

language of the pragmatist, 'the world' in Davidson's language) and provides a bridge or a mirror so as to insure (and indicate) that the physical state of things corresponds to the mental state of things in question. These epistemic facts being what is decidedly real, any belief that corresponds by way of epistemic fact to reality is decidedly true. Davidson urges us against the difficulties and incoherencies that these epistemic intermediaries introduce.

On Davidson's account, the only link between our beliefs and the world is a causal one. The world causes us to believe some things. This is true in a very real and desperately obvious way. (Of course philosophers tend to often miss the obvious, don't we?) For instance, my past relations with hot stoves directly cause me to believe that touching hot stoves hurts really bad. Such causation, though, falls desperately short of the epistemological call for evidence that justifies beliefs. Davidson says exactly that: "Sensations cause some beliefs and in *this* sense are the basis or ground of those beliefs. But a causal explanation of belief does not show how or why the belief is [epistemically] justified."²¹ On Davidson's account, there is no such thing as evidence or justification for any given belief, unless we construe evidence or justification generically; that is, according to the evidential or justificatory standards implicit in practices (e.g., forensic evidence in a courtroom).

Again, our sleepy cat may help to clarify the situation. On Davidson's view, if we see a cat on the mat this will cause us to believe that "the cat is on the mat" is true.²² Our friends can come by and see the same thing and it will cause them to believe the same thing. An empiricist epistemologist comes by and says that so perceiving the cat on the mat causes "the cat is on the mat" to be true. For the empiricist, the perception causes the belief to be true-the perception itself is therefore the object of knowledge rather than the actual content of the belief.²³ For the empiricist, the cat itself is relegated to the realm of fantasy; what counts, what is real, is the epistemic intermediary-what I call the epistemic fact. For Davidson, on the other hand, the objects we see are what directly influences and practically justifies our beliefs. As early as 1974 Davidson was already concerned to do away with the epistemic facts, to throw away the epistemologists' intermediaries: "In giving up the dualism of scheme and world we ... re-establish unmediated touch with the familiar objects whose antics make our sentences and opinions true or false."²⁴ G. H. Mead, in lectures delivered in the 1920's, sums up much of what I've been pointing towards here:

This definition of knowledge, this identification of the object of knowledge with the so-called perception, whether a perception by virtue of the eye or the imagination, in company with various other pragmatists I reject... I will point out that the rejection sweeps out a vast amount of philosophic ruffraff known as epistemology, and relieves one of the hopeless task of bridge-building from a world of one's states of consciousness to an outside world that can never be reached.²⁵

The point that Davidson and Mead are making is that perception (Hume) or sensory stimulation (Quine), because empiricists construct it as an epistemic intermediary, never places knowledge on the secure foundation that the epistemologists are trying for. If there are intermediaries between our beliefs and the world, then we can't know the world-we can only know the mediating facts. This was indeed Hume's very point and it's the source of Kant's unfortunate conclusion in the *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft* - we can only ever know *Erscheinungen* whereas the true *Dingen an sich* are always and necessarily concealed.

What I hope to show is that accepting the epistemological mode of inquiry saddles us with the horrible burdens of scepticism and relativism - the real, true, and right world could be very different from how we conceive it to be because our conception of it is based not on the world itself, but on our reflection or representation of it. It is the epistemologist who ultimately proves to be the sceptic and relativist. Davidson says that "to base meaning on [non-practical] evidence necessarily leads to the difficulties of [Quinean-type epistemological] theories: truth relativized to individuals, and scepticism."²⁶ Relativism can be shown the way out only when humans are seen to answer to true beliefs without putting to use any epistemic intermediaries to get there. In other words, relativism is defeated only by a non-epistemological methodology and rhetoric.

Pragmatism: Anti-Epistemology Is Anti-Relativism

Earlier I discussed an important difference between epistemological and pragmatic philosophy. Namely, pragmatism opts for practical justifications whereas epistemology dismisses practice in favor of an epistemically mediating fact. Note further that this epistemic fact is necessarily nondoxastic and nonlinguistic - for if it were either it would be a part of practice wouldn't it? What the epistemologist is left with is precisely the task that Mead described for him: building a bridge from a subjective state of consciousness to an objectively existing outside world. Epistemologists criticize pragmatists for staying on the 'subjective' side of this bridge whereas they, the truth-bearers in a very Platonic sense, are on the way to 'objectivity.'

My defense of the pragmatic approach to truth is this: the whole subject and object dichotomy is nothing more than a product of epistemology. Epistemologists are merely calling pragmatists bad epistemologists — that's like Maxwell calling Aristotle a bad scientist and defining 'science' as any inquiry into nature motivated by Baconian and Newtonian concepts of 'experiment'.²⁷

It's a rhetorical move that conceals what's really at issue — in the case of physics the real issue is

what 'good science' really is. To say that pragmatists are being subjective or relativistic is merely to insist again that *you* (pragmatists) aren't doing things *our* (epistemological) way. And when epistemologists call pragmatists bad epistemologists they are spot-on in their critique. However, pragmatists aren't epistemologists of any sort so it's kind of like telling me that I'm a bad mother or a terrible novelist. It's true perhaps, but only in a very queer sense.

As I've said before the possibility of relativism doesn't arise in a pragmatic philosophy because the question of what is true or false is always going to be settled in practice. And don't say, "But sometimes it's just not!" All that means is that sometimes there are differences of opinion. James called his pragmatism a humanism because he thought, like Rorty does now, that these disputes and differences aren't going to be settled by philosophical inquiry, but rather by conversation — that is, they are to be settled in practice not in philosophy classrooms. The dispute is settled in one of two ways — either disputants come to agreement in conversation or they come to blows. Dewey wrote, "As to truth ... philosophy has no pre-eminent status" (1958, 410).²⁸ World history demonstrates Dewey's very point. Consider the extreme case of nazism and the state of Europe only fifty years ago — the dispute between Hitler and the rest of the West wasn't settled once and for all when some philosopher proved that nazism couldn't be true (or when Heidegger proved that it was). Philosophy has never been able to stop the march of ideology and soldier.²⁹

What Dewey's advice entails is that the falsity of Hitler's claims isn't of any great consequence. Nobody cares if what Hitler said was false—unless this is taken to mean that what he says just didn't hold water in the end. What does matter is *why* his views are false and that we *show* that they are false. Merely labelling them 'false' isn't going to get you anywhere unless, like we are now, you are already amongst a group of people that already agrees with you.³⁰ When the question of Hitler *really* comes up what matters is *why* he is false, not the falsity itself. (Consider the innocent woman jailed because of a mistaken jury — the real important thing is *that she is innocent* and that she *proves* it, not that it is true that she is innocent.)³¹ The truth, by itself, can't save us from Hitlers — all those brave boys who fell on the beaches and in the fields are a monument to what very little truth can do for us on its own. What we need is a practical justification supplemented, in cases like that of nazism where there isn't a chance of conversation, by practical action.³²

Epistemology and the Very Possibility of Relativism.

What I want to turn to now is the idea that the epistemological critique of pragmatic truth as rela-

tivistic reveals a deep flaw in epistemological inquiry: namely, the very possibility of relativism itself. Epistemology, in calling for some justification other than actual practice, opens a door to relativism that it just can't shut.

Let's return to the concept of an epistemic intermediary. Davidson said that only in swearing truth to intermediaries, rather than to what is true itself, can we open the door to relativism. Consider competing astronomical theories — heliocentrism and geocentrism. Which one is true? Both epistemologist and pragmatist, I take it, will say that Copernican astronomy is true whereas Ptolemaic astronomy is not. The epistemologist, however, has to go further than this and say that not only is Greek astronomy false in 1999, but it was also false in 350 BC. What this means is that Aristotle not only is wrong now, but he was also wrong when he wrote of the motion of the sun in his *Meteorology* or *Heavens*. What Aristotle said there about astronomy was false — and that's the end of the story.³³ Epistemologists are forced to this conclusion about Aristotle, though I think happily, because the epistemological concept of truth requires that whatever is true has always been and will always be true—in order to avoid historical relativism, the epistemologist has to construct truth as an ahistoric notion. This is a notion of truth and falsehood that pragmatists just can't give any sense to. This epistemological construct of an ahistoric epistemic fact (or intermediary) is precisely what opens the door to relativism and skepticism. This is ironic; that which epistemology constructs to avoid relativism dooms them to that same fate.

In the time of Aristotle and Greek astronomy, telescopic verification of planetary motion wasn't considered. That the sun revolved around the earth was a matter of course that did not demand any further proof than seeing it. Why not? Because their belief worked fine for them; life continued on its path just fine without telescopic verification. Farmers continued to reap their harvest, fishermen continued to feed their families, and Aristotle and others produced convincing stories about heavenly phenomena. Geocentrism didn't need any proof as it was already justified in practice.³⁴

If, in looking back at history, we say that the ancients were wrong in holding to geocentrism, what exactly are we condemning in their behavior? In calling their belief 'wrong' or 'false', exactly what was wrong with what they believed? It appears, at least, that they were acting rationally. They had no good reason to believe other than they did just as we have no good reason to believe other than we do now. To say that they believed something that was false is to criticize them for having a mistaken picture of the world that just so happened, after all, to function perfectly well.

To claim that Aristotle had a false belief about astronomy or zoology is to claim that there was some such reason that could have convinced him otherwise. This "reason", though, isn't causal in nature but rather is epistemic (remember Davidson's discussion of evidence and justification). It's not something that you could point to and say, "Hey look here Aristotle, the way these planets move just doesn't float with *your* theory, man." First of all you'd have to teach him a little more math and then train him in optics and also con-

subject and
dichotomy
is nothing but
a product of
epistemology

vince him of a whole host of other things. In other words, you'd have to train Aristotle in a whole new way of construing astronomical evidence; you'd have to take Aristotle through almost two millennia of scientific endeavor.³⁵ As Davidson has shown, nothing counts as evidence without a practice for so counting it.³⁶ There is no natural evidence.³⁷

There are no justifications outside of practices of justifying. Aristotle didn't have any justifications for Copernican astronomy because he didn't have any of the distinguishing beliefs that fund the Copernican practice of astronomy.³⁸

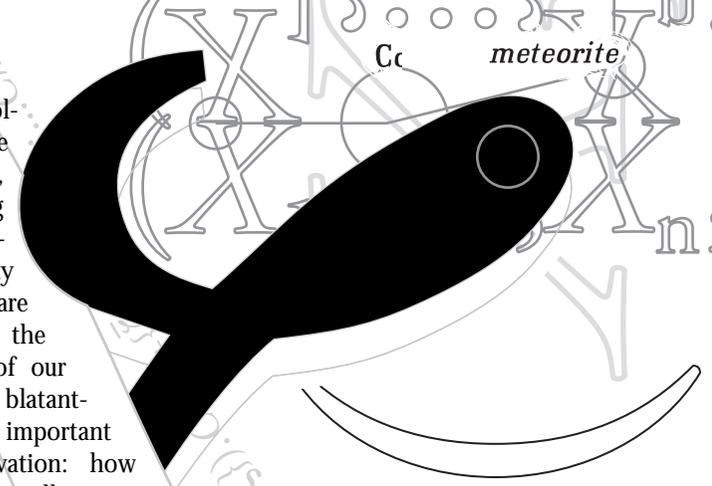
More to the point, though, is this: saying that Greek astronomy was 'false' for the Greeks makes it painfully clear that perhaps we are under the same ruse of epistemological cloudiness that the ancients were. If there was some (hidden) reality underneath their beliefs why can't there be some (hidden) reality under ours that sweeps away the very foundations of our thought and practice? Scientists and epistemologists will naturally defend our modern view saying that these and those calculations and these and those telescopic verifications ultimately prove that we are right. This answer, though, begs the question inasmuch as it relativizes truth to our modern standards for astronomical measurement — what Kuhn might call our contemporary astrophysical paradigm. What is really at issue here is the epistemological foundation for such standards. Isn't it? At least, that is what epistemological inquiry sets as its standard — the epistemological foundation itself, not the epistemic construction built on that foundation.

