.[50] Rather it is just to acknowledge – as can scarcely be denied – that whatever statements we make about music in the hope, belief, or presumption of their holding good will have to do not only with certain salient features of the work itself but also with our competent (musically-informed) perception of them or the kinds of response that they *can and should* evoke in a sufficiently keen-eared listener.

Still it may asked: what is the difference between this kind of qualified Platonist approach in the case of music and the kinds of accommodationist thinking – the various attempts to strike a compromise stance between realism and anti-realism – that I have criticised above? After all, it is hard to see how this difference could amount to very much if musical 'Platonism' is so defined as to admit the crucial role of listener-response (no matter how perceptive and intelligent) when it comes to deciding just which elements of form, structure, thematic development, tonal progression, etc., should count as intrinsic to the work 'itself', that is to say, the work platonically conceived as transcending any such merely subjective or response-dependent dimension. Thus, here as with mathematics and the formal sciences, Platonism would seem *prima facie* downright incompatible with a theory that acknowledges the extent to which truth must be conceived as subject to the scope of competent, normal, or optimised human judgement. Yet it is just this basic ontological distinction between music and mathematics – that the former, unlike the latter, involves an irreducible appeal to the register of human cognitive-appreciative powers – which can serve as a useful means of explaining what is wrong with any form of the response-dispositional or 'humanised Platonist' approach when extended to regions of enquiry beyond its proper remit. That is to say, it brings out both the fallacy involved in reducing mathematical or logical truth to the compass of human epistemic warrant, and the opposite fallacy of treating music - by analogy with mathematics – as *purely and simply* an affair of formal, objectively existent structures. For this is to ignore the realist case that well-formed (i.e., truth-apt) mathematical statements, thoreems, or hypotheses have their truth-value fixed irrespective of whatever we may know or be able to establish concerning them. And it is also to ignore the fact that any competent, perceptive and well-informed judgement about music will involve a

phenomenological aspect – an appeal to the register of normal or optimal listener-response – which cannot be discounted in the quest for objectivity or analytic rigour.

This is why, as I have suggested, the instance of music may help to clarify some of the issues that arise in other fields of enquiry, among them philosophy of mathematics, logic, and the natural sciences. What it shows up by way of contrast is the fact that these latter – albeit for different, case-specific reasons – neither need nor admit any qualification of the realist-objectivist standpoint in order to make adequate room for the contribution of human perceptual responses or powers of cognitive judgement. In the former case, conversely, it is clear that analysis cannot produce any valid, musically convincing results except in so far as they fall square with the response of a competent listener under suitable conditions, i.e., when exposed to a likewise competent performance of the given work and in the absence of any distorting factors (whether ambient or cultural) that might get in the way of that response. Thus the question *what counts* as a valid claim or a truth-apt statement in the context of music analysis might perhaps find an answer of the kind proposed by the response-dependence theorists, namely a quantified biconditional linking the statement to a more-or-less detailed specification of the various requirements that have to be met in order for that to be the case.

One could then come up with a wide range of such biconditional formulas, from the most basic and nearly tautologous ('piece *x* is in classical sonata-form if it would reliably be recognised as such under normal acoustic conditions by any competent, attentive listener with an adequate grasp of the relevant structural features') to other, more elaborately specified instances ('it is true that "work *y* exhibits a striking pattern of major/minor harmonic alternations together with shifts from triple to quadruple metric patterns" just so long as that statement would be endorsed by any tonally and rhythmically sensitive listener with the ability to recognise such complex interactions'). Or again, the biconditional might include certain kinds of evaluative as well as structural-descriptive predicate, always with reference to normalised or idealised listener-response as a validating ground of judgement. Thus the left-hand clause might read: 'composer z's Third Symphony is the finest of his eight works in this genre since it is here that his music most fully achieves those distinctive qualities – of rhythmic drive, harmonic dynamism, sweeping tonal progression – which the others strive for but never bring off to such compelling effect'. In which case the right-hand (conditional) clause would have to specify that this claim was true, or warranted in descriptive and evaluative terms, just so long as it was such as to command the assent of listeners properly qualified to judge of its various component parts. That is to say, its truth-conditions would derive from – or depend upon – its answerability to certain well-defined standards of musical appreciation, understanding, and judgement which in turn drew their adjudicative warrant from a detailed specification of the particular responsive capacities involved. So, for instance, in the two last-mentioned cases – where (as it happens) the composers I had in mind



were the Czech Bohuslav Martinu and the American Roy Harris – the claims would count as veridical just on condition that the various melodic, rhythmic, tonal and dynamic attributes to which those statements refer would indeed be picked out as salient, distinctive, or characteristic by any well qualified (musically informed) listener with a good knowledge of the works in question. However, as I have argued above, the main drawback of response-dispositional 'solutions' to the realism/anti-realism issue is that they tend to work out either as merely tautologous (where the right-hand side of the biconditional amounts to a kind of all-purpose, 'whatever-it-takes' clause) or else as a more substantive and specific but *to just that extent* far from self-evident or uncontroversial specification of the relevant responsive capacities. In other words, it can look very much like a case of attempting to have one's cake and eat it but managing to do neither since the cake has crumbled away in the meantime.

It seems to me that one reason for this difficulty with response-dependent approaches to epistemology is their grounding in, and constant allusion to, the Lockean *topos* of secondary qualities. On the one hand these are clearly prime candidates for treatment in this manner since they involve a strictly irreducible reference to qualitative aspects of human sensory or perceptual experience which cannot be fully cashed out in physical-scientific terms, i.e., through some putative explanation deriving (in the case of colour) from optics, reflectance theory, quantum electrodynamics, the neurophysiology of vision, etc. Such is the well-known problem of qualia – of the gap between third-person scientific and first-person phenomenological (or 'what it's like') modes of thought – which philosophers have often claimed to resolve, but which continues to divide them along various fault-lines of entrenched presupposition.[51] On the other hand response-dependence theories pay for their ability to make this problem look misconceived – just an error brought about by seeking scientific explanations where such explanations are out of place – with their failure to provide any adequate (non-circular) account of how the truth-predicate functions when applied *either* in mathematical-scientific *or* in phenomenological contexts of debate. For in the one case they tend to collapse the idea of objective, i.e., recognition-transcendent truth into a question of what counts as such amongst those presumptively best qualified to judge while in the other they treat all modes of perceptual experience (or statements concerning them) as subject to assessment only in terms of an equation – the quantified biconditional – which amounts to no more than a thinly disguised or verbally spun-out tautology.

