

On Frege's Legacy in the Later Wittgenstein and Brandom

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ABSTRACT

It is generally accepted that Frege is a powerful logician who created completely original tools for analysis which have become the firm ground on which 20th Century logic and analytical philosophy is built, however indirect his influence might be. His specific attempts to construct the foundations of arithmetic, however, are frequently judged to be ill-conceived and no more nowadays than a curiosity of 19th Century philosophy. In the light of scepticism that there is anything left to share after Wittgenstein's criticism of Frege both in the *Tractatus* and in *Philosophical Investigations*, as expressed in particular by P.M.S. Hacker, it is the aim of this paper, first, to show that there is a strand of philosophical thinking that runs from Kant to Frege to Wittgenstein which is worth exploring and developing: Robert B. Brandom's enterprise of rational pragmatism and inferential semantics is one outstanding example for developing original philosophical thought based on the conviction that Frege's inheritance is very much alive and worthwhile exploring, along with Kant's, Hegel's and Wittgenstein's, among others. The aim of this paper is, secondly, to explore the seemingly divergent routes some aspects of Frege's legacy take when reworked by Wittgenstein and Brandom, and further if and how, respectively, these divergences might be seen, after all, as nothing more than local ramifications of one continuous stream of philosophy.

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KURT WISCHIN

§1 Oil and Water?

THOMAS KUHN DEVELOPED FOR US THE VIEW that scientific knowledge progresses via the construction and demolition of paradigms. Astronomy as described by Ptolemy vs. Kepler, or Combustion as explained by Becher and Stahl vs. Lavoisier, are favourite examples for revolutions science underwent on its course from the Sumerians to Stephen Hawking. When it comes to philosophy, a rather different picture would seem to be appropriate. There is hardly any philosopher at all today who believes that Plato's theory of forms is right or, for example, that Aristotle developed his philosophy out of the essential building blocks from that doctrine. There will be more than one who would argue that Aristotle constructed his world view to a large part in opposition to Plato's¹. However, no one takes this as a motive to deny that Aristotle drew on philosophical notions brought to life by Plato or, for that matter, that all of Western Philosophy is inspired in his work and that much of his thought still is with us today, as Alfred North Whitehead famously asserted². Yet when it comes to Frege and Wittgenstein, matters frequently take on a peculiar look. As might seem well argued for and constitute perhaps the

¹ Aristotle himself: "It would perhaps be quite a good idea to examine the notion of the universal and go through any problems there are in the way it is employed, despite the fact that such an inquiry turns out to be difficult going because those who introduced the Forms are friends. It will presumably be thought better, indeed one's duty, to do away with even what is close to one's heart in order to preserve the truth, especially when one is a philosopher. For one might love both, but it is nevertheless a sacred duty to prefer the truth to one's friends." (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated and edited by Roger Crisp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2000. 1096a), condensed later reportedly by Ammonius to "amicus Plato, magis amica veritas".

² "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato" (Whitehead, Alfred North. *Process and Reality*, p. 39. Free Press, 1979)

mainstream view, P.M.S. Hacker, considered by many —rightly, I think— the pre-eminent interpreter of Wittgenstein's philosophy (Glock & Hyman, 2009, p. vii), begins one of his observations about Frege's influence on Wittgenstein by asserting that “The philosophy of Wittgenstein, both early and late, is propounded to a vast extent in opposition to Frege's. They can no more be mixed than oil and water” (Hacker, 2001b, p. 219), concluding that “Frege, like so many of the greatest of philosophers, such as Plato, Descartes or Spinoza, was a spinner of wonderful webs of illusion. Wittgenstein was the paradigmatic destroyer of philosophical illusion³. Their philosophies can no more fruitfully be put to work together than Lachesis and Atropos” (ibid., p. 241). There can be little doubt that Hacker is right about the fact that Wittgenstein heavily criticized Frege's doctrine in the *Tractatus*. Some of this criticism may be due at least in part to the fact that young Wittgenstein's view of Frege was tainted by misunderstandings he might have inherited from Russell—a point Hacker does not comment on. Many of Wittgenstein's critical remarks in the *Tractatus* are directed at both Frege and Russell, and Hacker makes hardly an effort to separate the critical remarks that apply to both of them from those where he would have done better separating the views of Frege and Russell, because they are too dissimilar to be treated as one.

As for later Wittgenstein, to characterize him and Frege as being “like oil and water” seems to be inspired by the picture of a Kuhnian revolution rather than that of a developing philosophical dialogue. I think it very doubtful that Wittgenstein would be happy about such a picture being applied to his philosophical effort. Hacker concentrates his description both of Frege and Wittgenstein on what separates these thinkers, that is, on the *system* Frege tried to construct in order to prove logicism. Since the later Wittgenstein repudiates theory construction in philosophy, Frege's systematic theories are the wrong place to look for similarities and marks of influence. Hacker thus excludes from the picture he is painting precisely all the features of Frege's philosophy that did influence, in particular, the later Wittgenstein's thinking.