If the ancients were wrong in their picture of the heavens, then we might be wrong as well. Our space programs and our astronomical measurements are proving to be quite useful, but this doesn't overrule the apriori possibility that we might be barking up the wrong epistemological tree in very much the same way that the ancients were. The epistemologist opens the door to the sceptic and then cannot shew him the way back out. Only epistemologists can be relativists because only epistemologists seek to fix truth to factual intermediaries that get between beliefs and the conduct that continues within them.

The truth is, our beliefs about the world are true just insofar as we keep taking them to the bank and making large cash withdrawals. So long as they take it, let's call it "good currency."³⁹ As the scientists might perhaps say, you can't argue with the success of the space program. It is that very success that funds the truth of our astronomical theory. Such success cannot, however, epistemically justify belief because an epistemic justification is necessarily non-practical and wholly philosophical.

If that is what epistemologists want to call by the names of 'true' and 'false', there's not much helping them. In committing themselves to the epistemic falsity of Greek astronomy, they are committing themselves to the possible epistemic falsity of our own. Both claims, however, blatantly ignore what I find most important about astronomical observation: how well it functions when it is actually put into practice. I can't give any sense to the idea that our astronomy might be wrong or false. Why? Because we get on so well with it. What does it mean to call something that works so well 'wrong'? If all it means is that in another two millennia humans probably won't be Copernicans, I'm happy with that except it doesn't seem a good reason for saying that we're wrong now. It just means that we haven't progressed as far as they will have. However, the epistemologist, I think, has a different sense of 'wrong' or 'false' in mind. As they are committed to the ahistoricity of truth, they are committed to saying that if in two millennia humans aren't Copernicans about astronomy then we (Copernicans that we are) are *wrong right now*. This is the unfortunate residue of trying to be ahistorical and apractical about truth — in other words, this is the unfortunate residue of epistemological methodology and rhetoric. What this rhetoric really boils down to is that most of our beliefs are now false.⁴⁰ And that's a result that has just got to be wrong.⁴¹

Finally, let me draw a brief analogy to the history of chess here. A great chess player from the mid-19th century, say Paul Morphy, wouldn't stand much of a chance against a great player from today like Anatoly Karpov, Bobby Fischer, or IBM's Deep Blue. But, in his time, Morphy was probably the greatest player. And players like Karpov are more than happy to acknowledge this without criticizing Morphy for the (now-disproven) theories that he employed in his games.⁴² The key to this is that knowledge about chess is an historical phenomenon — it's a body of knowledge that has grown over time and will surely continue to grow. Karpov isn't about to criticize Morphy for not being as good as him and I don't think any philosopher would want to do so either. Why criticize the greatest chess player of 1859 for not being the greatest (or one of the greatest) chess player of 1999? Similarly, I want to know why the epistemologist wants to call Aristotle wrong when all Aristotle really did was contribute to a historical development of astronomical knowledge — it seems that philosophers hold scientists and other philosophers to a different standard than they hold chess players.⁴³



CONCLUDING: A Different Beginning with**Allen, James, Foucault and Rorty**

Allen has commented on the problems with epistemological inquiry into such things as Victorian views about gender. His thoughts here will help us to return to an idea I discussed above — the idea that what is important about a belief isn't its truth-value, but rather the treatment it receives in practice. This is a re-emphasis of the idea with which I began this essay: the Rortean conviction that there is nothing to truth besides justification in practice. Allen writes of the Victorian belief that men are naturally suited to work and women are naturally suited to homemaking and family life:

That these statements are false is unimportant. What is important is that there was once a political economy of knowledge in which they passed for true. Their currency contributed to the stability of a large pattern of asymmetrical differences of power between men and women. The key point though is that the statements did not have to be false to have this effect. It was enough that they passed for the truth.... All that is important, then as now, is the currency they had; that they and others like them historically passed for the truth.⁴⁴

Allen makes these remarks while discussing Foucault's theory of truth. Allen, Foucault, James, and Rorty are all in agreement on one central idea, and it is their convictions about this idea that results in their unfortunate status as members of the 'philosophical fringe'. The idea is this: truth has no power on its own. Truth is a power only if there is a person to use it — just like a gun is a weapon only in the hands of a person. A gun by itself has no power — truth by itself is likewise impotent.

What philosophers from Kant to Moore to Dummett have ignored is the fact that women had to fight for equal freedom, just like African-Americans had to fight for theirs, just like the Allies had to fight for theirs in the Second War (in fact the first two groups are still fighting if you haven't noticed). Truth, Foucault and Rorty want to show, is an economical relation between *humans* rather than an epistemic relation between *believers* and *the world*. Truth has no economy outside of discursive practice. This is just to say that you can't cash out true belief in anything other than practical action. (If you think that you can you'll have the difficult task of giving just one example of this cashing-out).

I said above that I find the widespread rejection of certain "postmodern" and pragmatic texts an unfortunate fact about contemporary philosophical practice.⁴⁵

Why is this unfortunate? Because as philosophers continue to complain more and more about the marginalization of their discipline by other academics (and by contemporary culture

What [epistemological] rhetoric boils down to is that most of our *beliefs* are now *false*.

in general) they ignore the self-marginalizing tendencies inherent in their own epistemological demand for ahistorical and foundational truth. In fact, the demand for ahistoricity and apracticality implicit in epistemological methodology and rhetoric creates the following situation: analytic philosophers busy themselves with constructing theories and analyses (even moral theories) that they know nobody besides other philosophers will ever bother to read. It's little surprise that disciplines including sociology, linguistics, literature, law, psychology, education, and history have been so heavily influenced by interdisciplinarians such as Derrida, Foucault, and Rorty (even James would fit on this list)⁴⁶ whereas few sociologists or historians have ever heard of Frege, Strawson, Dummett, or even Quine and Davidson.⁴⁷ Most college graduates in the humanities will have at least heard Foucault's name, if not read *Madness and Civilization* — very few, including a few with philosophy degrees, will have heard of and read Carnap. If I might be allowed to paraphrase Rorty: Why do philosophers worry about it when nobody else does?

NOTES

1 Cf., "Pragmatism defines 'agreeing' to mean certain ways of 'working', be they actual or potential." (James 1909, 218).

2 (James 1907, 36) Cf., "The true' ... is only the expedient in the way of our thinking." (1907, 98)

3 (Rorty 1995, 19)

4 Hence the term "pragmatism" from the Greek pragma - "action". Barry Allen discusses the rhetorical shift implicit in pragmatism:

"The 'pragmatic theory of truth' is not the logical analysis of a concept but a revisionary reworking of the tradition. The reference to consequences, to efficacy and prosperity, concerns not the formal essence but the practical value of truth. Pragmatism is a revisionary ethical work on truth's value, an effort as much rhetorical as philosophical to resituate truth in the circle of goods" (1993, 63)

5 Cf. (James 1907, 32)

6 (James 1907, 23)

7 (Rorty 1994, 80)

8 I say "jargon" here on purpose to indicate that this justification is rooted firmly within the specific discursive practice in which we find the belief. Any justification of a statement about chemistry is likely to be phrased in terms of the technical language of chemistry; likewise, a justification of a statement about chess is likely to be phrased in the technical language of chess; compare philosophy here and you get the same conclusion.

9 James criticizes the copy theory at James 1907, 88.

10(2.222) Cf., Russell's claim, almost identical, that, "A belief is true when there is a corresponding fact, and is false when there is no corresponding fact." (1912, 129)

11 It's like saying that cyanide kills humans because it is a poison or that humans have two legs because we are bipeds. (cf., James 1907, 115)

12 (Putnam 1995, 10)

13 (Allen 1993, 164)

14 There are resemblances here to Frege's argument for the redundancy theory of truth. Truth doesn't contribute to the sense of a sentence 'p' because if it did, saying that 'p' is true would change the sense of 'p' such that predicating something of it could either make it come in or out of existence. Cf., Frege's "My Basic Logical Insights" reprinted at page 322 of Beaney (ed.), *The Frege Reader*, Blackwell 1997.

15 (James 1925, 39) James's persistent dismissal of rationalism in James 1907 is Dewey's call for an end to epistemology—a call echoed more recently by Rorty and Charles Taylor.

16 Where I say 'epistemology' here, some may find it more useful to think of 'representationalism'. Or, with James, some may prefer to think of 'rationalism' (see n.11, above). Charles Taylor writes about what he calls 'the epistemological model'. It is defined by the ideas that, "Our awareness of the world, whether in the organized, regimented form we call science, or in the looser forms of common everyday awareness, is to be understood in terms of our forming representations ... of 'external' reality." (1984, 18) Taylor names Quine as exemplary of this model. There is, of course, a striking similarity to Rorty's discussion of representationalism in his 1979 *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* and elsewhere.

17 Regarding scepticism see Michael Williams's *Unnatural Doubts*, or Rorty's review of that book "Antiskeptical Weapons: Michael Williams versus Donald Davidson" in Rorty 1998.

18 Cf., "The idea that the property of truth can serve as an explanation is a product of the misleading picture which engenders the idea that its presence requires an explanation.... The explanation of success and failure is given by the details about what was true or what was false, not by the truth or falsity itself" (Rorty 1986, 140). In other words, explanation is given in strictly practical terms. As for the presuppositions, or transcendental preconditions, of truth, they won't be any good if we won't know why some sentence is true. Again, that 'the cat is on the mat' is true is explained by finding the cat and finding her on the mat not by showing that 'the cat is on the mat' has the same logical form as this state of affairs over here that just so happens to be an existent state of affairs—unless of course Wittgenstein's picture only means to say 'look for the cat and the mat and see if she is on it' (I suspect that it is, but it involves all sorts of metaphysical and epistemological baggage as well).

19 Unless, of course, you want to say that the epistemologist can produce results that changes his or her own actions. This is begging the question insofar as it conflates a private enterprise with a public legitimation.

20 I refer here to Kripke's treatment of Wittgenstein; cf. Kripke, *On Rules and Private Language*, Harvard University Press 1982.

21 Davidson 1984, 125. Two comments here. First, I think my insertion in the brackets is acceptable. Davidson surely doesn't want to say that sensations can't be considered the justification of beliefs in the straightforward causal way. Surely, he doesn't want to reject the idea that seeing the cat on the mat over there causally justifies my saying that 'the cat is on the mat' is true. Second, I am troubled by Davidson's use of 'sensation' here. It seems to me that he would be better to talk about objects or those things in the world that our sentences are in fact about (as he does in Davidson 1974). 'Sensation' approaches dangerously near a Quinean proximal theory of evidence (cf., Davidson 1990a).

22 Cf., "Certainly it is true that events and objects in the external world cause us to believe things about the external world" (1984, 125).

23 Davidson makes just this criticism of Quine in Davidson 1990a. He writes that, "On Quine's proximal theory, all that matters to meaning (or the contents of thought) occurs within the skin of the speaker" (77).

24 Davidson 1974, 198.

25 Mead 1938, 94.

26 Davidson 1990a, 76. Note that Davidson wrote 'proximal' where I have inserted 'Quinean-type epistemological' in the brackets. Within the context of Davidson's discussion of Quine's proximal theory of evidence, I think this is a fair move.

27 Not only would 'experiment' be problematic for Aristotle, but so would the concept of 'nature' that Maxwell was working with—both, I think, would be troubled by my usage of 'motivation' here.

28 Cf., the following theme in Rorty's work: "There is nothing more for us to know about our relation to reality than we already know. There is no fur-

ther job for philosophy" (Rorty 1986, 135)

29 So it should stop pretending that it can do this work—philosophers need to start admitting that they too, like everyone else, get their hands dirty every once in awhile. They need to heed Voltaire's advice about gardening in *Candide*.

30 That's what's called the dogmatic expression of a truth.

31 This example is borrowed from Allen, "It is not important to me that I truly am innocent, but only that I am innocent. The innocence is what matters, not the truth" (164).

32 Cf., Rorty's claim that, "Truth isn't the name of a power that eventually wins through" (1991, 226).

33 I assume we are discussing an epistemologist who doesn't buy into heliocentric astronomy.

34 And, otherwise, it was for some an instance of religious conviction (which is probably one of the strongest forms of practical proof you can find).