This criticism has lately been brought against the theory by Mark Johnson, one of its earlier proponents, in terms of what he calls the 'missing explanation' argument.[52] Briefly stated, it runs that response-dependent accounts of secondary qualities must always be deficient in explanatory power unless they include some causal component along with the (otherwise tautologous) formula. This would be an extra clause to the effect: 'quality *x* is truly perceived as such by perceiver *y* just so long as the requirements are met (i.e., the perceiver is up to the mark and the ambient conditions are truth-conducive) *and also* there is some adequately specified causal relation between *x*'s perceiving *y* as an instance of just that quality and *y*'s actually possessing that quality as a matter of perceiver-related but not entirely perceiver-dependent fact'. (I am paraphrasing Johnson rather freely here but take this to capture the gist of his argument accurately enough.) The point of such objections is that any attempt to resolve or circumvent the realism/anti-realism dispute by recourse to response-dependence theory in however qualified a form can only escape a vicious (or at any rate disabling) circularity if it goes so far toward conceding the force of opposed, e.g., causal-explanatory arguments as to leave its own thesis either redundant or downright false. That is to say, it would allow scientific realists to argue that this denouement is best regarded as a classic *reductio* not only of response-dependence theory in its current form but of any approach – from Locke on down – which has recourse to a realm of subjective (no matter how widely shared or communally warranted) perceptions and judgements. Moreover, the same objection would apply to 'humanised Platonist' accounts of mathematics and the formal sciences since here also – from a realist (or *echt*-Platonist) standpoint – what is lost by such concessions to the adversary camp is not merely, as Alex Miller would have it, a 'metaphysical' or 'sublimated' conception of realism but the single most basic commitment of any realism worthy the name.[53] For whatever its attractions as a middle-ground stance or a hedge against reactive sceptical doctrines there is still a clear sense in which any proposal of this sort involves the idea of truth as epistemically constrained, i.e., as a matter of optimised assertoric warrant or of best judgement among those deemed fittest to judge. In which case

it is not so much a good working compromise – one that should keep the realists happy while fending off the usual range of anti-realist objections – as a rather shuffling and evasive form of anti-realism which concedes the main point (the existence of objective, recognition-transcendent truths) and thus lets the argument go pretty much by default.

VI

This is why I have suggested that reflection on music, on its ontological status and the criteria for various kinds of judgement about it may provide a better, more helpful guide to some of these issues than reflection on the standard Lockean topos of secondary qualities. Music is a highly structured and hence – albeit in varying degrees – a cognitively more complex and articulated mode of perceptual experience which, unlike the range of everyday sonorous or acoustic phenomena, gives a hold for much subtler discriminations of normal, adequate, or optimal listener-response. Thus it doesn't leave room for the kind of tautologous or blandly uninformative biconditional ('sound *x* is loud/soft/piercing/discordant, etc., if and only if perceived as such by any subject with properly functioning auditory apparatus under normal acoustic conditions') that typifies the discourse of response-dependence. Rather, it shows how trivially circular such formulas are if applied in the case of music and in hope of establishing anything of interest with regard either to the work in question or to the question what should count as a valid, competent, or musically informed judgement concerning it.

This is also to say that such judgements, if truth-apt, must be thought of as more or less responsive (and responsible) to standards of attentiveness, perceptual acuity, and long-range structural grasp which *can* be spelled out in substantive terms and *cannot* be reduced to just another variant on the biconditional theme. From which it follows that there is always a further, phenomenological dimension – a reference to aspects of the work as they strike a duly perceptive and appreciative listener – that goes beyond anything accountable in terms of generalised 'best judgement'. That is, music poses a particular challenge to response-dispositional theories in so far as it involves a range of attributes (tonal, thematic, rhythmic, structural etc.) which are not – or not solely – listener-dependent but also, and by no means incompatibly with that, a capacity to call forth complex and highly specific kinds of listener-response that exceed any such vague, all-purpose mode of specification. In which case there is always a question whether listeners, analysts, philosophers of music, or even those engaged – like myself at present – in a kind of meta-philosophical address to these issues have got things right or wrong (quite aside from their own or other people's best judgement) in relation to musical works. Thus the standing possibility of error must always be allowed unless it is ruled out through some such stipulative error-excluding device as the quantified biconditional which makes it, quite simply, an *a priori* truth that best judgement necessarily, by very definition equates with what's there in the music. Otherwise we shall have to make terms with the fact – borne out with depressing regularity by the record of musical criticism to date – that it can often go very badly wrong unless defined in counterfactual terms as that upon which all judges would be sure to converge at the limit of optimal response.

As I have said, this should not be taken as an argument for assimilating music to the kind of full-fledged Platonist approach that would treat it on a par with mathematics and the formal sciences. That analogy breaks down on the problem of explaining how musical perception, understanding, and evaluation could be held accountable to standards – like those of mathematical or logical proof – whose validity-conditions are in no way involved with the register of human responsive or phenomenological capacities. Hence, as I have said, the error of supposing that the kinds of extreme contrapuntal and structural complexity exhibited by works such as Bach's *Musical Offering* or *Art of Fugue* give reason to think that the

greatest music somehow aspires to the condition of pure mathematics. For if this were the case then analysis of those works – or indeed of any music that qualified for treatment on similar terms – could best take the form of a proof-theoretic demonstration that certain thematic, harmonic, and tonal problems were posed and resolved through a process of thought whose validity had nothing whatever to do with the work's expressive or communicative power. A good deal of present-day music analysis does seem to work on this mistaken supposition, that is, the idea that mathematical techniques such as pitch-class set analysis are somehow guaranteed to reveal what is most significant about the music's structural or even its phenomenological character as perceived by a listener duly instructed in these or kindred technicalities.[54] Moreover, that idea might be said to have exerted a strong and (arguably) a malign influence not only on certain ultra-formalist trends in academic musicology but also on the way that such thinking is mirrored in a line of creative-compositional development running from middle-late period (i.e., twelve-tone serial) Schoenberg, *via* Anton Webern, to the Darmstadt School and their few remaining followers. Here we have another striking case of how analysis can sometimes risk losing touch with the deeper-laid sources of musical expressivity. Undoubtedly these have much to do with the various structural (e.g., thematic, harmonic, and rhythmic) traits revealed by a sharp-eared analytical approach. However the latter needs to be enhanced – guided and informed – by a prior sense of their musical significance as realised through a full and appreciative listener-response. Otherwise analysis will tend to over-emphasise those elements or aspects of the work that lend themselves most readily to treatment on formalist, structuralist or (quasi-)mathematical terms whilst under-valuing – even ignoring – those other, more elusive yet phenomenologically salient aspects that resist such treatment.