³ Not even in Hacker's view all is destruction though; and as a destroyer he also was preceded by Kant's “critique of dialectical illusion” when the limits of sense are transgressed (Cf. Hacker 2001, p. 34f.). Wittgenstein wasn't the first theoretical “quietist” in philosophy either: there is more than one student of Wittgenstein's who feels reminded of Pyrrho of Elis by aspects of his philosophy; see, e.g., Sluga, Hans, “Wittgenstein and Pyrrhonism”. In: In Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (ed.), *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*. Oxford University Press. pp. 99–117 (2004)

Furthermore, while Hacker is essentially right about Wittgenstein opposing Frege's theories, the picture he is painting of Frege seems to be inspired by an attitude characterized, perhaps, by his (and Baker's) assertion that "How useful Frege's ideas are *for modern philosophical concerns* is something which we can only assess once we have identified correctly what his ideas were, what problems he tried to solve, and what success he had" (Baker & Hacker, 1984, p. 4, my emphasis): I believe this attitude is fixing in advance the paradigm for the investigation too narrowly. This might be right for specific scientific investigations, but doesn't seem to be the right approach when one tries to understand the flow of ideas from century to century.

Oil and water don't mix if one pours them into the same container. I believe the relation between Frege's and Wittgenstein's ideas is not at all like that. It is the picture of the container that is wrong here, as is the one invoking Lachesis and Atropos: Frege was working heavily on constructing a system for the science of arithmetic that is indeed incompatible with the later Wittgenstein's view of the need (or rather the lack of it) for providing foundations of mathematics. But, contrary to what Hacker might seem to be suggesting, Frege had no intentions to spin a tale of how natural language comes to mean something—as Russell and young Wittgenstein set out to do and, say, as Dummett thinks is essential for analytical philosophy—, because he took the workings of natural language for granted, and that it works as it does, as an indispensable (but adaptable) basis for the elaboration of any scientific theory. The first work on Frege's path working out his logicist program, the *Concept Script*, was not compounded repudiating natural language, but rather built on it restricting and adapting its unlimited expressive power to the specific needs of a perspicuous exploration of the sciences of logic and arithmetic⁴. It might be said that in that sense Frege took a much more pragmatic approach than most mainstream analytical philosophers do nowadays. I am convinced that much can be gained from a broader and better balanced investigation into the several things the later Wittgenstein learned from Frege, but which were overlooked for decades by most everybody else.

In this essay I won't dwell much on Hacker's observations about what separates Frege and the later Wittgenstein, and concentrate instead on the features of Frege's view entirely or largely ignored by Hacker's story, and hope to show that precisely these were indeed an important inspiration for Wittgenstein, and not

⁴ It did not occur to Frege that human logic was a hidden description of human thinking, as young Wittgenstein did. Thought for him is objective, but we can fail to grasp it correctly. More on this will follow.

only when elaborating the *Tractatus* but also, and even more so, when dissolving the philosophical problems exacerbated by his early work; and on issues where Wittgenstein's point of view splits radically from some of those which many a contemporary analytical philosopher takes for granted.

Brandom, while being a staunch defender of analytic philosophy –rightly understood–, distinguishes himself by bringing to life several unappreciated characteristics of Frege's philosophy in his pioneering work on rational pragmatism and inferentialist semantics. I shall try to pinpoint some important features Brandom takes from Frege and from later Wittgenstein and try to see how these parts interconnect. I shall do so with the help of Hacker and the summary he provides, mainly in the paper quoted, of the mature Wittgenstein's rejection of Frege's system of logic and its underlying assumptions to see if they might constitute a problem for Brandom's enterprise and its relation to the mature Wittgenstein, respectively. I also venture a guess about the lessons that might be learned from the differences between Wittgenstein's and Brandom's Frege, how these different readings may illuminate our comprehension of the forefather of modern logic and language philosophy, but more importantly, what light these differences may shed on the relationship between the philosophies of Wittgenstein and Brandom, and our own philosophical doings. Imposing the contemporary paradigm when looking at the mighty dead, the approach Hacker seems to be taking, strikes me as too narrow a perspective for the wide look a philosophical investigation should take. I hope to seed some doubt in the reader as to whether today's Analytic Philosophy is indeed the only rightful heir to the philosophies of Frege and Wittgenstein.