35 And if people like Dilthey are right, then we'd also have to take him through about two millennia of philosophical, theological, and general cultural endeavor as well.

36 Cf., "One can locate individual objects, if the sentence happens to name or describe them, but even such location makes sense relative only to a frame of reference, and so presumably the frame of reference must be included in whatever it is to which a true sentence corresponds" (1990b, 303). And, really, Davidson is merely restating some of Kuhn's claims about scientific paradigms.

37 "Order is nowhere original. Nature does not exist" (Allen 1993, 149).

38 Again, this is just a re-hashing of Kuhn's work - which, for some reason, many analytic philosophers still obstinately disagree with.

39 And if everybody wants to take it in exchange for goods, you can't go somewhere and say 'hey well really it's not real money' because it's real-ness as money

depends on nothing other than its functioning within the economy. In other words, truth is like money in that there is

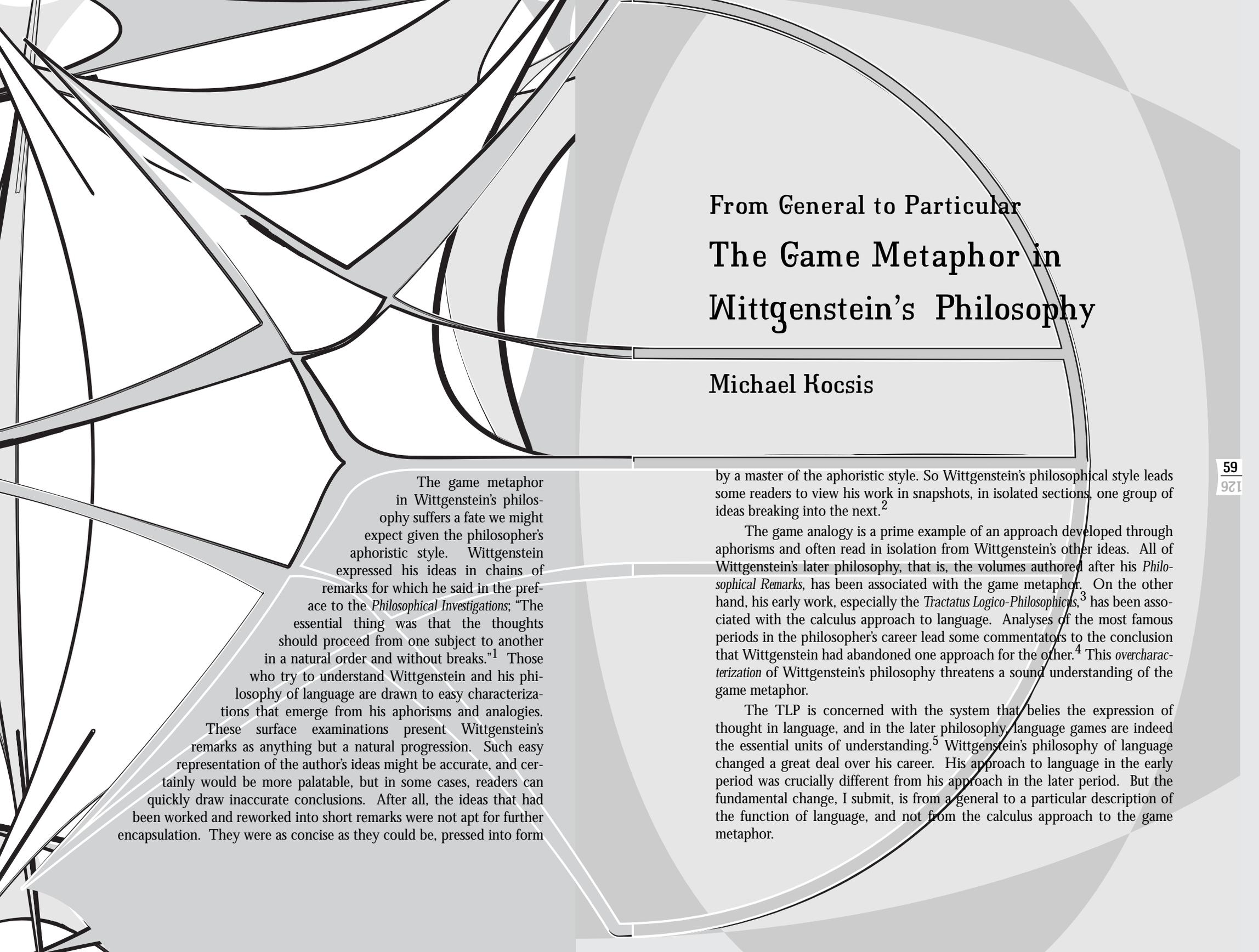
nothing to it except its conventionally-determined use. This, though, doesn't mean that you can use it however you want. You can't spend American dollars in the middle of Ethiopia nor do they take Swiss Francs in Liverpool. As Fish has pointed out, "The removal of independent constraints to which the self might or might not conform does not leave the self free but reveals the self to be always and already constrained by the contexts of practice (interpretive communities) that confer on it a shape and a direction" (1989, 26). In other words, just because truth is determined only in practice doesn't mean that a human can be a non-truthful or non-practical organism.

40 At least for my part, I would be inclined to think that by the turn of the next millenium humans will have rejected a large part of twentieth-century science, sociology, psychology, literary criticism, historiography, philosophy, chess theory, and sexual practice. What's left is seemingly very little.

41 Again, this is something that Davidson would be happy with given his emphasis on the intrinsic veracity of belief.

42 For those in the know, we might restrict this claim specifically to Morphy's opening theories.

43 I suspect that we can attribute this double-standard to a particular picture of philosophic thought as ahistorical. In fact this is the very point I am trying to make here. People like Descartes, Kant, and Husserl envisaged a philosophy free of its history—and, therefore, a philosophical theory that gets to the ahistorical truth. The result of this picture is that ahistoricists like Husserl are free to criticize anybody else (including Descartes) for not having impugned the reality—for not having lifted the Kantian veil before the appearances of the phenomenal world. This point is well made by Wolf Lepenies in his "Some 'interesting questions' in the histo-



From General to Particular The Game Metaphor in Wittgenstein's Philosophy

Michael Kocsis

The game metaphor in Wittgenstein's philosophy suffers a fate we might expect given the philosopher's aphoristic style. Wittgenstein expressed his ideas in chains of remarks for which he said in the preface to the *Philosophical Investigations*; "The essential thing was that the thoughts should proceed from one subject to another in a natural order and without breaks."¹ Those who try to understand Wittgenstein and his philosophy of language are drawn to easy characterizations that emerge from his aphorisms and analogies. These surface examinations present Wittgenstein's remarks as anything but a natural progression. Such easy representation of the author's ideas might be accurate, and certainly would be more palatable, but in some cases, readers can quickly draw inaccurate conclusions. After all, the ideas that had been worked and reworked into short remarks were not apt for further encapsulation. They were as concise as they could be, pressed into form

by a master of the aphoristic style. So Wittgenstein's philosophical style leads some readers to view his work in snapshots, in isolated sections, one group of ideas breaking into the next.²

The game analogy is a prime example of an approach developed through aphorisms and often read in isolation from Wittgenstein's other ideas. All of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, that is, the volumes authored after his *Philosophical Remarks*, has been associated with the game metaphor. On the other hand, his early work, especially the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*,³ has been associated with the calculus approach to language. Analyses of the most famous periods in the philosopher's career lead some commentators to the conclusion that Wittgenstein had abandoned one approach for the other.⁴ This *overcharacterization* of Wittgenstein's philosophy threatens a sound understanding of the game metaphor.

The TLP is concerned with the system that belies the expression of thought in language, and in the later philosophy, language games are indeed the essential units of understanding.⁵ Wittgenstein's philosophy of language changed a great deal over his career. His approach to language in the early period was crucially different from his approach in the later period. But the fundamental change, I submit, is from a general to a particular description of the function of language, and not from the calculus approach to the game metaphor.

His work should be examined for its development, not for its lack of continuity. The temptation to characterize Wittgenstein's philosophy according to the analogies and metaphors used must be avoided where it obscures the view of language he conceived. More to the point: the game metaphor in Wittgenstein's philosophy served a specific purpose as an object of comparison. Without proper interpretation, the metaphor's purpose can be overestimated and lead us to the conclusion that language games superseded or replaced the older view that language functioned as a living system.

My project in this paper is twofold. First, I will show why and how Wittgenstein used the game analogy to articulate his view of language. Language games stand as the perfect metaphor for Wittgenstein, given his developing understanding of the way language worked. Of course, this is why his philosophy in the later period is so easily associated with the metaphor. Wittgenstein used games as the object of comparison in his analogy because they allowed him to express a variety of points the calculus model is not equipped to express.

Second, having established the purpose of the metaphor, I will argue that the calculus approach to language was not abandoned in favor of, but developed into an approach demonstrated through, simplified language games. In the later period, the calculus model became a description of how particular uses of language performed in particular circumstances, not a general theory of the way that language worked. I will argue that Wittgenstein articulated the calculus model in his later philosophy as a description of particular aspects and cases of language.

This discussion can conclude, then, where it began: with the assertion that Wittgenstein's use of aphorism and metaphor in concise remarks might lead some philosophers to the conclusion that we must examine two fundamentally different proposals — two different philosophies. My detailed examination of the purpose of the metaphor will allow an understanding of the development, rather than the multiplicity of Wittgenstein's philosophy. I will begin with a description of some of the problems in the early approach that generated the game analogy.

AWAY FROM THE GENERAL APPROACH

Wittgenstein wrote in his first book: "The truth of the thoughts here communicated seems to me unassailable and definitive. I therefore believe myself to have found, on all essential points, the final solution of the problems."⁶

The importance of the philosophy presented in this book should not be underestimated. The TLP attained its influential position in philosophy because it

presented a very attractive picture of the way language worked. Two features of that picture are crucial to this discussion: the TLP made sense of the system according to which language functions, and it provided an account of the way that language refers to, or is in some way *about* the world. On the systematic feature of language, Wittgenstein observed: "A proposition constructs a world with the help of logical scaffolding, so that one can actually see from the proposition how everything stands if it is true."⁷ On the way that language refers to the world, he wrote: "In a picture the elements of the picture are representatives of objects"⁸ and, "That is how a picture is attached to reality; it reaches right out to it."⁹

The TLP picture of language was attractive, but it was also inadequate. In the post-TLP period of his philosophy, Wittgenstein saw that the two features mentioned above had been exaggerated in his initial discussion of language.

One difficulty with the early approach is the way that Wittgenstein conceived of the rules that frame language. The logical scaffolding that the calculus proposal was supposed to accentuate, when drawn to its proper conclusion, proved incomplete. The kind of rules postulated in the TLP were concrete in application. They were logical rules, and did not permit variation according to subject matter. These rules then required that the elements supplied to them be logically independent of one another. In "Some Remarks on Logical Form", an early example of post-Tractarian thought, Wittgenstein shows how logical independence of elementary units as a general characteristic of language is not possible. Statements of degree and number, for example, do not permit such an analysis. The logic of language, as supplied in the early philosophy, does not apply to all of language, *to language in general*: the TLP proposal is not equipped to deal with the structure of some expressions in language.

In the *Blue Book*, Wittgenstein presents two sets of numbers in an example:

1	2	3	4
1	4	9	16

The second row of numbers is a function of the first set, namely the squaring function.¹⁰ But this example serves to show that for any two sets of arguments, the function performed on the first set to arrive at the second is ambiguous. Wittgenstein later wrote on rules, "For just where one says 'But don't you see...?' the rule is no use, it is what is explained, not what does the explaining."¹¹ And returning to the BB example: "What I wrote is in accordance with the rule of squaring; but it obviously is also in accordance with any number of other rules; and

amongst these it is not more in accordance with one than another." Although the squaring function is the obvious example of a function used to derive the second set of numbers, any other appropriate function serves just as well. Thus, a second flaw in the argument that language is a system built onto concrete rules of logic — general rules are subject to various interpretations; thus, such rules could not be the basis for a comprehensive account of the way that language functions. Although Wittgenstein could be sure that in some sense language operated according to rules, in investigating the nature of language, he could not lay the foundation for his philosophy on general rules.