For much the same reason, if philosophy of music presses too far toward a full-fledged objectivist Platonism of the sort that finds its most frequent (if strongly disputed) application in mathematics, logic and the formal sciences then this may have a similar distorting effect. That is, it may prevent them from acknowledging the extent to which musical works exist in and though their ongoing reception-history and the responsive capacities of those – performers, listeners, and analysts alike – who seek to realise their structural as well as expressive qualities. Thus the trouble with an unqualified Platonist approach is, as one might expect, just the opposite of that which afflicts any view of music as a matter of purely subjective or (in the widest, i.e., non-rigorous and un-Husserlian sense of the term) phenomenological response. And again, it is the opposite of that which arises with response-dispositional theories wherein music would figure as a topic of discourse subject to truth-values or conditions of warranted assertibility that can always be can be cashed out through a circular appeal to 'whatever it takes' for work *x* to possess quality *y* just so long as the listener likewise possesses 'whatever it takes' to recognise *y* in *x* under normal (or optimal) conditions. For if pure-bred Platonism captures the idea that musical works must in some sense be thought of as transcending the various contingent aspects of their reception-history to date then it does so only at the cost of failing to explain how listeners, no matter how responsive, could ever gain access to the experience of music, as distinct from its abstract representation. (One is reminded here of Hermann Hesse's novel *The Glass-Bead Game* where a mandarin cultural elite is concerned with nothing so vulgar as musical composition or performance but spends all its time in devising elaborate mathematical permutations on existing works.[55]) However this gives no reason to swing right across to the opposite extreme of a downright anti-Platonist, subjectivist, or response-dependent approach that would deny the very possibility of music's possessing a mode of existence beyond its various transient realisations or beyond how it strikes the community of those presently deemed fittest to judge.

These issues are posed with particular force in the case of music – more so, I have argued, than when raised with reference to Locke on secondary qualities – since music occupies a kind of contested zone where philosophy will have to find room for some *prima facie* sharply conflicting but none the less jointly binding conditions on any adequate approach. This is why I have drawn attention to Derrida's treatment of the various deep-laid antinomies that emerge throughout Husserl's project of transcendental phenomenology.[56] Although he (Derrida) has nothing to say directly about music he does raise the question, more generally, of how 'a certain' structuralism nowadays inherits the Platonist commitment to values of recognition-transcendent truth or 'absolute ideal objectivity', and also of how this commitment relates to the phenomenological concern with intuitive acts of understanding, judgement, and conceptual-investigative grasp. I have

argued elsewhere that analytic philosophy over the past half-century and more has been driven into a series of dead-ends – of ultimately sterile rather than productive or thought-provoking aporias – through its steadfast refusal (with just a few, mostly short-lived exceptions) to engage with issues that have typically preoccupied thinkers in the 'continental' line of descent after Husserl.[57] Here also the case of music has a special pertinence and diagnostic force. For it is hard to escape the impression that much analytical philosophy of music – and Anglophone aesthetic philosophy more generally – has long been in thrall to a narrow agenda of agreed-upon topics for debate which have to do mainly with issues of linguistic, conceptual or logico-semantic analysis, and has thereby avoided any deeper engagement with the kinds of issue taken up amongst thinkers in the 'other', mainland-European tradition. Yet in shying away from those questions it has tended to veer between the opposite extremes of an objectivist indifference to phenomenological concerns – stigmatised since Frege as mere 'psychologism' – and a series of reactive retreats into various sharply opposed (e.g., emotivist, projectivist, or other such non-cognitivist) positions.

Hence the strenuous but, it seems to me, the unavailing efforts of thinkers like McDowell to dismount from this violently oscillating seesaw or damp down its movements to the point of restoring a state of equilibrium no longer disturbed by such contrary pushes and pulls. What emerges from McDowell's claims to this effect, as likewise from the response-dependence literature, is the curious way that such attempts to occupy a sensible, middle-ground position between realism and anti-realism end up by producing yet more complex and roundabout versions of the same old subject/object or mind/world dualism. Thus, according to McDowell,

> what we find in Kant is precisely the picture I have been recommending: a picture in which reality is not located outside a boundary that encloses the conceptual sphere . . . . The fact that experience involves receptivity ensures the required constraint from outside thinking and judging. But since the deliverances of receptivity already draw on capacities that belong to spontaneity, we can coherently suppose that the constraint is rational; that is how the picture avoids the pitfall of the Given.[58]

The tortuous, chinese-box-like phrasing of this passage – the notion of reality as somehow no less 'real' for *not* being 'located outside a boundary that encloses the conceptual sphere' – is evidence enough that McDowell is still wrestling with problems that Kant bequeathed most directly to his heirs in the German idealist line of descent, whether 'subjective idealists' like Fichte or 'objective idealists' like Schelling.[59] But it is also the kind of quandary that has typified a great deal of debate in the mainstream analytic tradition, from logical positivism down. That is to say, it results from that same Kantian problem of how one could ever reconcile two such intrinsically disparate or non-communicating realms as those of sensuous (phenomenal) intuition and objective (noumenal or mind-independent) reality.

I should not wish to claim – far from it – that I have here succeeded in putting together what just about every development in post-Kantian epistemology has somehow managed to drive asunder, most often (as with McDowell) despite and against its professed intent. On the other hand I do hope to have shown that this problem has a complex genealogy, one that has received a more adequate, historically informed, and – be it said – philosophically sophisticated treatment in post-Husserlian continental than in mainstream analytic debate. One reason is that continental thinkers – even those (like

Habermas and Derrida) who have little to say expressly on the subject of music – are none the less heirs to a history of speculative thought concerning the relationship between truth, knowledge and experience where issues of aesthetics have been central, rather than marginal, and where music has often figured as the greatest challenge to philosophy's self-image and powers of conceptualisation. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the writings of a thinker like Adorno for whom that challenge was a matter of music's stubbornly autonomous formal character – its holding out against the lures of commodified mass-culture – yet also, paradoxically, of its capacity to reflect (albeit in a highly oblique or mediated fashion) the various forces at work in its social contexts of production and reception.