§2. Frege and the Augustinian Picture

So much seems to be beyond doubt: Other things being equal, without Frege there would be no Wittgensteinian philosophy. Nobody seriously denies that there are huge differences between Frege's and the later Wittgenstein's philosophies. But one should not be blinded by the importance of these differences to the much more important and basic similarities that unite both thinkers and which sets them apart from other thinkers, notably from the other founding fathers of analytical philosophy, Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore, but also from the thinkers that strongly helped create the mainstream ideas about logic in the 20th Century, for example, David Hilbert, Kurt Gödel, Alfred Tarski, Willard v. O. Quine, Donald Davidson, at times Hilary Putnam, Saul Kripke and their respective followers. Another name to be included in this list would be

Edmund Husserl and the line of thought he inspired, as Dummett had observed in his short book *Origins of Analytical Philosophy*.

While there can be no doubt that the later Wittgenstein held Frege in high esteem, he says preciously little about how his own thinking might have been influenced by the conversations and written exchanges or by studying "the great works" (*Tractatus*) of his predecessor in early analytical philosophy. In order to find concrete traces of Frege's undeniable influence we are largely confined to identifying similar ways of thinking we may detect in Frege and Wittgenstein, but that are not common to other philosophers of their time; a similar difficulty exists, certainly, when trying to pin down the influence Kantian thinking had on Frege, a circumstance that is largely responsible, I think, for overlooking this vital difference in how Frege and Russell approached their respective version of logicism. Hans Sluga (1980) has put much effort (unfortunately with little effect⁵) into trying to change our ideas about the latter relation, while Erich Reck's exploration of the topic (1997, 2002) is a good place to start looking for Fregean influence on the later Wittgenstein. Other investigators that should be mentioned in this context are Gottfried Gabriel, Steven Gerrard, Sanford Shieh, Marco Ruffino, Joan Weiner, Warren Goldfarb, Danielle Macbeth, Thomas Ricketts, Cora Diamond, Ian Proops, Juliet Floyd, Matthew B. Ostrow and James Conant, all contributors to Erich Reck's book about Frege and the early Wittgenstein and, in varying degrees, to the idea that Frege is not the half-baked mathematician and half-baked philosopher Hacker and Baker take him to be and did more to bring about Wittgenstein's philosophy than they are willing to recognize. There are many others⁶ that should be mentioned in this context, like Tyler Burge or Robin Jeshion who offer detailed and sympathetic discussions of Frege's philosophy of logic, but the prevalent view at least in today's Analytic philosophy still is that Frege was the father of predicate calculus whose life work tragically crumbled under the blow of Russell's paradox. I shall draw later in this paper on some of the resources made available by the authors I mentioned above.

⁵ Dummett dismisses Sluga's book as irrelevant historicism which relies way too much on unsystematic thinkers like Lotze, and Baker and Hacker see only unsubstantiated speculation. It is, however, a very inspiring look at Frege's philosophical background which is very helpful to appreciate his philosophical inspiration without which we would be stuck with the prejudices of contemporary analytic philosophy.

⁶ Though a minority, they are too many to mention but a very few. There are several German authors exploring Frege that deserve a special mention because of the impressive thoroughness of their investigative work: besides Gottfried Gabriel, already mentioned, Wolfgang Künne, Lothar Kreiser, Christian Thiel, Werner Stelzner, Wolfgang Kienzler and Günther Patzig come to mind, but there are more and their rank is growing.

For now, let us begin our story about Frege and the later Wittgenstein with the so-called Augustinian picture of language, reproducing a lengthy assertion in Hacker's essay from 1998 (republished in 2001b, as quoted here), in which he speaks of incompatibility, while, what I see here, is basic agreement and Frege's influence on his younger friend, once he broke loose from the representational model of designation that governed his earlier philosophy.

The *Philosophical Investigations* opens with a quotation from the autobiography of St Augustine in which he adumbrates the manner in which he takes himself to have learnt language as a child. From this unselfconscious description, Wittgenstein precipitated a number of theses which, he thought, with sophisticated qualifications and refinements, inform numerous philosophical accounts of the nature of language. For present purposes, the relevant theses are two. First, that (after due logical parsing or analysis) every significant expression that contributes to the determination of the sense of a sentence has a meaning, which is the entity it stands for. So the essential function of words is to stand for a meaning in the context of a sentence. Second, sentences are combinations of words the essential function of which is to describe. These two components of the Augustinian picture constitute a *leitmotif* of the *Philosophical Investigations*, and indeed of much of Wittgenstein's philosophy of mathematics. If one takes for granted this conception of sub-sentential expressions, one will think that the central questions to be asked are not: What is the use of such and such an expression? What is its role? What need does it meet in discourse? – but rather: What kind of entity does it stand for? What is the mechanism whereby it represents the entity it stands for? Does it adequately reflect the essential nature of the meaning it represents? [...]