There were other problems with the early philosophy. According to the calculus model of language articulated in the TLP, words are primarily connected with their meanings is by ostensive definition.¹² Ostensive definition is the method by which the referent of a word is obviously or directly demonstrated. In the TLP, the relationship is clear; "A name means an object. The object is its meaning," and, "In a proposition a name is a representative of an object."¹³ Ostensive definition, the basis for the name-object relation, applies in many cases, especially for proper names and names of physical objects. But the relation certainly does not apply in all linguistic situations. Early in PI, Wittgenstein writes of St. Augustine's association between ostensive definition and meaning: "Augustine, we might say, does describe a system of communication, only not everything that we call language is this system."¹⁴

In remark twenty-seven of PI, Wittgenstein cites a number of expressions for which there could be no ostensive definition. While we might be inclined to approach these as cases on the periphery of language, consideration of them is vital, Wittgenstein suggests, for an understanding of the nature of language.¹⁵ It is not the possibility that ostensive definition correlates language with the world *at all* that is attacked here, but again, the application of a principle that explains how language works in particular cases to language in general. On the appropriate use of ostensive definition to explain particular uses, we again examine the BB: "Such an explanation might consist of ostensive definitions. We should say; e.g., "this is Kings College" (pointing to the building), "this is a fire" (pointing to a fire). This shows you the way in which words and things *may* be connected."¹⁶

the
fundamental change is from a
general to a particular description of
language, and not from the calculus
approach to the *game metaphor*.

So far we have examined two cases where Wittgenstein took issue not with the features of his early philosophy, but with how far he went in advocating those features as a general account of the structure of language. In the second section of this paper, I will show how both of these features, the system according to which language functions and the way that some units of language refer to the world, are made congruent with the game metaphor. The issues discussed above only infect the theory when taken as a general account of language. The problem I will examine now, however, was not so easy for Wittgenstein to reconcile.

To make sense of the connection between a word and its ostensive definition, using the TLP approach, we must postulate private mental experience. Private experience, we might say, falls out of the calculus proposal.¹⁷ Wittgenstein explains:

Thus, if you are asked what is the relation between a name and the thing it names, you will be inclined to answer that the relation is a psychological one, and perhaps when you say this you think in particular of the mechanism of association.¹⁸

Wittgenstein's proposal in the TLP was supposed to stand, I have argued, as a general account of the function of language. Early in the BB, however, the philosopher investigated the idea that language was not equipped to refer to some aspects of the mind-world relationship. In a noteworthy passage, Wittgenstein draws the reader through an examination of a group of assertions made by a Diviner to describe his unusual sensations.

Wittgenstein's Diviner says: "I have never learnt to correlate depth of water with feelings in my hand, but when I have a certain feeling of tension in my hands, the words 'three feet' spring up in my mind."¹⁹ This example shows that although the grammar of the words in the Diviner's expression subscribe to appropriate rules for their use, they are combined in a way that we do not understand. The Diviner's expressions are not able to describe to the listener the sensations that they purport to describe.

This example presents a problem for Wittgenstein's early approach because it suggests that part of an investigation of the nature of language might require postulation of mental phenomena which cannot be evaluated sensibly. On the mental images we are inclined to postulate to explain the live character of signs in language, Wittgenstein writes:

As soon as you think of replacing the image by, say, a painted one, and as soon as the image loses its occult character, it ceases to seem to impart any life to the sentence at all.²⁰

The way we conventionally locate and describe pain is problematic for the same reason as the Diviner passage. Pain is used in explication because it is a clear case, we are led to think, of private sensation. The meaning of the word "pain" is supposed to refer directly to the sensation. It cannot be social behavior that connects "pain" to pain, for one who experiences pain might not express it, and one who claims to be in pain might be deceptive. Furthermore, what "pain" refers to is not a *synonym* for the expression the sensation, it is the expression of the sensation.²¹ Likewise, "pain" cannot be correlated with pain in a learned relationship; to have pains is not to have learned of pains, but to *have* them.²²

If we cannot identify a relation between the word "pain" and its sensation, we might want to know whether we can call the experience private at all. Subsequently, Wittgenstein distinguishes two senses of privacy — a sensation is private if either only I can know about it or if others cannot feel it.²³

On the former sense of privacy, Wittgenstein develops a damaging criticism. To say that I can know of my own pains is really to say no more than that I am in pain. As noted, experience of pain can be kept a secret, but of course, the issue concerns the privacy of experiences which are not kept a secret.²⁴ There are no criteria of the evaluation of a sensation expression, so any such expression is empty. Wittgenstein sums this point up in: "The proposition 'sensations are private' is comparable to: 'one plays patience by oneself.'"²⁵

On the latter sense of privacy, pain cannot be reliably associated with pain behavior.²⁶ But Wittgenstein continues with the criticism of private sensations, suggesting that it is conceivable one could experience another's pain:

If, on the other hand, the tactual and kinaesthetic sensations described were correlated to the visual experience of seeing my hand touch the tooth of another person, there is no doubt that I would call this experience 'toothache in another person's tooth.'²⁷

Similarly: "In so far as it makes sense to say that my pain is the same as his, it is also possible for us both to have the same pain."²⁸ From the inadequacy of private sensations as a description of the nature of meaning, we can now see the fundamental aspect of Wittgenstein's private language argument. Since we cannot define criteria for the proper and improper application of signs to refer to private sensations, we cannot presume the correlation between words and meanings to be ostensive definitions associated with private experiences. From the famous section of PI:

The essential thing about private experience is really not that each person possesses his own exemplar, but that nobody knows whether other people have *this* or something else. The assumption would thus be possible — though unverifiable — that one section of mankind had one sensation of red and another section another.²⁹

Stepping back, we can see the developed attack on this aspect of the calculus approach. Since there are expressions which we cannot understand through the general account of language presented in the TLP, and since many of these expressions refer to supposed private sensations like pain, we might insist that there is a fundamental problem with any explanatory apparatus which invokes private sensations as a feature. Since the calculus approach requires private sensations as the primary correlate of ostensive definition in the relationship between language and the world, we can assume that the Tractarian account, at least in regard to its proposal for connecting language to the world, is mistaken about private sensations. The calculus approach to language may prove coherent where it makes sense of the systematic and the referential features of particular uses of language. Private mental experience, however, proves incoherent, and so must be abandoned as the basis for an understanding of how language functions. Meaning, then, must be public phenomena.

Using the Game Metaphor

The game analogy allowed Wittgenstein to articulate the essential features of his developed account of the nature of language. A prominent characteristic of the later philosophy was the way that meaning emerges from language, that is, the way that signs get their life. In the later philosophy, meaning is derived

from the use of the particular expression — the *procedure* for using the expression. In the TLP, the initial connection between sign and meaning is described as use:³⁰ “In order to recognize a symbol by its sign we must observe how it is used with a sense.”³¹ The TLP presents use as an expression to render a picture of reality within the logical syntax. But the use of other expressions (especially those cited in PI *rm.* 23 and 27) remains unexplained. In the BB Wittgenstein argues that the meaning of an expression, of any expression, derives from its use in language: “The use of a word in practice is its meaning,” and, “The meaning of a phrase for us is the use we make of it.”³² This is part of why the metaphor is a useful tool for Wittgenstein — the way meaning emerges from language is the way that particular games emerge from individuals’ participation in them. Meaning is use in the same way that individuals play games. An excerpt from the later period makes the point explicit: “To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to be a master of a technique.”³³

We established that Wittgenstein was forced to reject the idea that meaning was in any way a private phenomena. So another aspect of Wittgenstein’s approach, articulated in the game metaphor, is that we play games with each other. Expressions have meaning in language because individuals participate in the activity, and because the activity takes place within communities of use. If the life of a sign in language is not derived from the individual’s use of it, then there must be a basis for the assertion that the sign has a life outside its signification. The basis is the notion that language games *are* a form of life. Henry Finch puts the issue in precise terms: “A form of life is a possibility of meaningful action shared by members of a group, and hence repeatable by different members of the group on different occasions.”³⁴ Thus, the move from a general approach to particular uses of language within linguistic communities.

A third characteristic of language articulated in the game metaphor

further refines the adherence to a particular approach to language. The multiplicity of uses of language are illustrated by language games. Each game concerns the particular use it describes. Wittgenstein notes the tendency to search for a general explanation: “The idea of a general concept being a common property of its particular instances connects up with other primitive, too simple, ideas of the structure of language.”³⁵ This tendency must be avoided, Wittgenstein thinks, because language games “form a *family* the members of which all have family likenesses,”³⁶ and, “there is no single feature in common to all of them, though there are many common features overlapping. They have family likenesses which are not clearly defined.”³⁷ Linguistic expressions can be defined, but not within a general theory of the nature of language. They can be defined, however, by their place in the context of the language game to which they belong. With some idea of Wittgenstein’s use of the game analogy at hand, we can examine how his strategy accounts for the concepts in the calculus approach as they were discussed earlier in this paper.

The first of those concepts was the set of general rules of language favoured in the TLP. As his view developed, Wittgenstein wrote: “For remember that in general we don’t use language according to strict rules.”³⁸ On precise rules for the use of language, Wittgenstein continued the explanation: “To suppose that there *must* be [precise rules] would be like supposing that whenever children play with a ball they play a game according to strict rules.”³⁹ The rules that hold language together cannot be determined through a general approach to language. What we call a rule in a language game might have very different roles in particular games.⁴⁰ Only in particular cases, with reference to particular language games, can one determine the proper and improper use of linguistic rules.

In the final piece of Wittgenstein’s *nachlaß*, we see how the philosopher’s notion of language games is equipped to dissolve philosophical disputes. If the relationship between particular language games can be determined, then the confusion resulting from their conflation can be avoided. In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein investigated the position of certainty as the foundation of the language game. Both certainty and doubt stand outside the game, doubt threatening everything within, certainty supporting everything within.⁴¹ What stands fast for us is the basis for language games, according to OC, and as such is not subject to skepticism: “If the true is what is grounded, then the ground is not true, nor yet false.”⁴² Doubting propositions for which we can be certain on an everyday level, is conflating language games. Doubt might belong to the language game in which I could question whether it will rain

tomorrow or not. It does not, however, belong to the game in which I state that I am certain of my own existence. Conflating language games in this manner leads to philosophical puzzlement. If we understand that our interpretation of language must subscribe to rules determined by particular uses, we can avoid the pitfalls our ordinary use of language imposes on us. The rules of language do not apply in general, but within specific language games.

Returning to the problems created by the calculus approach, the place of ostensive definition in simple language games needs to be explained. The metaphor is constructed with reference to artificial examples of primitive games. In both PI and the BB Wittgenstein examines example cases of primitive languages which show how ostensive definition serves as the model for particular examples of language games.⁴³ Indeed, part of the concept of language games is precisely the fact that primitive games serve as the basis for more complex forms of expression.⁴⁴ In BB Wittgenstein writes: "We see that we can build up the complicated forms from the primitive ones by gradually adding new forms."⁴⁵

In the later philosophy, ostensive definition of words is situated as the correlation between words and their referents, according to the procedure for using the words in particular language games. These are the most straightforward of language games, upon which more complex forms of language are built. They are, as Wittgenstein says, the most primitive of games, and it is no surprise that they should be overestimated in an examination of the nature of language.

So, can simple language games help the philosopher make sense of expressions for sensations like pain? Like other units of language, sensation language takes its place as a language game. When we refer to pain, we do not refer to an ostensively defined private experience as the calculus approach would entail. Pain takes a place in a language game because within the rules of the game we are free to assume, by the use of pain expressions, that the expression of pain and the behavior of the suffering individual indicate that the individual is indeed in pain. Wittgenstein makes the point in an analogy: "If water boils in a pot, steam comes out of the pot and also pictured steam comes out of the pictured pot. But what if one insisted on saying that there must also be something boiling in the pictured pot?"⁴⁶ Anthony Kenny explains the analogy: "In the metaphor, the water is the pain, the steam is the pain behavior, the pot is the sufferer's body. In the language game with pain there are pictures only of the sufferer and his behavior, not of his pain."⁴⁷

Sensation language, functions according to the use of particular expressions in the language game, and the sensations of pain themselves are excluded from the game. Hence, the departure from the implications of the calculus model of sensation language. We express and understand others' expressions of pain not through universal psychology, but through convention and community agreement of what is and is not appropriate within the language game. Thus the move from a general to a particular approach to language in Wittgenstein's philosophy.