I can scarcely cite Adorno as a straightforward source of philosophical support for the kind of phenomenologically qualified Platonist approach to the ontology of music that I have proposed in the course of this essay. After all, some of his most powerful and sustained critiques were directed toward the

project of Husserlian transcendental phenomenology and also toward what he saw as the self-deluding and ideologically complicitous idea that one could somehow subsume the unique particulars of musical (or indeed everyday) experience under the rubric of an abstract, hence reified general ontology.[60] Yet it is clear that Adorno's negative-dialectical approach to the sociology of music cannot do without the enabling premise that works have a certain structural autonomy, that is to say, an ontological status beyond whatever meaning or value is imputed to them by this or that (however well-attuned) listener in this or that (however favourable) context of reception. It is equally clear, despite his animadversions on Husserl, that Adorno's relentless critique of conceptual abstraction and his defence of the particular against the encroachments of system and method cannot but have recourse, at crucial points, to a phenomenology of musical and other perceptually-based modes of experience. For there could otherwise be no explaining how certain works – those that elicit Adorno's dialectically hard-won approval – are such as to challenge our acculturated, ideologically conditioned habits of response. This is where Adorno's thinking comes closest to Derrida's deconstructive analyses of the various tensions in Husserl's project or the 'principled, essential and structural impossibility', as he puts it, 'of closing a structural phenomenology'.[61] It is also where reflection on the nature of music, its ontological status and relation to the range of our perceptual-cognitive capacities has most to offer by way of suggestive analogy in the context of current epistemological debate.

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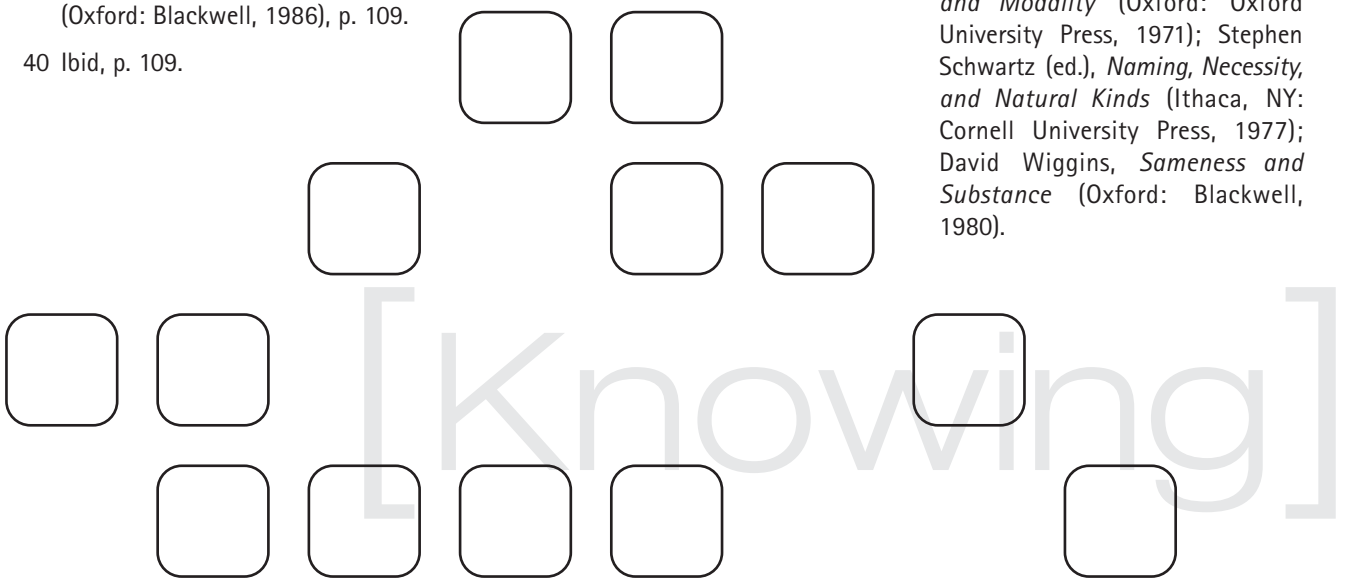

[Knowing]

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Paul Sperring

Does Anybody Know that Anything is So?

Peter Unger's 'An Argument for Skepticism"[1] purports to show that an argument in support of the universal form of the philosophical sceptic's thesis, that 'nobody ever knows *anything* to be so' (p.42), is sound. Here is the argument:

[1] If someone *knows* something to be so, then it is all right for the person to be absolutely *certain* that it is so.

[2] It is never all right for anyone to be absolutely *certain* that anything is so.

[3] Therefore, nobody ever *knows* that anything is so.

As the 'anything' makes clear he is suggesting that one cannot know that there are trees or hands, that 2+2=4, even that one exists or that one is having an experience of something or other right now.

Knowing and Being Absolutely Certain

Perhaps, contrary to premise [1], there is an ordinary sense of 'know' that allows us to simultaneously know a thing and not be absolutely certain of it – although, admittedly, even in ordinary usage one would be quite unlikely to hear it said that 'X knows that *p*, but isn't absolutely certain that *p*'. But there could be cases where it is said truly, couldn't there? Here one thinks of the exam candidate who knows all the answers but, either through humility or revision-induced fatigue and stress, isn't absolutely certain of all the answers. Unger agrees that this is a natural thing to think, in ordinary circumstances, but that the loose sense of 'know' used here is not, strictly speaking, a correct usage.[2] He asserts that it is wrong to think that there are really more senses of to 'know that' than the one that is equivalent to 'absolutely certain that'.

If X claims to know that *p* then, Unger suggests, this *entails* that X is absolutely certain that *p*. Is this right? Consider the proposition, 'Alf knows that he turned the oven off, but isn't absolutely certain that he turned the oven off'. Is there a consistent reading of this? If Alf is not in a state of absolute certainty with respect to how things were left with the oven then could it also be possible that Alf *knows* that he turned it off? What if Alf has already checked the oven twice, but just as he leaves the house, with something akin to the routine of the mildly obsessive compulsive person, goes into the kitchen for one more look; might we say, before the final check, he knows he switched it off, despite behaviour suggestive of being in a doubtful state? Perhaps we might ask Alf if he was certain: 'well,' he responds, 'I knew that I had turned it off, but I just like to check, to make certain'. This seems like a perfectly consistent thing to say.