In *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning*, Gordon Baker and I argued that Wittgenstein, in expounding Augustine's picture of language, had Frege, Russell and the *Tractatus* in his target area. Their philosophies lay within the field of force of these misguided presuppositions, despite the sophisticated overlay of distinctions between surface and depth grammar, between subject/predicate parsing and alternative function/argument forms of decomposition, between sense and meaning, and between unanalysed and fully analysed sentences. (Hacker 2001b, pp. 238–239)

This seems a good starting point to me, because it will allow me to become clear on several points where I believe Hacker and many other analytical philosophers misread Frege in a similar vein. Hacker himself goes on, immediately after the long passage just quoted, to report that Peter Geach found this interpretation perverse, when remembering what Wittgenstein had told him about his view of Frege. But Hacker then simply continues to reconstruct Frege's point as though Wittgenstein in fact had taken him to "succumb to the charms of the Augustinian picture", even though he admits that "Wittgenstein did not even intimate that Frege cleaved to the Augustinian picture in its naive, pre-theoretical form –

indeed, it is not clear that *anyone* has. Certainly Augustine himself did not do so in his philosophical writings.” (ibid, p. 240) So, did Frege rely on the *Urbild*, described by Wittgenstein quoting St. Augustine, when formulating his doctrine? I shall maintain that he did not and that neither Wittgenstein thought he did.

It is rather strange, at first sight⁷, that Hacker should think that Frege is a target of Wittgenstein's criticism here. For one thing, Baker and Hacker became aware well before Dummett (who published a short article reversing his former views in 1993⁸), of several ways —identifying them with great precision— in which fundamental ideas, present in Frege before the 1890s, continued to work in his efforts to prove his version of the Logicism after the changes introduced into his doctrine afterwards, in particular how the principle of context and the primacy of the judgeable content continued to form basic principles of his doctrine. As I see it, this should have told them that Frege was not the simple Platonist Hacker here seems to take him to be. But Hacker also miss-describes Frege's attitude towards natural language in his piece "Frege and the Early Wittgenstein" (Hacker, 2001a) which might go some way to explain why he sets up early Wittgenstein and Frege as a common target of the criticism in *Philosophical Investigations* here.

Here are Hacker's reasons for maintaining that Frege is a target of Wittgenstein's attack on the Augustinian picture of language (I insert markers to separate arguments):

- (i) Of course Frege did not think that "some man" in the sentence "Some man is rich" has a meaning, since it does not form a logically significant unit contributing to the sense of the sentence of which it is a part. But, properly parsed, each significant expression does have a meaning; for example, if parsed "For some x" and "if x is a man, then x is rich", the first expression (called "a second-level concept-word") has as its meaning a second-level function and the second (called "a first-level concept-word") has as its meaning a concept. *Pari passu*, a bound variable in conceptscript does not have a

⁷ I'll attend in the next section some of the reasons Hacker might have to consider Frege a Platonist, independently of the situation described here. They might have to do with the fact that his introduction of singular terms designating logical objects fail and that he did not apply the same strategy to singular terms designating real objects. But Hacker, along with the later Wittgenstein, is of course determined to a wholesale rejection of the entire attempt of introducing logical objects via abstraction and equivalence relations.

⁸ They seem to have been moving in opposite directions — see “An Unsuccessful Dig” and also Dejnožka, Jan (2007). "Dummett's Backward Road to Frege and to Intuitionism". In Randall E. Auxier, ed., *The Philosophy of Michael Dummett*. La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, p. 55-113, August 2007. The Library of Living Philosophers, vol. 31.

- meaning, but the quantifier has a meaning, and the "indicating" variable is to be treated as a feature of the name that has a first-level concept as its meaning.
- (ii) As Frege wrote in the Introduction to *The Basic Laws*, "every wellformed name must have a meaning' (BLA, p. xii), but a complex name may contain signs that indicate but do not have a meaning—namely, variables. A wellformed name is either a proper name that has an object as its meaning, or a concept–word such as 'Fξ' or 'if F, then Gξ' that has a first-level concept as its meaning, or an n-level concept–word that has an n-level function as its meaning, or a sentence that has a truth-value as its meaning, and so forth.
 - (iii) To be sure, an expression has a meaning only in the context of a sentence, and how the sentence is to be parsed into names that stand for meanings depends, in the case of some kinds of sentences, upon our mode of apprehension (*Auffassungsweise*). A sign of conceptscript that does not have a meaning, yet is not part of a name, is the judgement stroke, which 'contains the act of assertion' (BLA i, §6); similarly, the doublestroke of definition has no meaning.
 - (iv) With these provisos (and others), Frege's conception of the functioning of any symbolism for the expression of thoughts perspicuously lies within the force field of the Augustinian protopicture (*Urbild*) (Hacker 2001, pp. 240–241).