From General to Particular

It has become fairly commonplace to interpret Wittgenstein's philosophy in terms of the abandonment of the calculus approach, and the emergence of the language game model.⁴⁸

This characterization, I submit, is a misinterpretation of his purpose in his later philosophy.

Some argue that although Wittgenstein came to favour one term over the other to describe his proposal, he used "calculus" in a way that did not require a general interpretation of the term.⁴⁹ The inclusion of particular cases among calculi was discussed by Wittgenstein in the post-Tractarian period:

The word 'calculus' has different meanings: there are different kinds of calculi just as there are different lists of rules. By this I do not mean different calculations, but different *kinds* of calculi. The concept calculus itself is ambiguous.⁵⁰

Wittgenstein here is broadening his notion of calculus so that it could conceivably apply in different circumstances, for particular purposes.

Stephen Hilmy has gone as far as to argue that Wittgenstein used the terms "calculus" and "language game" interchangeably, both in his published material and in rough notebooks where he often crossed out one expression to substitute the other.⁵¹ In Hilmy's view, this shows that there is some point to the idea that Wittgenstein did not abandon one approach for the other.

But there are more convincing arguments. There are significant lines of distinction between the early and later proposals; indeed, this paper has been partially dedicated to the discussion of these differences. The fact that Wittgenstein put forward two different proposals is indisputable. This is how

we came to debate the question of continuity in his philosophy. However, the features of the view of language retained in the later philosophy show the fundamental move — or at least the best way to observe that move — was not from a calculus approach to a language game model, but from a general to a particular examination of language.

The conception of rules presented in the TLP was not abandoned wholesale, but was re-evaluated and made to work within a different comprehensive account. In the later philosophy, instead of general rules of logic providing a foundation for all of language, rules function within particular manifestations of language games. Wittgenstein's comments regarding all language games explain equally well the kinds of rules within them: "I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, but that they are related to one another in many ways."⁵² But the *kind* of rules presented in the early and late periods share two determining characteristics. They are normative rules; they prescribe the behavior to which language users should adhere. Also, they provide the structure which determines the system which makes up language. The above passage shows that the system in the later proposal was developed according to particular uses of language, not according to language in general.

The Tractarian notion of ostensive definition was maintained in a similar manner. While the TLP account required ostensive definition as the primary correlation between sign and meaning *for all of the signs in language*, the later proposal allowed direct demonstration of reference, only according to use, and only when the correlation was straightforward.⁵³ Continuing, we see how Wittgenstein conceived of the system of language constructed on the foundation of the primitive, 'clear cut', and particular ostensive language games:

On the other hand we recognize in these simple processes forms of language not separated by a break from our more complicated ones. We see that we can build up the complicated forms from the primitive ones by gradually adding new forms.⁵⁴

For some language games, but not all, the ostensive correlation between language and the world is appropriate.

The tendency to ascribe general explanations where there are only particular features is termed by Wittgenstein "our craving for generality." Among the reasons for this craving is the propensity to look for something in common to all the entities we commonly include under a general term. This is precisely the mistaken approach to language the game analogy was intended to shake loose. The notion that the meaning of a word is something accumulated by one who understands the word furthers this mistaken approach. This inclination is associated with the idea that all of language works the same way proper names do — through ostensive definitions. Wittgenstein identifies a third rea-

In saying

"Don't think, just look!",

Wittgenstein is referring to an approach to language and to an approach to

his language -- and to his philosophy .

son for the craving for generality: "Again, the idea we have of what happens when we get hold of the general idea...is connected with the confusion between a mental state, meaning a state of a hypothetical mental mechanism."⁵⁵ So the private mental experiences which are presumed by the calculus approach stem from the general approach. Since general interpretation requires postulation of an indeterminate 'hypothetical mental mechanism,' only the particular uses of sensation language can be properly interpreted.

In the BB Wittgenstein wrote: "The idea that in order to get clear about the meaning of a general term one had to find the common element in all its applications has shackled philosophical investigation."⁵⁶ This, I think, provides an understanding of the purpose of the game metaphor — to shake away the problems created by our craving for generality. The crucial shift in Wittgenstein's philosophy is from a general to a particular view of language. Anthony Kenny's words about language games are most accurate: "Whether they can still be called calculuses is indifferent, as long as we do not allow ourselves to be diverted by the use of a general term from the investigation of every individual case we want to decide."⁵⁷

The TLP system was not equipped to express all that Wittgenstein had observed as essential characteristics of language. The point of the later philosophy, and especially of the game metaphor, was that language was not all and only a rule governed calculus. Language games accentuated the role that the early approach played in the function of language.⁵⁸

So I return to the assertion made at the beginning of this discussion; that Wittgenstein's use of aphorism and metaphor might lead some to the conclusion that we must examine two different philosophies. Three remarks will serve as examples. In the TLP, Wittgenstein wrote: "In logic there can be no distinction between the general and the specific."⁵⁹ We can take from this

comment that during the early period, Wittgenstein conceived of language as a system in which all expressions could be derived from elementary expressions through the same operation.⁶⁰ As his conception changed, the philosopher wrote in the BB: "Instead of 'craving for generality' I could also have said 'the contempt for the particular case.'"⁶¹ Here we have a statement of the early view, and a statement of the transitional period.

And finally, in PI, the most comprehensive account available of Wittgenstein's developed philosophy of language, we see the completed transition. In opposition to the first comment we read: "For if you look at them you will not see anything that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don't think, but look!"⁶² Who could examine these remarks and aphorisms and not be drawn to associate them with their distinguishing features?

The temptation to characterize Wittgenstein's philosophy according to the aphorisms derived from his style is powerful, but must be avoided where it obscures the approach to language he developed. The game metaphor served a specific purpose in Wittgenstein's philosophy as an object of comparison — as a way of looking at language. The analogy allowed him to describe the implications of his early view that drew him toward a different perspective, and most importantly, it allowed him to articulate the features of his new philosophy. This is where the later approach connects with his style in writing philosophy. In saying "Don't think, just look!", Wittgenstein is referring to an approach to language and to an approach to *his* language — and to his *philosophy*. Overcharacterization of Wittgenstein's game metaphor steps into the very trap — the craving for generality — that the later period in his philosophy was conceived to avoid.

Notes

1. Hereafter PI.
2. Avrum Stroll, *Moore and Wittgenstein on Certainty* (Oxford Press, 1994) 80, 89.
3. Hereafter TLP.
4. Including myself in an earlier, unpublished, paper entitled "The Question of Continuity: The Picture Theory in Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy" (Apr. 1997) where I argued for a different conclusion than this paper with regard to the picture theory.
5. Henry Finch, *Wittgenstein - The Later Philosophy* (Humanities Press, 1977) 74.
6. Wittgenstein, TLP (Routledge Press, 1921) Pref.
7. Wittgenstein, TLP rm 4.023.
8. Wittgenstein, TLP rm 2.131.
9. Wittgenstein, TLP rm 2.1511.
10. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books* (Harper Torchbooks, 1958) 13. Hereafter BB.
11. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel* (Basil Blackwell, 1967) rm 302.

12. Kenny, *Wittgenstein* pg 154, 156.
13. Wittgenstein, TLP rm 3.203 and 3.22, respectively.
14. Wittgenstein, PI (Macmillan Publishing, 1953) rm 3.
15. Kenny, *Wittgenstein*, 154.
16. Wittgenstein, BB 37. (my italics)
17. Finch, *Wittgenstein - The Later Philosophy*, 11.
18. Wittgenstein, BB 3.
19. Wittgenstein, BB 10.
20. Wittgenstein, BB 5.
21. Kenny, *Wittgenstein*, 184.
22. Wittgenstein, PI rm 246.
23. Wittgenstein, PI rm 246, 247.
24. Kenny, *Wittgenstein*, 190.
25. Wittgenstein, PI rm 248.
26. Kenny, *Wittgenstein*, 184.
27. Wittgenstein, BB 53.
28. Wittgenstein, PI rm 253.
29. Wittgenstein, PI rm 272.
30. Kenny, *Wittgenstein*, 159.
31. Wittgenstein, TLP rm 3.326.
32. Wittgenstein, BB 69, 65 respectively.
33. Wittgenstein, PI rm 199.
34. Finch, 91.
35. Wittgenstein, BB 17.
36. Wittgenstein, BB 17.
37. Wittgenstein, BB 20.
38. Wittgenstein, BB 25.
39. Wittgenstein, BB 25.
40. Kenny, *Wittgenstein* 171.
41. Stroll, *Moore and Wittgenstein on Certainty*, 140.
42. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (Basil Blackwell, 1969) rm 205. Hereafter OC
43. Rm 2, and pg 3, respectively. Also, rm 10, 11 in the *Brown Book*.
44. Finch, *Wittgenstein - The Later Philosophy* 69.
45. Wittgenstein, BB 17.
46. Wittgenstein, PI rm 297.
47. Kenny, *Wittgenstein* 198.
48. Hilmy, *The Later Wittgenstein*, 98.
49. Kenny, *Wittgenstein*, 162.
50. Waismann, *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle - Conversations Recorded by Friedrich Waismann* (Blackwell, 1979) 202.

51. Hilmy, 98; 100; 102.
52. Wittgenstein, PI rm 65.
53. In BB Wittgenstein wrote: "We see activities, reactions, which are clear cut and transparent." Wittgenstein, BB 17.
54. Wittgenstein, BB 17.
55. Wittgenstein, BB 17.
56. Wittgenstein, BB 17.
57. Kenny, *Wittgenstein* 162.
58. *jibe*
59. Wittgenstein, TLP rm 5.454.
60. Mounce, H.O. *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: An Introduction* (Blackwell, 1981) 65.
61. Wittgenstein, BB 18.
62. Wittgenstein, PI rm 66.

Works Cited

- Brand, Gerd. *Wittgenstein*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979.)
- Finch, Henry Le Roy. *Wittgenstein - The Later Philosophy*. (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1977.)
- Grayling, A.C. *Wittgenstein*. (New York: Oxford Press, 1988.)
- Hilmy, Stephen. *The Later Wittgenstein*. (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987.)
- Kenny, Anthony. *Wittgenstein*. (Suffolk: Penguin Press, 1973.)
- Mounce, H.O. *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: An Introduction*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989.)
- Stroll, Avrum. *Moore and Wittgenstein on Certainty*. (New York: Oxford Press, 1994.)
- Waismann, Friedrich. *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle - Conversations Recorded by Friedrich Waismann*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979.)
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *On Certainty*. Trans. Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969.)
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1958.)
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *The Blue and Brown Books*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958.)
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Trans. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961.)
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Zettel*. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958.)

This is a colophon.

This is a colophon.

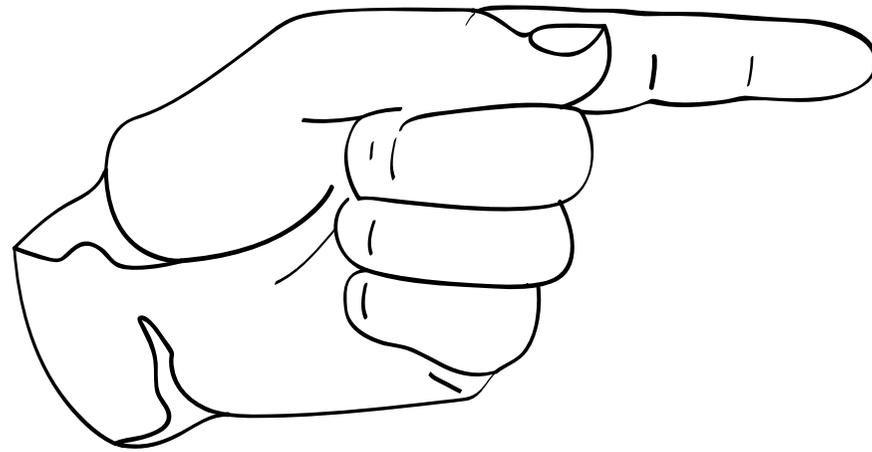
What is a colophon?