To suppose it impossible that Alf know something he is not absolutely certain of might simply be a consequence of thinking that 'to know' and 'to be absolutely certain' are synonymous – but this seems to make the argument's first premise trivial, its second question begging and its conclusion otiose. Premise [1] would simply be a claim about how knowing that *p* makes it all right to know that *p*, and premise [2] a straightforward denial that we ever know that *p*.

Unger claims that when we say, for instance, that 'Alf *knew* that he turned the oven off', then, if we speak truly, we always really mean, 'Alf *knew for certain* that he turned the oven off' – even in ordinary usages of 'know'. This, he says, is evidenced by the inconsistency of 'he knew it, but he didn't know it for certain', and therefore even our earlier attempt to give it a consistent reading is not quite right. But either we say that 'know for certain' is pleonastic (and we are back to the triviality issue), or we are adding something to mere knowing when we tack on the 'for certain'.[3] So what is being added?

Perhaps, to 'know for certain that *p*' is to 'be unprepared to entertain any doubts that you know that *p*'.[4] When Alf says that he knows he turned the oven off, but under a grilling admits to having some doubts about the matter, we naturally say that Alf *does not know for certain* that he turned it off, and thereby *does not really know it at all*. The mere fact of Alf's entertaining of the doubts seems, so to speak, to dent the certainty claim. And just as actual dents in perfectly flat surfaces render them not flat in an absolute sense, so figurative dents in certainty claims render them something other than certain, in an absolute sense.[5] So, according to this understanding, to know for certain is to be in a position where what one is certain about is indubitable, come what may. Since one is not ever justifiably[6] in such a position, then, given the equivalence of *know* and *know for certain*, one is, therefore, never in a position to know – concerning any putative knowledge claim whatever.

The Attitude of Certainty

To claim that one is certain of something is to take up a 'severely negative attitude' concerning whether the thing in question is so (p.44). That knowledge requires such strict requirements is not something peculiar to Unger's characterisation, he argues, but is a feature even of the anti-sceptic's account of what it means to really be said to know. If one is said to be certain then this will involve having 'the attitude that *no* new information, evidence or experience which one might ever have will be seriously considered by one to be *at all* relevant to *any possible* change in one's thinking in the matter' (p.44 – Unger's emphasis). We'll call this the Certainty Attitude, or CA.

So, when I am in CA with regards to *p*, then I am in an attitude concerning all possible future states of affairs such that I deem it that none of those possible states of affairs should bear at all on my thinking that certainly *p*. Suppose *p* to be 'there are currently roses'. Since I take it to be true that I am now looking at some, in a vase on my desk, while I type, then it looks to be all right to say 'I am certain that *p*'. So, I now have an attitude concerning all possible futures, deeming them all to be irrelevant to my absolute commitment to *p*. Now, suppose I imagine some scenario where it becomes apparent to me that there are not roses in the vase on the desk (I am told that I have failed to identify them as some species similar in shape and smell to roses), and further that it becomes apparent that all actual roses, prior to my thinking that there were some, were struck by a sudden and mysterious blight and shrivelled away into dust, so that my thinking that there were roses, at the time I did, was apparently false. Would my attitude be that the having of such a series of experiences, should they come to pass, would be irrelevant to my judging it to be certain that *p*? If it is, says Unger, then I am being dogmatic.

Let us attempt to spell things out rather more carefully. One way of understanding CA is as follows:

> [CA] If X is certain that *p*, then X would take it that for the appearance of each possible scenario S_1, S_2,...S_n, if S_*, then X still knows that *p*.

Well, this can't be quite right, since the possible S in question could be the imagined giving up of the belief that *p*, or a proof of the falsity of *p*, either of which would entail the negation of X's knowing that *p*. So Unger himself says:

> The attitude of certainty concerns *any* sequence of experience or events which could consistently be presented to a sentient subject, *without its prejudging the issue on which it might supposedly bear*. (p45 – my emphasis)

So, we could put in a clause heading off prejudicial scenarios, and come out with something like the following:

> [CA*] If X is certain that *p*, then X would take it that for the appearance of each possible scenario S_1, S_2,...S_n, if S_*, where S_* is not simply X's coming to believe that not-*p*, or X's accepting proof that not-*p*, or the coming about of

not-*p*, then X still knows that *p*.

Therefore when I know that there are currently roses, or that there were roses, should scenarios S_1, involving the experience of being told by a flower expert that it is not roses but a near relation of the rose family in the vase, and S_2, where it appears to me that the vicious rose blight is being reported by the trusted news media that I have access to, both come to pass, I would still maintain that I know that there are currently roses (or that it is still the case that I knew earlier). Am I dogmatic here? I should say that I am, since from such a vantage point (where those scenarios came to pass) I imagine that I would most likely be a bit doubtful about whether there were any roses, which looks to be pretty clearly what it means to be in an attitude of uncertainty.

But suppose we dispute this characterisation of certainty. CA, recall, involved ruling out all possible future experiences as irrelevant to the question concerning whether one knew that *p*. Well it is one thing to say that one rules out this or that scenario, *should it come to pass*, as bearing on whether one knows that *p*. It is another thing entirely to rule out scenarios which one is prepared to accept as counting against one's claim to know that *p*, on the grounds that one is certain that *no such scenarios will come to pass*. So an alternative formulation of the certainty attitude, sensitive to this distinction, might be:

> [CA†] If X is certain that *p*, then even though the coming to pass of the appearance of some possible scenario S_1, S_2,...S_n would make X doubt that *p*, X knows that no actual appearances of S_* will come to pass.

In knowing that there are roses I am completely confident that nothing of the sort described above will occur to cause me to give up my claim to know, even though I understand that things coming to pass as described would make me hesitate. Perhaps I am justified in thinking this – it doesn't seem to be a dogmatic stance, at least ordinarily considered anyway. This seems a perfectly acceptable way of reading 'being unprepared to entertain doubts', which was our suggested adjunct to mere knowing. So, on this re-characterisation of CA we can accept Unger's premise [1] and deny premise [2] – it is then *all right* to be unprepared to accept that any appearances of the preposterous scenarios outlined by the sceptic would occur, thus ruling out whatever might threaten one's claims to know. That is to say, it is all right to be certain.