Item (i) is surely meant to answer, e.g., Geach's contention: "Was Wittgenstein's critique, which is overtly directed at St. Augustine, tacitly aimed at Frege and his own *Tractatus*? And if so, was the criticism well aimed? I answer 'No' in both cases. [...] It is easy to show that Frege was so far from thinking every word *named* an object (or else, some queer *non*-object, like a function) that he did not ascribe even *Bedeutung* to every expression, whether in ordinary language or in his symbolism." Geach (1998, p. 72). Whatever the merit of Geach's argument, Hacker does not really refute it, and I think it is beside the point in any case. As I hope to make clear later on, all this talk of expressions having a meaning when they are part of an assertion is just meant to assure that the assertion is about something. If it is not, then it cannot be a true or false assertion but an a piece of arbitrary phantasy⁹.

Item (ii) essentially is a complement to (i), meant to show specifically for Frege's formal language that he insists in *Basic Laws* that every name must have a meaning. But the primitive names Frege introduces in *Basic Laws* are truth values.

⁹ Not all language is assertions for Frege, of course. But Frege's formal language is meant to make assertions and their inferential relations perspicuous. He is not interested in constructing a general theory of semantics. It is true, of course, that the later Wittgenstein did not agree with Frege's way to account for representational expressions that occur in assertions. But not because he thought that Frege might have fallen for the Augustinian Picture of Language.

So the point of this observation is to make sure that any assertion is either true or false and that each part contributing to the meaning of the assertion does not fail in its job (See also the discussion below of the context principle and the question of compositionality). It is, of course, true that Frege requires for his basic symbols in the concept script of *The Basic Laws of Arithmetic* to be the names of objects. But these objects are, at least, facts of logic and the names are sentences capable of being asserted without any concrete conceptual content¹⁰. So this requirement amounts to the demand that every sign in Frege's formal language is capable of being true. It does not mean, of course, that these objects, in particular numbers, are *real*, except in some strange sense, as Frege says in *Foundations*. He clearly did not mean that "Nothung" had to die along with the sword it names, as Hacker seems to suggest in the passage quoted, and he clearly did not maintain that an eventual meaning of each name can only be known to us by direct acquaintance, as Russell thought. So why on Earth would Wittgenstein's argument against these characteristics of the Augustinian Picture of Language be directed at Frege? Of course, Frege and the later Wittgenstein see names and logic in general differently—but this difference does not amount to Frege holding a version of the Augustinian picture of language.

Item (iii), as I see it, effectively concedes the point Geach makes but tries to swipe it under the rag and (iv) is an affirmation that, after everything that has been said, comes out of the blue. Hacker hasn't really presented any convincing argument for his claim.

To sum up, Hacker makes it clear that Frege, in any case, was not the simple minded designationalist the Augustinian picture of language would suggest. Still he insists that Frege's sophisticated view, when spelled out in detail, is an elaborate version of it. However, Hacker's argument is not convincing and grossly uncharitable. I can empathise with Peter Geach's reaction. Frege did not try to explain, as did Russell and young Wittgenstein, how language connects to reality—that was something Frege took for granted and he made it clear that doing science depends on the functioning of language in concrete, individual cases. The concept script was designed to avoid tacit assumptions built into everyday language which might mislead us. Everyday assumptions about the way our

¹⁰ This might be a good place to remind the reader that "the True" and "the False" are abbreviations for the circumstance that a sentence is true or false (See "Über Sinn und Bedeutung" p. 34). That is, sentences are names of a specific type of facts: the fact that the thought expressed by the sentence does or does not obtain. And this specific type of fact is all that is of interest to preserve for logic when it progresses from premises to conclusions in order to prove, in this particular case, the basic laws of arithmetic.

language works, but which are capable of misleading us, are also subject to the later Wittgenstein's language philosophy. So this constitutes a trait that unites Frege and the later Wittgenstein and separates him from Russell and young Wittgenstein. A positive account of some of these traits follows in the next sections.