Webster's Dictionary offers a few entries for colophon.

This is the first entry:

colophon \ˈkɒləˈfɒn\ n [L, fr. Gk kolophōn summit, finishing touch; perh. akin to L culmen tip] (1774) 1: an inscription placed at the end of a book or manuscript usu. with facts relative to its production; an identifying device used by a printer or a publisher⁴

The text that I am now writing is such an “inscription... with facts relative to the production” of a particular volume — the philosophy journal that you are now reading. Some of the typefaces used to produce this volume will be mentioned (this, for example, is New Clear Era). The names of thinkers and concepts that appeared in the last hundred or so pages of text will reappear in these few pages at the end. This, strictly speaking, will have been a colophon. [But, as you may already guess, one that is aware that “strict speech” often more closely resembles the most mischievous trope than it does ordinary parlance.]



1 Perhaps we can formalize Webster's definition: a colophon is a writing about a particular typography. This formalization seems consistent with how colophon is used. “Colophon” is the name editors and publishers give to that little text in the back of a bound volume that describes the typefaces, layout, and so on. This formalization, though, is not as simple as a simplification. To have a “writing about typography” is to have defined colophon as a “writing about the image of a writing.” It then follows that a colophon is a kind of philology or criticism (that is, “a writing about... a writing”). But it is a particularly surprising kind — one that must pass by way of image to get where it wants to go. So, two questions are posed:

1. What is the image of language?

[It cannot be *only* the shape of letterforms.]

2. Which writings are colophons?

[Certainly not only those with the banner “**COLOPHON**” at the top of the page.]

← That is also a colophon.

2 This second sense of colophon, however, does not have an entry in Webster's (nor in the O E D, nor Robert's). It is likely no more than a simple accident of scholarship that the second sense of colophon often seems

3 to elude definition; one tends to find it used only in the glossaries of somewhat antiquated printer's manuals. In fact, I am only aware of one brief passage where the word is used in a text that is something other than technical. An attempt to rectify this oversight, however, by articulating precisely what the figure on the facing page signifies (that is, if it does signify) belies the simplicity of a dictionary's report on the conventions of its use. In the end, the attempt to provide such an entry will do exactly what one would generally think an entry ought to do — open upon concepts and questions that we have too often concealed from view.

And, yes, in this case they are undeniably philosophical concepts and questions. This is the passage anticipated a paragraph above; the author is the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan:

Descartes apprehends his I think in the enunciation of the I doubt, not in its statement, which still bears all of this knowledge to be put into doubt. Shall I say that Freud makes one more step... when he invites us to integrate in the text of the dream what I shall call the colophon of doubt? — the colophon, in an old text, is that small pointing hand that, in the days when we still had a typography, used to be printed in the margin. The colophon of doubt is part of the text. This indicates that Freud is placing his certainty... only in the constellation of signifiers as they result from the recounting, the commentary, the association, even if they are later retracted (33).

Lacan is describing the design of a conceptual graph. He finds the path traced by Freud’s writings on the unconscious to intercept the path of Descartes’ meditations on doubt, certainty, and the self. Descartes, of course, worried that all his experience of the world was nothing but a dream. In hope of locating an island of solidity in the sea of the world-as-dreamwork, Descartes argues from his doubt — from the belief that there must be a doubter — to secure his confidence that he exists. Lacan’s Freud recasts this exercise; it is by way of doubting, questioning, reinterpreting the surface features of the dreamwork that we may be able to name with confidence where the responsible self lies. For Lacan, the interaction between a body of text and its questioning colophon of doubt parallels the interaction between the dreamly thinking of Descartes’ as-yet-insecure self and that which secures by recognizing the doubting. To anticipate: when a printer notices an error, the colophon of doubt is added to a page, not to spite or threaten a text, but to re-secure the text’s authority by pointing out its moment of failure. And Lacan’s point is that the securing of the self occurs as a similar moment of rupture; Cartesian security comes only at the price of an irreparable fragmentation of who one is.

Lacan stops there. The colophon of doubt is abandoned and does not reappear in his work. [And if I seem to be passing the question of selfhood by, it is only to provide some turning room so we can approach it from another angle.]

4. THE DAYS WHEN WE STILL HAD A...

But I want to broaden Lacan’s metaphor by describing another intersection and another rupture. The relationship that I want to discuss is that between the graphic and the linguistic. It might seem that these are obvious or even surpassed concepts; without doubt, art historians and aestheticians, literary critics and philosophers of language, have produced rich and varied discourses about each. However and with doubt, we only yet have the allusions to a rich understanding of how image and language relate — what quite literally could be called an understanding of typography. When we don’t find the rote dualism of a thesis of the incommensurability of image and language, we often find the most common reaction to any dichotomy — an urge to understand the defining features of one sphere as nothing more than particular manifestations of the other. [An aside: I confess that I am over-generalizing. For example, My idea begins with this:

The colophon (in the dictionary’s sense of “an inscription placed at the end...”) often has the function of a colophon (of doubt).

To begin to grasp what I mean here, it is helpful to take up one of the manifestos of so-called “modernist” typography. A number of such works have been published over the last century that we could choose. An early example is Jan Tschichold’s 1923 *Die Neue Typographie*, published recently in English as *The New Typography*.

This is how Tschichold describes his work:

AN EXPLANATION OF THE SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW TYPOGRAPHY IS THEREFORE AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY FOR ALL WHO WISH TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THE FIELD OF PRINTING. MERELY TO COPY ITS EXTERNAL SHAPES WOULD BE TO CREATE A NEW FORMALISM AS BAD AS THE OLD. WE MUST FREE OURSELVES COMPLETELY FROM THE RIGID PATTERNS OF THE PAST, AND TRAINING IN CALLIGRAPHY OR GRAPHICS ALONE WILL NEVER ACHIEVE THIS. IT WILL COME ONLY FROM A COMPLETE REORIENTATION OF THE ROLE OF TYPOGRAPHY...

everyone from the most austere philosopher to the most sprightly critic in one way or another believes, “There is graphic language — writing.” This much is trivial. From this point, though, one often slips too quickly into the belief that any philosophical interest in writing is exhausted by how writing signifies. Typography is one of those cases when we should remember that sometimes there is more in heaven and earth...]

I set the above passage in a reproduction of Tschichold's favored font (12pt. Aksidenz Grotesk) to highlight an irony implicit in *The New Typography*, and to begin to provide "a fuller account" of what "the New" was. The book has a colophon. In that colophon, Tschichold's editors and designers, who are by no means unsympathetic with his declaration that the history of print culminated in high modernism, describe at length the technical and aesthetic decisions they made so as best to mimic the design of Tschichold's original work. They delve into quite a bit of detail about, for example, how lost typefaces were feigned to produce a sense of historical accuracy, about how tracking and margins were set to imitate those of the original printing, and so on.

The colophon doubly revises Tschichold's text. First, it informs the reader that Tschichold's declaration of a typographical *tabula rasa* was false — the history of print has continued even so far as to make the moment of its declared end recoverable only by an effort of imitation. This first revision alone is not that interesting; the observation that all of culture does not resemble *De Stijl* comes as no surprise.

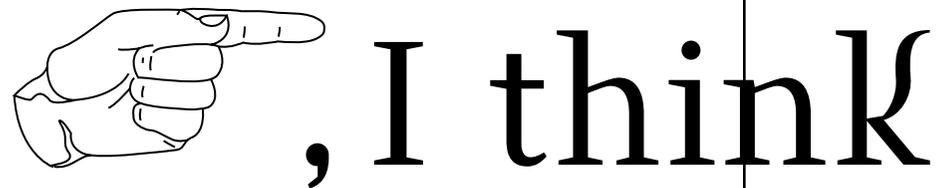
The colophon's second revision is far more surprising. It serves not only as a summary, an abridged edition of what we would have already learned from the passage through Tschichold's book. Instead, it produces the very sense of an origin that it proceeds to deny. It offers a reassuring proscription: "You can reclaim the moment when history was complete by mimicking its means, even though you know that that was never anything more than an illusion." So, the colophon is nostalgic for an event that never was. But this directive has an underbelly. It is not just in spite of, but precisely because there never really was an end or origin of history that there is an urge to imitate what one wishes there might have been.

5. IS PART OF THE TEXT...

Interrogating the colophon of doubt may help clarify the dynamic at issue here. Let's begin with the semiologist's question: What does the colophon of doubt signify? But the question may already imply too much about how signification functions and what qualifies as a signifier. The colophon, though, might not be so simple a signifier as those our courses have trained us to expect. A first option would be to treat the colophon of doubt as signifying the act of doubting:



But what would that entail? If the colophon were nothing more than a icon substituting for the phrase "I doubt," then the colophon would be a usage of synecdoche. Synecdoche, in study of rhetoric, is the act of using the name of one part of the body to invoke and encapsulate the notion of a "greater whole" — synonymy at the expense of scale. So, the colophon of doubt would be the incarnation of a self-complete doubter. We could then offer this new translation of Descartes' famous phrase, "I doubt, I think":



Our attempt to understand the colophon of doubt as the signifier of doubt has backfired. The exchange of what were thought to be synonyms turns out to be far from idle for the content of Descartes' statement. The most famous example of an a priori truth in the history of philosophy is thus brought precariously close to the edge of philosophy's most famous paradox: "This statement is false." A norm of intellectual respect would seem to dictate that, for the moment at least, I should assume the difficulty is mine in interpretation and not Descartes' or Lacan's in formulation.

Perhaps this re-designation is simply the result of misconceiving what the colophon signifies. Another diagram would seem to be called for, one that leaves no worries as to where the colophon directs its attention. This diagram would take the colophon to signify the very text it calls into question:



This is a colophon.
What is a colophon?
Webster's Dictionary offers a few entries for colophon.
This is the first entry:

colophon \ k-uh-f-uhn, -uh-f-uhn, -lohn-uh-mee, -fuh-nah-shuh-geh-puh-ahn to
1. indicate typ(ing) 2. the inscription appended to the end of a book or manuscript, usu. with
facts about its production (usu. inserted by a printer or publisher)

The text that I am now writing is such an "inscription... with facts relative to the production" of a particular volume — the philosophy journal that you are now reading. Some of the typesets used to produce this volume will be mentioned (this, for example, is New Clear Era). The names of thinkers and concepts that appeared in the last hundred or so pages of text will reappear in these few pages at the end. This, strictly speaking, will have been a colophon. [see also my other posts, and the answer that
http://www.oxfordjournals.org/abstract/doi/10.1093/oxfordjournals/oxford-journal-of-philosophy.a010001

1 Perhaps we can formalize Webster's definition: a colophon is a writing about a particular typography. This formalization seems consistent with how colophon is used. "Colophon" is the name editors and publishers give to that little text in the back of a bound volume that describes the typeset/layout, and so on. This formalization, though, is not as simple as a simplification. To have a "writing about typography" is to have defined colophon as a "writing about the image of a writing." It then follows that a colophon is a kind of philology or criticism (that is, "a writing about... a writing"). But it is a particularly surprising kind — one that must pass by way of image to get where it wants to go. So, two questions are posed:

1. What is the image of language?
[I cannot see only the shape of sentences.]
2. Which writings are colophons?
[Certainly not only those with the banner "COLOPHON" at the top]

2 That is also a colophon.
This second sense of colophon, however, does not have an entry in Webster's (nor in the OED, nor Merriam). It is likely no more than a simple accident of scholarship that the second sense of colophon often

to elude definition; one tends to find it used only in the glossaries of somewhat antiquated printer's manuals. In fact, I am only aware of one brief passage where the word is used in a text that is something other than technical. An attempt to rectify this oversight, however, by articulating precisely what the figure on the facing page signifies (that is, if it does signify) belies the simplicity of a dictionary's report on the conventions of [the OED]. In the end, the attempt to provide such an entry will do exactly what one would generally think an entry ought to do — open upon concepts and questions that we have too often concealed from view.