Unger is unmoved by this sort of challenge – it is, he says, both incorrect and irrelevant (that is, even if it were thought to be correct). Firstly, it is incorrect since one is invariably (or almost) not nearly so certain about the sorts of things that might turn up as one is about the thing one purports to be certain about. Being certain about there being roses is far from the same thing as being certain that there could not be appearances to the contrary. Unger gives the following example to illustrate. I might be certain that a person is married, but then that person says to me (falsely) 'I am unmarried' and, further, gets his friends to support his story. Such a case looks like a plausible example of someone being certain about a thing despite there being easily imaginable appearances to the contrary – is one ever certain about contrary appearances not turning up? Of course, I might be inclined to reject the appearances to the contrary (after all, I claimed that I was certain this person was married, so am unlikely to give up so easily) – but this takes us back to the original characterisation of CA.

Second, it is irrelevant because even if one characterised the certainty attitude in this way it would still amount to dogmatism to rule out as possible the coming to pass of appearances to the contrary. Regarding this sort of stance Unger says that 'only a quite foolhardy man would...reject out of hand any suggestion that some things might be brought forth to speak against his position' (p.46).

Of course, there is a sense in which it might always appear to be a mistake to say that nothing could count against one's position – there are many logically possible scenarios that count against one's claims that *p*. I follow Austin[7] however, and deem *merely* logically possible counter-examples as irrelevant to one's claims to know. If Unger takes that to be unfair we could present his position as involving him in the following dilemma: Either one knows things only if one has *shown* that all the logically possible counter examples to one's claims do not obtain, or one can know things if one is justifiably ruling out *merely* logically possible counter examples (i.e. ignoring *irrelevant* possibilities). Embracing the first horn Unger looks to be offering a characterisation of knowledge that is a long way from the ordinary conception. The alternative, however, is just to accept that we do know some things after all (supposing we can give an adequate characterisation of 'relevance').

So with this in mind, I think that Unger's claim that the alternative characterisation of the certainty attitude is incorrect has not been shown. Let us take a closer look at the example offered. I know that you are married, you lie to me and say you are not. Here, supposedly, is an appearance of things that are contrary to my knowing them. But why can I not deny that this is even an appearance to the contrary? When I say that I am going to rule out scenarios that would dent my claim to know, what I am not ruling out is mere speech acts of a contrary nature. In fact I suppose it quite likely that in the future I will get involved in discussions with philosophical sceptics who will say, concerning things which I do know, 'you know no such thing, since you may be a brain in a vat/asleep...', but I don't think that I will then feel inclined to describe those sayings as 'appearances to the contrary' with regard to the things known. What I am ruling out are appearances where I take it that the actual states of affairs have come to pass that would make me give up my claim to be certain about something or other – I am saying, for instance, that it will not be the case that the married person will appear to me to *truthfully* say 'I have never been married'.

Further, supposing (as I am) that this alternative characterisation is the correct characterisation of the attitude of certainty, it doesn't seem at all irrelevant, since it isn't obviously dogmatic to deny that anything at all could happen to shake my commitment to the things I am certain about – since, after all, I am certain about them, and therefore the appropriate thing to do concerning them is to rule alternatives out. This is just how we characterised being certain (with [CA+]). What Unger would need to do to show that one is being dogmatic here is to show that one ought not to take up this sort of position[8] – and I have just tried to show that he has not convincingly done this, at least with respect to the examples discussed.[9]

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1 Unger, P., 'An Argument for Skepticism', (1974), in Sosa, E. and Kim, J., eds., *Epistemology: An Anthology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 2000). Hereafter all bracketed references in the text are from the Sosa and Kim.

2 This sort of example is discussed by Unger in an earlier airing of the argument outlined above, 'A Defense of Skepticism', in *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 80, 2 (1971), p. 214.

3 Another possibility is that something is being added to *mere* certainty when we say 'to know for certain' – although the claim 'she was certain that *p*, but didn't know that *p*' seems an even more unlikely formulation than 'knew but wasn't certain that *p*', and one would be hard pushed to come up with clear cases of certainty without knowledge.

4 Another suggestion might be that to 'know for certain that *p*' is to 'know that you know that *p*'. Of course, if to know anything (whether *p*, or 'that one knows that *p*') is to know it for certain then we also have a case here, on Unger's view, of 'knowing for certain that you know that *p*' – which means, according to this suggested sense, 'knowing that you know that you know that *p*', and so on. This is perhaps grist to the sceptic's mill, since the attempt here to explain what it means to be certain of something threatens an infinite regress, but it seems to cause problems also for this suggested reading of 'to know for certain'.

5 This is because, according to Unger, both 'flat' and 'certain' do not admit of degree (pp. 46-47).

6 Unger does not discuss the various problems with different sorts of attempts to justify beliefs in this paper. His attack is rather more general; levelling the charge of dogmatism at any claim to certainty – and the dogmatist never holds his position justifiably. Unfortunately Unger does not clearly define what he means by dogmatism in this paper – but it seems clear enough from the examples that he takes the attitude of the dogmatist to be one of holding on to claims to know which he ought not to.

7 In his paper 'Other Minds' Austin discusses examples where, in ordinary cases, it would just be considered unreasonable to consider merely logically possible counter examples. For instance, suppose an expert ornithologist spots a goldfinch in the garden. Now if one asks 'how do you know?' if the expert responds with a range of criteria that mark out goldfinches from all other types of birds then we ought to be satisfied. To say 'but how do you know it isn't stuffed?' seems unreasonable here. Knowing *enough* to know that it's a goldfinch isn't knowing *everything* – just enough.

8 Barry Stroud argues, in a similar vein, that Unger does not show that dogmatism is intrinsic to certainty in his review of Unger's book, *Ignorance: The Case for Skepticism in The Journal of Philosophy*, vol 74, no. 4 (1977), pp246-57.

9 It seems that one is on firmer ground still when it comes to matters such as, that I know I am having experiences of a certain sort, or that 1+1=2 – and the 'appearances to the contrary' that ought to dent one's commitment in these cases, such as God telling us we are wrong, also look to be nothing of the sort.