So why are Baker and Hacker so eager in 1984, and again Hacker in 1998/2001 to argue that Frege is a target of *PI* § 1 along with Russell and the *Tractatus*? They come both very close to acknowledging the Kantian and the inferentialist vein in Frege's thinking, which are clear signs that some also important characteristics of the later Wittgenstein's basic assumptions about language could be detected in his work and clearly show that it might have dawned on Wittgenstein, once he escaped Russell's anti-Kantianism, that Frege was right about a lot of things Russell and his former self were wrong about. Hacker concedes that "[t]here can be no doubt that Frege's work in logic greatly influenced Wittgenstein" (Hacker, 2001a, p. 194). That he is not willing to concede that there might be also a shared philosophical outlook might be motivated, in part by the fact that he doesn't take Frege seriously as a philosopher (as a mathematician neither) and in part to his conviction that "[t]he conception of philosophy advocated in the *Investigations* has no precedent, although it is, in a qualified sense, anticipated by the *Tractatus* programme for future philosophy" (Hacker, 2001, p. 20) and the wish to minimize all direct (Kant) or indirect (through Frege) influence that might be seen as bearing a seed of this philosophy without precedent¹¹. Another motive might be that the semantic holism that underlies Kant's, Frege's and the later Wittgenstein's philosophies of language stand in the way of the bottom up semantic theory many analytic philosophers prefer¹² and Hacker takes the later Wittgenstein to be part of this tradition¹³. Hacker seems to wish also to see Wittgenstein's philosophy as being within the general paradigm of his view of Analytic Philosophy, which considers Frege's unprepared ventures into philosophy at best an inappropriate joke. I think, however, that on the first account, the fact that Frege (and Kant) inspired the later Wittgenstein's view of philosophy does not diminish in any way the

¹¹ That Frege adhered to this principle, fully aware of the Kantian precedent, is something Hacker knows perfectly well, of course (Cf. Hacker 2001, p. 198 and footnote 14 there).

¹² See the brief contextualism-compositionalism discussion below. For a more detailed account see Frápolli (2017).

¹³ See for example his book *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-Century Analytic Philosophy*. Cambridge, MA, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell (1996).

originality of his thought; on the second account, Hacker is simply wrong, and much of what he says about Frege being a "half-baked philosopher and a half-baked mathematician" could even more readily apply to Wittgenstein himself.

It is true that the specific way in which Frege tried to account for expressions with representative functions may be seen closer to Brandom's inferentialist semantics than to the later Wittgenstein: we'll explore this relation a bit closer in section 4.

§ 3. On some views shared by Frege and Wittgenstein

It is true that young Wittgenstein's redaction of the propositions that form the *Tractatus* was in the first place largely inspired by taking over ideas from Frege (and Russell), and then built on, by opposing many of them and transforming the sense of most everything else, as Hacker observes¹⁴. It is also true that Frege proposed a system of science based on his (largely tacit) philosophical outlook, drawing conclusions which collide with the later Wittgenstein's philosophy. What should interest us here, however, is the philosophical lessons on which also the later Wittgenstein built and which was rejected or overlooked by later developments in Analytical Philosophy, in large part, it would seem, because of its essentially holistic orientation, taken over from Kant (and overlooked by many a Frege scholar), that stands in the way of the general bottom to top approach to semantic theories at the heart of the classical analytic project, as Brandom would put it.

Hacker's contention that Frege's doctrine falls within the paradigm of the Augustinian Language Picture and, hence, is utterly incompatible with the later Wittgenstein's philosophical outlook is wrong, at least, because his contentions are mistaken on the following topics¹⁵:

¹⁴ In a way, this is remindful of how Frege built his own proposal based on many Kantian ideas, except for opposing his doctrine in the one key notion: logical objects not standing in need of intuition to have meaning; one of the motives Brandom takes over and adapts from Frege but which is absent in the later Wittgenstein's philosophy.

¹⁵ Also Glock (2009, p. 43), even though he calls him a Platonist, seems to think that Frege does *not* fall within the reach of the Augustinian Picture as Hacker asserts: (i) he distinguishes proper names from concept names, (ii) he maintains the context principle, hence "a sentence can be meaningful without every individual word's being associated with a material or mental entity" and (iii) he distinguishes between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*.

- (1) Both Frege and Wittgenstein take natural language for granted and the place to start from. They make no attempt to construct a meaning theory for natural language.
- (2) Both describe the referential capacity of words as a consequence of their role in entire acts of speech, and not the meaning of a complete sentence as the sum of the meanings of their parts (principle of propositional priority, principle of context¹⁶).
- (3) They both reject logical atomism, at least implicitly (differing from Russell and young Wittgenstein).
- (4) Both reject correspondence theories of truth. The truth of one sentence, the fact asserted to obtain, depend on the truth of many other sentences, not on an individual picturing relation between how things are in the world and the signs that stand in for these things.