In our attempt to eliminate doubt from the picture, it seems we have inadvertently eliminated the picture of repetition — the graphic incarnation of the text. Its doubting function has been abolished. In its place is now the exposition of a logical identity. To demonstrate:

This is a colophon.
What is a colophon?
Webster's Dictionary offers a few entries for colophon.
This is the first entry:

colophon \ k-uh-f-uhn, -uh-f-uhn, -lohn-uh-mee, -fuh-nah-shuh-geh-puh-ahn to
1. indicate typ(ing) 2. the inscription appended to the end of a book or manuscript, usu. with
facts about its production (usu. inserted by a printer or publisher)

The text that I am now writing is such an "inscription... with facts relative to the production" of a particular volume — the philosophy journal that you are now reading. Some of the typesets used to produce this volume will be mentioned (this, for example, is New Clear Era). The names of thinkers and concepts that appeared in the last hundred or so pages of text will reappear in these few pages at the end. This, strictly speaking, will have been a colophon. [see also my other posts, and the answer that
http://www.oxfordjournals.org/abstract/doi/10.1093/oxfordjournals/oxford-journal-of-philosophy.a010001

1 Perhaps we can formalize Webster's definition: a colophon is a writing about a particular typography. This formalization seems consistent with how colophon is used. "Colophon" is the name editors and publishers give to that little text in the back of a bound volume that describes the typeset/layout, and so on. This formalization, though, is not as simple as a simplification. To have a "writing about typography" is to have defined colophon as a "writing about the image of a writing." It then follows that a colophon is a kind of philology or criticism (that is, "a writing about... a writing"). But it is a particularly surprising kind — one that must pass by way of image to get where it wants to go. So, two questions are posed:

1. What is the image of language?
[I cannot see only the shape of sentences.]
2. Which writings are colophons?
[Certainly not only those with the banner "COLOPHON" at the top]

2 That is also a colophon.
This second sense of colophon, however, does not have an entry in Webster's (nor in the OED, nor Merriam). It is likely no more than a simple accident of scholarship that the second sense of colophon often

This is a colophon.
What is a colophon?
Webster's Dictionary offers a few entries for colophon.
This is the first entry:

colophon \ k-uh-f-uhn, -uh-f-uhn, -lohn-uh-mee, -fuh-nah-shuh-geh-puh-ahn to
1. indicate typ(ing) 2. the inscription appended to the end of a book or manuscript, usu. with
facts about its production (usu. inserted by a printer or publisher)

The text that I am now writing is such an "inscription... with facts relative to the production" of a particular volume — the philosophy journal that you are now reading. Some of the typesets used to produce this volume will be mentioned (this, for example, is New Clear Era). The names of thinkers and concepts that appeared in the last hundred or so pages of text will reappear in these few pages at the end. This, strictly speaking, will have been a colophon. [see also my other posts, and the answer that
http://www.oxfordjournals.org/abstract/doi/10.1093/oxfordjournals/oxford-journal-of-philosophy.a010001

1 Perhaps we can formalize Webster's definition: a colophon is a writing about a particular typography. This formalization seems consistent with how colophon is used. "Colophon" is the name editors and publishers give to that little text in the back of a bound volume that describes the typeset/layout, and so on. This formalization, though, is not as simple as a simplification. To have a "writing about typography" is to have defined colophon as a "writing about the image of a writing." It then follows that a colophon is a kind of philology or criticism (that is, "a writing about... a writing"). But it is a particularly surprising kind — one that must pass by way of image to get where it wants to go. So, two questions are posed:

1. What is the image of language?
[I cannot see only the shape of sentences.]
2. Which writings are colophons?
[Certainly not only those with the banner "COLOPHON" at the top]

2 That is also a colophon.
This second sense of colophon, however, does not have an entry in Webster's (nor in the OED, nor Merriam). It is likely no more than a simple accident of scholarship that the second sense of colophon often

In order to rectify these errors, it will be necessary to describe how the colophon both doubts and channels its doubting toward a certain object — of how it functions as what linguists call an indexical.

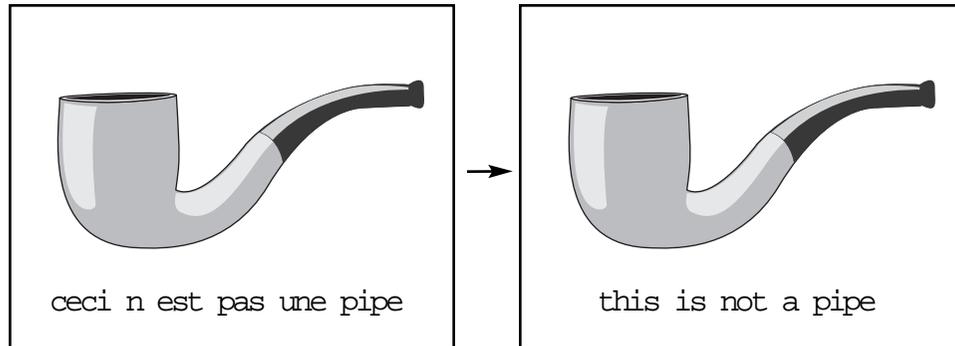
THIS... 6

"This" is an indexical. The way that indication works has come to jeopardize the beliefs shared by many philosophers that a simple and clear harmony between language and the world will inevitably be found. René Magritte will teach us this. (So could a more proper philosopher of language, like Donald Davidson.)

One finds the concept of the indexical most frequently employed by analytic philosophers writing about language. Their idea is that, when fully rooted out, the way that a statement implicitly indexes a certain "this" (that is, an "at this particular time," "at this particular place," and so on) often reveal the statement to be incoherent. An example may be found in the fifth sentence of this text: "The text that I am now writing is the [colophon] of the philosophy journal that you are now reading." Here the difficulty is temporal; the first "now" indexes a time (about 11 AM on a day in late December 1999) that is not the same as the time indexed by the second "now" (what will have been sometime next

year at least). This (or “this”) has thus impeded attempts to formalize theorems of truth or meaning.

The unformalizability of “this” may itself indicate a condition not confined to this linguistic phenomenon. This condition of language is what I’ve been calling image; image has shot through language and language bears the mark of its path. This is a representation of that drawing and its English translation:



A thematic similarity between Magritte’s “Betrayal of Images” and Lacan’s colophon of doubt is immediately apparent. At first glance, both are displays of a tension between language and the image that accompanies it. But Magritte (anachronistically) inverts Lacan’s schema. Where the colophon Lacan describes is an image that doubts the authority of the text in which it has become a participant, Magritte’s painted phrase is a text which doubts the authority of the image (initially, the pipe-shaped lines) in which it has become a participant (now, Magritte’s painting). In short, Magritte’s phrase is a colophon of the kind described by Webster’s.

Michel Foucault writes what is likely the most famous, if often chastised, interpretation of Magritte’s “Betrayal.” Foucault first highlights the ambivalence of the “~~ceci~~” (“this”), demonstrating that it can be taken to refer to the image of the pipe (because it is a representing image, it is not, strictly speaking, a pipe), the words drawn on the canvas (the statement “This is not a pipe” is not a pipe), or the painting as a whole (the painting of a pipe and some text, when taken together, is not a pipe, but a painting).

Foucault’s Magritte wants to split the world of images from the world of things: “Must we say: ‘My God, how simpleminded!’ the statement is perfectly true, since it is quite apparent that the drawing representing the pipe is not the pipe itself” (19). Language — specifically, the language of indication — is the wedge brought in to accomplish the task. But there may be more to “this” than that. Magritte’s “this” is not only ambivalent as to what it signifies or refers, it is ambivalent as whether it is so simply and completely contained within language. Magritte’s

“this” will be the mark left behind when language lost its ability to imitate the world, and instead was condemned to describe it

Now, Foucault is one of those thinkers who takes image and language to be utterly separate domains; he would allow that a word or image might both represent and signify, but would say that ~~that~~ representing and ~~that~~ signifying are two completely isolated activities in which that word or image participates. Hence, for Foucault, the thought that “this” might reach across the boundaries between image and language is a distortion when taken at face value, and permissible only as a charade executed according to the implicit rules of the painter’s game - a “ruse,” Foucault says. Magritte’s painting thus poses a special challenge for Foucault: to provide a theory of how “this” could bind image and language that does not place his belief in the mutual resistance of image and language in jeopardy.

Foucault tries to meet this challenge. He finds in Magritte’s painting the evidence of its history. The image of the pipe and the text that underlies it, he says, were once together, “allied,” in the form of a calligram - written words that adopt the shape of that to which they refer. Foucault writes that *The Betrayal of Images* has survived

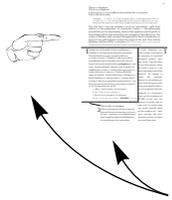
An operation rendered invisible by the simplicity of its result, but which alone can explain the vague uneasiness provoked. The operation is a calligram that Magritte has secretly constructed, then unravelled. Each element of the figure, their reciprocal position, and their relationship derive from this process, annulled as soon as it had been accomplished. Behind the drawing and these words, before anyone has written anything at all, before the formation of the picture (and within it the drawing of the pipe), before the large floating pipe has appeared - we must assume, I believe, that a calligram has formed, and then unravelled. There we have the evidence of failure and its ironic remains (20).

So Foucault is positing a history of Magritte’s painting. The narrative runs something like this:

“Once upon a time, there was a firm alliance of language and image. But at some moment there was a break in this history — [It is far from clear as to when or where Foucault imagines the splitting to have occurred. When Foucault writes about the split, it seems that he wants to be taken saying that it was something more than a decision made and executed by Magritte in the production of *Betrayal*; Foucault wants to inflate the story of this one work and project it onto the history of meaning. To a habitual reader of Foucault, this move is of little surprise. But that reader ought to also recall that Foucault’s ethic of attentiveness to detail is often a method of clarifying exactly where our commitments lie. With Magritte, however, Foucault is ambiguous. Is Foucault thinking the split in the history of meaning to have occurred with Freud, as the Surrealists themselves thought? Or perhaps earlier, with Nietzsche? With Hegel? All the way back to Aristotle? Or, perhaps, not until the time when Foucault and his contemporaries would articulate the notion?] — a break in history when the alliance between image and language ruptured beyond the possibility of repair.”

The story concludes by describing the debris left behind — the “ironic remains” that lay bare *The Betrayal of Images*.

Our difficulties with the colophon of doubt are not all that different from Foucault's with *The Betrayal of Images*; both us and Foucault have been trying to understand how an image and some language could disagree without ever having entered the same conversation. Maybe, then, we could adapt Foucault's solution to our own ends. The colophon, together with the doubted text, would be the remnants of a calligram gone awry. This is one way that calligram could look:



This is a colophon. What is a colophon?
Webster's Dictionary offers a few entries for **colophon**. This is the first entry:
col·o·phon \ˈkɑ-l e-fən\ *n* [L, fr: Gk *kolophōn* summit, finishing touch; perh. Akin to L *culmen* **top**] (1774) 1 : an inscription placed at the end of a book or manuscript usu. with facts relative to its production; an identifying device used by a printer or a publisher The text that I am now writing is such an "inscription with the facts relative to the production" of a particular volume — the philosophy journal that you are now reading. Some of the typefaces used to produce this volume will be mentioned (this, for example, is New Clear Era). The names of thinkers and concepts that appeared in the last hundred or so pages of text will reappear in these few pages at the end. This, strictly speaking, **will have a colophon**. [But, as you may already guess, one that is aware that "strict speech" often more closely resembles the most mischievous trope than it does ordinary parlance.] Perhaps we can formalize WEBSTER's definition: a colophon is a writing about a particular typography. This formalization seems consistent with how COLOPHON is used. **colophon** is the name editors and publishers give to that little text in the back of a bound volume that describes the typefaces, layout, and so on. But this formalization is not as simple as a simplification. To have a "writing about typography" is to have defined **colophon** as a "writing about the image of a writing." It then follows that a colophon is a kind of philology or criticism (that is, "a writing about... a writing"). But it is a particularly surprising kind - one that must pass by way of image to get where it wants to

84
TOI

But in the case of the colophon of doubt, there was a real history of the typography, not just an imagined one, as in Foucault on Magritte (or as in Tschichold's editors on Tschichold). When one sees the colophon of doubt in a printed work, it shows that, at some point in time, an editor came along, noticed an error in the original text and chose to mark the site of that error so as to rectify it for himself and the reader. The colophon of doubt, unlike the unravelled calligram, did not emerge from a void. The wounded text came first, the colophon only in retrospect. This calligram thus cannot account for the colophon's history

THIS 7

"This" is one of a very few moments in language when the gap between the signifier and what it signifies is collapsed. Hegel, for one, used the phrase "the this" to describe primal immersion in the spectacle of the world - image. The moment when one begins to become a self, for Hegel, is precisely the moment when "the this" is lost to history.