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Dermot O'Keeffe

The Failure of the [Free Will] Defence

Ah, Love! Could thou and I with Fate conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits – and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!
The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayam

In retrospect, it is hardly surprising that a century as brutal and brutalising as the last should have involved a sustained conversation, ranging across many disciplines, on the nature and existence of evil. In a world of mass communications we are daily confronted by images both of man's inhumanity to man (and other animals) as well as the suffering caused by the forces of nature. It is a commonplace observation that these two aspects of suffering, moral (originating in human action) and non-moral (or natural) evil are in fact intimately linked. Droughts and epidemics can be man-made; we do not have to live under Vesuvius, for instance. It is also clearly the case that they are logically distinct; we can conceive of a world in which there is no non-moral evil, for example, but only the pain caused deliberately. We can also conceive the converse, where people do no wrong, but none the less endure the effects of earthquake, drought and flood.

One can easily see from this how we move to the problem of evil for the theist. As Hume (echoing Epicurus) put it: 'Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?'[1]

Traditional attempts to reconcile suffering (or evil) with God's existence begin with a defence in the face of the logical problem sketched by Hume, and extend into positive theodicies (literally 'God-is-just', despite the appearance to the contrary) whereby evil is understood as an essential dimension of a divine plan. The problem of evil has frequently been divided in two. There is the *logical problem*, which states that the existence of God is logically inconsistent with the existence of evil. If evil is real God *cannot* exist. Then there is the *evidential problem*, which holds that the amount, extent, kind and scope of evil is such that we have compelling reason to doubt the existence of God. According to a major contemporary commentator, Peterson: 'It is now widely acknowledged that the Free Will Defence adequately rebuts the logical problem of evil.'[2]

In what follows this claim will be challenged. It will be argued that the Free Will Defence (FWD) fails, and with its failure the evidentialist debate is rendered redundant. For if freedom, God and evil are incompatible, then the question of the degree and scope of suffering becomes otiose: we shall see that no suffering is justifiable or necessary. So God and suffering are incompatible after all.

As we shall see, the reason why the FWD has been accorded an unmerited status is due to the fact that the central concept, freedom, has not been explicitly analysed. I shall adopt a positive over a negative conception of liberty, and therefore expose the vulnerability of the FWD.

The FWD is of course, an argument designed to render compatible the existence of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God with the manifest existence of suffering. This reconciliation is effected, essentially, by arguing:

1) that suffering is merited, and therefore poses no problem for God's justice; or
2) that suffering is necessary to the development of moral virtue, and as such part of a divine order.

These two positions, loosely attributable to Augustine and Irenaeus respectively, are broadly retributive and reformative in tone, and have been characterised by Mark Corner as suggesting that: 'Where Augustine gives us a Hitler, Irenaeus gives us a Stalin'.[3]

Both positions rest upon libertarian premises and both will succumb to the following analysis. However, for the purposes of this short paper we shall focus on the Ireneaean theodicy, which has been so prominent in philosophical discussions.

Ireneaus depicts evil as a necessary requirement if an imperfect humanity is to develop moral characteristics and to freely respond to an epistemically hidden God. Earthly existence concerns soul-making. Irenaeus asks, 'How could he (man) be trained in good without the knowledge of its contrary? For an object apprehended by experience has a surer effect than any theoretical inference.'[4] John Hick defends this scenario with a counterfactual hypothesis involving a world in which the very possibility of suffering is excluded. In such a world every attempted act of wrongdoing would be magically thwarted and the laws of nature altered to ensure an endless supply of harmless and happy outcomes. Hick reasonably enough draws the moral of this tale to be that 'In eliminating the problems and hardships of an objective environment with its own laws, life would become like a dream in which, delightfully but aimlessly, we would float and drift at ease.'[5] He goes on to observe that: '...such a world would be ill-adapted for the development of the moral qualities of human personality. In relation to this purpose, it might well be the worst of all possible worlds.'[6]

The Irenaeus-Hick (I-H) position immediately invites several queries: why is God such an arch-libertarian? As Ivan Karamazov asked, isn't this freedom bought at an unacceptably high price in terms of human suffering? Today we may well ask too why much of the suffering may not be rendered merely *virtual?* Our moral development would remain the same, provided we believed the suffering to be real. How would heaven differ from the world rejected by Hick? However, these questions are peripheral. The main difficulties for the I-H position concern a) the nature of the good and b) the nature of freedom. It is to these issues that we now turn.

The problem with the I-H thesis is that it treats moral virtues as intrinsic goods when they are in fact instrumental goods. The school of hard knocks may indeed promote certain dispositions and attitudes, but they are only valuable in a world of hard knocks. Generosity is valuable due to privation, courage due to danger, indignation due to injustice, etc. We value these characteristics because they *contingently* promote intrinsic or ontic goods such as wellbeing, peace, freedom and harmony. Consider how thrift was prized in the 1940s, and strength in pre-technological society; such 'virtues' may come and go. It is essentially the same with moral virtues, so it is to argue in a circle to say that evil finds its justification in the generation of moral virtues, when the moral virtues themselves rely for their value on the existence of evil itself.

The primary goods of happiness and wellbeing are satisfied, so the secondary goods are irrelevant. To return for a moment to Hick's counterfactual (evil-free) world; it is a *good* world, even though it contains no *moral* virtue (just virtues, or excellences).

The I-H thesis has attracted a celebrated, though perhaps not decisive, criticism from J.L. Mackie involving the relation of freedom and goodness. Mackie notes that there is no contradiction in the idea of a free agent invariably choosing the good, and draws the conclusion: 'God was not, then faced with a choice between making innocent automata and making beings who, in acting freely, would sometimes go wrong: there was open to him the obviously better possibility of making beings who would freely act but always go right. Clearly, his failure to avail himself of this possibility is inconsistent with his being both omnipotent and wholly good.'[7]

If Mackie is right here, and freedom and invariably choosing the good could be harmoniously pre-established, then the I-H thesis fails. However, Hick seems to have a robust response to hand in finding Mackie's position incoherent and self-contradictory: '...while God *could* have created such beings, there would have been no point in doing so – at least not in a God who is seeking to create sons and daughters rather than human puppets.'[8] In other words, God could make free agents *or* good agents, but even omnipotence cannot guarantee that all free agents will be good, it being analytically true that true freedom offers no such guarantees. Mackie's paragon is indeed a logical possibility, but the responsibility for the freely chosen (and invariably good) acts needs to be located within the

agent, and cannot devolve to God in this way. Thus the I-H thesis remains intact.