Erich Reck (1997) suggests, just as Hacker, that Wittgenstein does not see the quote from St. Augustine as an elaborate theory, but as a “picture’ —the Augustinian *picture* of language, and he appeals to it right at the beginning of the text because one of his “main goals in *Philosophical Investigations* is to discredit” it (Reck, 1997, 10). But while it is only a vague picture, it still provides a naive explanation of the relation between language and world. And what is at work here, Reck observes, is an order of explanation:

- 1) We simply assume the existence of a realm of self-identifying objects (thus "object" and "existence" are primitive notions.) And we take tables and chairs, or people, to be paradigmatic examples.
- 2) The meaning of words is then explained in terms of some form of direct reference to such objects (so "reference" is primitive, too.) The simple paradigm for how to establish such reference relations is pointing and labeling, as in the baptism of babies and ships.
- 3) Next, the descriptive use of our words, and the truth/falsity of the sentences involving them, is explained in terms of such meaning, thus in terms of reference; and the objectivity of our judgments is explained in terms of such truth/falsity.
- 4) Finally, some kind of knowledge, complementing steps 1)–3), is implicitly assumed or explicitly postulated. Here the paradigm is "directly observing" things, animals, and people (and thus "knowing" them), as they parade before our eyes (Reck, 1997, p. 9).

¹⁶ For the principle of *composition*, also called sometimes "The Frege Principle", when it is a *consequence* of the principle of *propositional priority*, see below.

One thing that Wittgenstein opposes in his critique of the Augustinian picture is precisely this order of explanation that is still very much here with us today. It is Reck's contention that to question this order of explanation is a Fregean idea. Also Brandom associates such a view at least to the early Frege, and you will find an explicit account of Frege's principle of the priority of propositions in Frápolli (2017). A version of the primacy of judgeable content and thought, respectively, is also found in Baker & Hacker (1984) and in an account of early Wittgenstein's thoughts about Frege, published in the same book, Hacker says: "One of the many advantages of Frege's functional analysis over subject/predicate logic was, [young Wittgenstein] thought, that it both vindicated the idea, anticipated by Kant of the logical primacy of judgements over concepts and provided a new, function—theoretic, rationale for it— while also modifying the concept of a concept" (Hacker, 2001a, p. 198).

I find it very hard to combine the insight, that Frege clearly approves of and applies in his theory construction the Kantian principle of the primacy of judgements—as Hacker clearly thinks that Frege does—with the idea that Frege was a Platonist who thought that the argument–place in a function must mean a thing either in the space–time world of causality or in the virtual world of logical necessity, where "thing" is taken to mean something *prior and independently* of the judgement in which the expression that names the thing occurs. But Hacker seems to be doing precisely that, and this also seems his reason for maintaining that it is Frege who is meant, along with all the others, who are said to have held something like the Augustinian picture of language.

Hacker complains that Frege does not define exactly what an object is—so he does it for him, it seems. In Hacker's formulation, a thing is primarily something that is there in the world (like a chair or a table) and which is then picked out by a name occurring in a sentence, the predicate part of it telling us how to pick out the object in the world of previously and independently existing objects. But this is precisely what Frege avoids. He only insists, in the end, that an assertion must *be about something*; and this insistence is echoed exactly by the mature Wittgenstein's philosophy about intentional expressions. So if Wittgenstein would attack Frege in the § 1 of *PI* for that reason, he would be surprisingly inconsistent.

So what *are* objects for Frege? As Hacker clearly knows, not just the things Augustine talks about, and Frege does not believe that we *learn* the meaning of names in the way Augustine suggests in the passage quoted in § 1 of *PI*. Hacker shouldn't be surprised therefore that Geach thinks it is perverse to insinuate

exactly that. For one thing, "object" is *not* a proper name in Frege's sense; it may only be used to predicate of some thing or other that it is an object. But although Frege uses it in effect as a predicate, it isn't a concept name either: Frege does not accept concepts that are not sharp defined. Frege does define the complementary parts of objects: functions, concepts and relations. So an object is anything that isn't any of these. But the boundaries of a concept cannot be defined by saying what characteristics it does *not* have. However this may be, the context principle tells us that these names have no meaning outside the world of judgements and conceptual content used in inferences, and this connects the question with Kant and the later Wittgenstein, rather than with the picture of Saint Augustin. What a thing is, is determined by how we conceive of it, or as Wittgenstein puts it, it is the grammar that determines what a thing is. Here, the basic attitudes of Frege and the later Wittgenstein are overall in harmony, and echo Kant's view of these matters. The misrepresentation about the role of objects in Frege's theory, along with the misrepresentation of his view of natural language, seem to provide the rationale for Hacker to locate Frege within the target range of Wittgenstein's criticism in § 1 of *Philosophical Investigations*. I am convinced that Wittgenstein knew Frege better than Hacker is thus suggesting.