We need to think something like Hegel's "this" alongside Foucault's if we want to really understand how the calligram — and the colophon — work. We should ask, what does Foucault think to have been surpassed in the unravelling of the calligram?"

Memories do not easily disappear; even when they seem forgotten, they return in other forms. Often to say that something "is nothing more than a memory" is just a strategy to disavow what one is confronting in the present. Foucault is engaging in the theorist's version of precisely this kind of disavowal.

What Foucault is trying to forget is how "this" is the mark of image's passage into language. By imagining the calligram to have gone awry, thinking "this" to have only ever been a failed attempt Foucault can deny it in the present.

There is a "this" to be found in the present, to be sure. And one that Foucault knows he has to confront. It is written across the surface of Magritte's painting. In as much as "this" marks the collusion of language and image, there is in a sense, a calligram staring sitting right there on the surface of *Betrayal*.

But how does Foucault deal with "this" when confronted by it? By pushing it away. By saying that the "this" that could ambivalentate between image and language has disappeared — "only a memory." And a memory that was never all that powerful; For Foucault, the collusion between image and language was only

ever a shaky "alliance," one already doomed to fail. Except, he says, when it "misleads"

Perhaps we can then offer a final calligram to more fully express what was lost when the colophon of doubt was born:

I AM LANGUAGE SPEAKING. I KNOW THE TRUE NAMES OF THINGS. I SAY WHAT I SHOW WHAT I MEAN WHAT I AM.

"Not a calligram!" you say, "Merely a commonplace passage of text." It certainly has a certain form, though, and not just as a rectangle. The little text unquestionably "references what it represents." If you are not yet convinced, look again at the diagram on page 84. There is more than

8 one calligram to be found. Examine the little text block hanging in the margins of the page, what at one time was one crumb of the “ironic remains” of the colophon’s calligram. You try to read it — perhaps as a game to test your vision, perhaps to check up on the trustworthiness of this essay. You can almost make out the words, but not quite. “Doesn’t matter much,” you think, “I know perfectly well what it says. I’ve seen it before.” [Another aside: You say, “What you’re advoc

Of course, you are right. The little text says what you think it does. And if you’ve read this colophon by the numbers, you have seen it before. But you only know what it says because you know how it looks. The little text indicates the first page of this essay simply by reproducing its image; it says “This!” Maybe the text says it unintelligibly, but the message comes through loud and clear. Even if this colophon did not start out as a calligram, it has become one. [A final aside: Foucault’s *This is Not a Pipe* itself has

Through a twist of scale and the passage of time, some language becomes the image of itself. As the figure of the calligram reappears in the shadows of is ruins, the sort of colophon that you are reading ambivalates as well.

question. It implies that the painting is an artist’s anticipation of one of the central themes of Foucault’s career — the celebration of the power and diversity of signification. If we choose to grant authority to this title, it would seem that even Magritte presents an image only insofar as it can be conceived as a code, a collection of signifiers to be deciphered. Except for one accident. The painting that Foucault’s colophon calls *The Use of Speaking* Magritte himself titled *Forbidden Speech*. And the index finger has obliterated the painting here looks like a naïve Platonism. It’s as if the word *sirène* only to reconstitute it in another form. The image of the pointing finger forms a new *I* to supplant the one that had to be destroyed in the quest for secure meaning. And the finger promises salvation only to thwart that promise. We all know what would happen if the *sirène*’s song were heard clearly. And that is precisely why we want to hear it. To repeat: the image of the pointing finger forms a new *I* to supplant the one that had to be destroyed in the quest for secure meaning — an accurate summary of the colophon as revision of the self. a colophon. Across the last few pages of the book, there are a number of reproductions of Magritte’s works as well as an index naming the title of each, the credits for its reproduction and printing, and so forth. This colophon identifies the title of another painting of Magritte’s as *The Use of Speaking*. This second Magritte shows a simple room, where the word *sirène* (“bell”) has been painted on the floor. In the painting, a giant extended index finger has ruptured through the floor, obliterating part of the text. (Is it a colophon?) That finger points out what the words on the floor once tried to name — a single bell floating in the room’s air. *The Use of Speaking* as the painting’s title is compelling evidence in favor of those features of Foucault’s account that I’ve wanted to call into

11

9

colophon or ‘this’ or whatever had some unique access to ideals which the rest of language lacked.” I say, “Yes, Cratylus, you’re absolutely right. It is Platonic.” Then you’re somewhat proud and somewhat confused as to why I give up so early, so I rephrase: “I’m not talking about Forms, I’m talking about people imagining. What I’m saying is that participating in Cratylism is one step in becoming a self. Let yourself remember that we were all Platonists once. Should it surprise you that it returns?” “When were we Platonists?” you ask. I say, “When our mothers first placed an object in our view an said, ‘This is a...’” Then you leave the café.]

12

Finally, we have the means to understand the colophon of doubt. The colophon of doubt is not a mere image. It does speak, though not in any ordinary way. All the colophon of doubt says is “This!” And it says it so forcefully that it cannot even articulate the word. The colophon of doubt disavows that it speaks. (no wonder we had such difficulty trying to comprehend what it could signify.) It is in order to ensure that its viewer imagine the harmonious page that the colophon must keep mute about its process. To lay bare how it creates the images of security would undermine its task.

Thus, in the tension between the colophon of doubt, we find a compelling and radical revision of how Descartes found himself to exist. This revision does not claim that what Descartes said was false — indeed it was perfectly true — but one where the I who thinks and the one who is are no longer neatly contained, as Descartes hoped they would be, but irrevocably split, like the text and the colophon that doubts it.

10

"The assumption of the rectorate is the commitment to the

Belknap Press

spiritual leadership of this institution of higher learning. The Benjamin, Walter. "The Life of Students" in *Selected Writings*: 1913-1926.

following of teachers and students awakens and grows critique from outside."

strong only from a true and joint rootedness in the as the students' bulwark against "alien" demands. So our concern here must be with inner unity, not

essence of the German university. This essence, or intellectualism — as commonly feared — but is a legitimate criticism, since science is normally adduced

however, gains clarity, rank, and power only when first indifference. To measure student life by the yardstick of this science does not necessarily imply any paralogism

of all and at all times the leaders are themselves led — an idea. The concept of "science" or "scholarly discipline serves primarily to conceal a deep-rooted, bourgeois

led by that unyielding spiritual mission that forces What distinguishes student life is the opposite of that: it is the will to submit to principle, to identify completely with

the fate of the German people to bear the stamp of In distinguishing between specific problems — of science, of politics, or ethics — if the courage to submit is missing overall, its history.

The question to address is that of the conscious unity of student life. This is the starting point for there is no point the future from its deformation in the present by an act of cognition. This must be the exclusive task of criticism.

Whether we do or not, the question must be to focus on the system as a whole. So long as the preconditions needed for this are absent, the only possibility is to liberate

faced: are we, the body of teachers and students stout-hearted will submit. The only way to deal with the historical significance of the student life and the university is

of this "high" school, truly and jointly rooted in the nature of things. This crisis will lead on to the resolution that will overwhelm the craven-hearted and to which the

essence of the German university? Does this manifesto: each of these is as futile as the other. But it casts light on the crisis that hitherto has lain buried in the

essence have genuine strength to stamp our being metaphysical state of history. Only then will it be possible. Such a description is neither a call to arms nor a

(Dasein)? No Doubt, only if we most deeply will this their present existence can be used as a metaphor, as an image of the highest

essence. But who would doubt this? "Self-governance" is the trouble to describe the contemporary significance of students and the university, of the form of

commonly seen as the dominant characteristic of the structure, as with the messianic domain of the French Revolution. It is worth taking

university's essence; it if to be preserved. However—have we customs, and so on), in fact, it eludes them. Rather, the task is to grasp its metaphysical

considered fully what this claim to self-governance demands on us. be captured in terms of the details (the history) of institutions,

the highest school of the German people? Can we even know this absolute, to make it visible and dominant in the present. This condition cannot

without the most constant and unsparing self-examination. historical task is to disclose this immanent state of perfection and make it

Neither an awareness of the present conditions of the university, nor exorciated, and ridiculed ideas and products of the creative mind. The

an acquaintance with its earlier history are enough to guarantee a sufficient deeply rooted in every man in the most endangered,

knowledge of its essence — unless we first delimit what this essence is to be, manifest themselves as formless progressive tendencies, but are

clearly and unsparingly: and having thus delimited it, will it, and in such philosophers. The elements of the ultimate condition do not

willing, assert ourselves."

that have traditionally been found in the utopian images of

Heidegger, Martin. "The Self-Assertion of the German University" in history appears to be concentrated in a single focal point like those

Review of *Metaphysics* Summer 1986.

"The following remarks, in contrast, delineate a particular condition in which

The doubter is forced to admit that he has only the doubting. The I that secures is as an inarticulate figure at the margin that can do nothing more than point at all the thinking that has come before and say "This is what I am." Even this move, though, is darker than an act of minimal confidence. To say

13

14

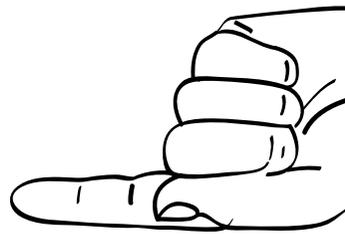
"this is what I am" is also to say "that is no longer me." Thus the colophon has radical implications. Like the colophon, a new image is created—the image of a complete self—to conceal the flaw in the thought that has been left behind. This image is how we

SUB

SCRIB

MIT

SUB



(no checks please; you only pay upon receipt)

ann arbor | mi | 48109 | usa

hall | university of michigan |

of philosophy | 2215 angell

meteorite | (care of) dept.

subscription by mail to:

or send a request for

www.umich.edu/~meteorite

subscribe on-line at

of meteorite, please

to receive back or future

available early 2004:

meteorite number four.

price: \$5.50 for students,

\$6.50 for non-students.

a few copies of issue

no. 1 remain; contact

us to find out how

to secure yours.

meteorite@ is currently seeking submissions

for forthcoming issues.

papers on any topic within the

field of philosophy are con-

sidered for publication, but the

editorial staff is most interested

in those papers that address the

theoretical development of the

twentieth century in novel ways.

to submit: either

- 1) a hard copy of your paper,
- 2) a cover sheet with your name, e-
- mail and mailing address &
- 3) a 3.5" diskette with an elec-
- tronic copy of your paper to:

METEORITE

C/O DEPT. OF PHILOSOPHY

2215 ANGELL HALL

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

ANN ARBOR, MI 48109

USA

or submit your paper as an

attached word processing file

sent to nbremner@umich.edu

NOTE: submissions from all active or

recent students without a doctorate are

eligible for review, but meteorite is

committed to providing a forum for

undergraduate work in each issue, while

we do not require a specific notation

format, complete citation is necessary,

english-language submissions only,

please, meteorite reserves the right to

make necessary design and editorial

changes for publication. we apologize in

advance for the inability to return

submitted papers.

Please send questions to

nbremner@umich.edu

Now, against today's opin-

ion that philosophy is

"exhausted," that culture

should no longer care, and

that we have already seen

the "last metaphysician of

the West" come and go, can

we ask if, tomorrow, our

typographers will be

thought to have been the

first to figure things out?

COLOPHON continued from page 89

believe we can think, even

when we cannot access

what we say. To have a self

is to flee from what one is.

And to have a history of

thought is to disavow

memory.