However, in his later writings on this issue Mackie intriguingly and subtly amends his thesis thus: 'There is no incoherence in the proposed alternative, that God should have made men...such that they would always act well rather than badly; and if so, the alleged overriding value of freedom provides no explanation of the occurrence of evils in a universe with a supposedly perfect creator.'[9] In what follows I wish to prise open and occupy the metaphysical space Mackie alludes to and which the I-H position denies. Moreover, I wish to defend it in the name of libertarianism – the I-H position's chosen weapon. We will find that the position collapses, not as Ivan Karamazov thought, due to a surfeit of liberty, but due to a dearth of it.

Essentially, the view being advocated here is a Kantian-Socratic one, where wrongdoing is seen as a form of *akrasia*, or weakness of will or reason. People are not so much *wicked* as weak or irrational or both. Given full moral understanding and perfect freedom, it is difficult to see how evil could be *chosen*. Moral responsibility seems conceptually linked to rationality and freedom, such that good acts follow from our rational judgements. An immoral act would be irrationally chosen, and therefore not responsible. A responsible act would be rational, and so necessarily selected. Think of an *a priori* discipline, such as mathematics. Reason motivates us to believe the results of a calculation. We are constrained to accept it. Similarly a moral calculator could be constrained to accept a certain course of action, and thus be motivated to perform it. Before dismissing this as reducing moral agents to Hick's puppets, consider whether it would be a freer or more responsible mathematician if they were irrationally tempted to accept numerous results which they knew to be wrong. Surely they would not be. Also, the mathematician who painstakingly learns arithmetic by trial and error is no better a mathematician than the naturally endowed one. This counts against the I-H work ethic view of moral development.

The best way to express the central criticism of the I-H view is by using a thought-experiment. Suppose a brilliant and pioneering scientist, Dr Freikenstein, decides to create two human individuals in his genetic research unit. One (the control) is a typical and fallible human being called Daimon. The other is a paragon, and his name is Eudaimon. Roughly speaking, Daimon is a good enough fellow, but he drinks and smokes too much, has a hot temper and a quick tongue and tends to get involved with the wrong women. He suffers from bouts of low self-esteem and guilt. Indolence and poor co-ordination add to his problems. Eudaimon, on the other hand, makes good friends, uses his time wisely, looks on the bright side and nourishes his ample talents to the full. He is no bore or prig, however, and his well-judged humour and penetrating insights are a joy and wonder to his varied entourage. Women are far from immune to his allure, and his discreet liaisons provide him and others with enduring comfort. Eudaimon cannot really understand envy, malice or even weakness of will. He gave up meat after reading an article in *The Guardian* about factory farming. This was really no hardship for him as his moral indignation effectively destroyed his taste for meat. He easily follows the path of disinterested good as he sees it, and he sees it very well. His college reference emphasised Eudaimon's human understanding, rationality and will-power – all non-moral virtues. Dr Freikenstein blushed with pride.

Let us ask two rather Greek-sounding questions: Given the *choice*, which of these individuals would you prefer to be? And which of these individuals do you consider the more *free?*

These questions are not intended as rhetorical. However, various reasons suggest that the clever money should go on Eudaimon. Note that he is no automaton. He deliberates and chooses freely, sometimes swimming, sometimes painting, etc. He is, admittedly singular when confronted by moral choices in that he invariably finds *consideration of the right thing to do a motivating reason*. Notice that Eudaimon understands that there are available to him, and he could theoretically choose to act upon, other considerations (glory, pleasure, idleness, etc) but he's just not motivated by them. Eudaimon is good simply by dint of following a moral algorithm modeled on a handful of (non-moral) virtues. Needless to say, he gets on very well with his other eudaimon friends, even though they have chosen very different careers, and argue fiercely over art, music and holiday destinations.

So it is far from clear that Irenaeus' empiricist claim that '...an object apprehended by experience has a surer effect than any theoretical inference' is true. An ability to perform *a priori* moral calculations, rather like algebra, would enhance rather than vitiate moral freedom. If this amplifies the paradox that moral freedom involves *constraints*, then so much the better. The FWD promotes freedom from external constraints at the expense of freedom to transcend the obstacles to rational and responsible action. It has confused true freedom on the one hand with licence and wantonness on

the other. The wanton has many options but no real freedom or responsibility. The free agent's options may effectively narrow to just one choice; there is sometimes only one thing we should freely and responsibly do. ('He couldn't hurt a fly', 'Here I stand, I can do no other.') So freedom means a form of constraint; a state of being constrained by considerations of the good and the rational. In the words of Susan Wolf: '...What we need to know if we are to find out whether we are free and responsible beings is whether we have the ability to act in accordance with reason.'[10] Sometimes, morally, we have no choice. And this is because freedom, reason and the good are analytically related.

The 'soul-making' view also overlooks the fact that we all need help if we are to be truly free and responsible. Such capacities are bestowed more than earned. If I am responsible I am not solely responsible for being so. Parents, teachers, writers and a host of influences beyond my choosing are essential. As Wolf says, 'We are not then, and never can be, fully responsible for whether and how much we *are* responsible.'[11] Conversely, the feckless will always have some very good excuses. So why doesn't God provide more help in our moral formation? Which brings us back to Daimon.

We can now see that Daimon is not more but *less* free than Eudaimon. Certainly he's 'free' to do the wrong thing, but he's not free from the siren voices of lust, anger, fear, avarice and the rest of the dispositions that undermine and trump his best intentions. (One thinks of St Paul in Romans 7:15; 'The good thing I want to do I never do; the evil thing which I do not want – this is what I do.') This is a mean and mocking freedom, and it certainly seems too poorly nourished to do the work that has been asked of it by its advocates.

It appears, in conclusion, that the I-H theodicy fails. Given the choice, some of us would sooner be good than moral; and this is not just the good choice; it may also, incidentally, be the only moral one.

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This article is an amended version of one that was printed in *The New Theologian* in the Spring of 2005. I am indebted to the editors of the RJP for detailed and penetrating criticisms of that piece, which have, to some degree, been addressed in this version.

[Evil]

Notes On [Contributors]

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Notes For Contributors

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The articles should be around 3000-4000 words.

Style

The language used in the articles should be as non-technical as possible whilst preserving the richness of the arguments. Where technical terms are unavoidable they should be explained and examples offered.

Notes should be presented as endnotes. Textual references should be presented in the following format: Barry Stroud, *Hume* (London: Routledge, 1977), 77-91.

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Contributors

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