The main thrust of this section has been to argue that there are many underlying convictions that Frege and the later Wittgenstein share, first impressions notwithstanding. In the next section we shall try to see how these shared beliefs of Frege and Wittgenstein look through the lens of Brandom's pragmatic rationalism and semantical inferentialism.

§ 4. Representing expressions

In this section I shall try to highlight some similarities and differences between the ways in which Frege, Wittgenstein and Brandom, respectively, deal with the aboutness of assertions, a question that is related to Hacker's claim that § 1 of *PI* is directed *inter alia* against Frege and which provides a motive to treat this assertion as more than a curious opinion. We shall see how Brandom explains Frege's treatment of *Eigennamen* for logical objects in normative terms, taking such treatment as a precursor of his own ways to account in great detail for the representational role of singular terms.

One of the most important aspects of Brandom's unifying story, which connects Frege, the later Wittgenstein, and himself, starts with Kant, and in part because it is there that we find for the first time the idea of the logical primacy of judgements over concepts, an idea taken over by Frege and by the later

Wittgenstein¹⁷. The later Wittgenstein, however, did not take over Frege's formalist explication for it. Hacker, being sceptical —as it would seem—of the notion that there might be any ideas worth exploring, running from Frege to Wittgenstein, agrees, as we have seen, with the Kant–Frege connection in this sense¹⁸. But they are at odds about the role meanings play in Frege's theory. While Hacker takes Frege to be a target of Wittgenstein's critique of the Augustinian picture of language since he insists that every expression (contributing to an assertion or otherwise) must have a meaning —one way or other—, Brandom tells us a different story.

Hacker agrees that Frege

argued that a word has a meaning only in the context of a sentence expressing a content of a possible judgement. For the content of judgement is correlative to its inferential powers, and a word contributes to inferences only as a constituent of an expression of a judgeable content or thought. He viewed concepts as arising (*inter alia*) through function–theoretic analysis, given that any expression of the content of a possible judgement can be viewed as splitting up in different ways into argument–expression and function–name (Hacker, 2001a, p. 198).

Brandom's view of the dependence of conceptual content on the role sentences play in inferences is very similar. He begins by observing that Frege is usually "thought of as the father of the contemporary way of working out the representationalist order of explanation" (*MIE* p. 94), though —he immediately observes— such an explanation would be possible, if at all, only of his view after 1890¹⁹. A representationalist view of Frege certainly seems to be shared also by Hacker as we have seen, the passage just quoted nonetheless.

However, while Brandom is a bit ambiguous in *Making It Explicit* about the continuity of inferentialism in Frege's philosophy of logic after 1890, Hacker

¹⁷ As is generally accepted, Wittgenstein took over Frege's context principle both for the *Tractatus* and for his later philosophy, but it is necessary to mention that his motives were radically different in each case.

¹⁸ He rejects Sluga's suggestion, though, that Frege might have been influenced also by the Neo-Kantian movement of his time and received inspiration, for example, from his teacher Hermann Lotze (see Backer and Hacker 1984, p. 7, fn. 11); Kreiser (2001, p. 111) sees Lotze's influence on Frege when it comes to his perception of the role of truth; but he neither confirms nor disconfirms Hans Sluga's and Gottfried Gabriel's contention that Frege very likely had taken over some ideas about logic from Lotze.

¹⁹ It seems to me that Brandom would be more inclined in later works to see Frege more clearly as an inferentialist also after 1890, but since he disregards preservation of truth in favour of preservation of commitments and entitlements, this more relaxed view of Frege is not emphasized.

seems to have no doubt that the conceptual content of sentences continues to be flowing of the inferential role they play in judgements also in Frege's main work, *The Basic Laws of Arithmetic*. He skips in his analysis Frege's best known paper "Über Sinn und Bedeutung", because he thinks that the main intentions of Frege's introduction of the distinction between sense and meaning are not easy to discern there, as might be concluded from the widely popular but misleading translation of "Bedeutung" as "reference". He takes the introduction to *GGA* to leave no doubt that "meaning" is the correct translation of "Bedeutung" in the context of Frege's work —and I totally agree. For Hacker, the change to the viewpoint expressed in *GGA* changes neither Frege's being an inferentialist, nor his adherence to some form of the Augustinian picture of language. For Hacker, it would seem, Frege can be an inferentialist and still believe that the relations between words and the objects they refer to are independent of their role in assertions.

Brandom sees Frege's inferentialism, as stated in the *Begriffsschrift*, thus:

Frege's Kantian insistence on the priority of the propositional, of judgeable contents, is an aspect of his pursuit of the rationalists' inferentialist order of semantic explanation. He embraces Kant's insight that the notion of content must be made intelligible first for judgements, which alone can figure as premises and conclusions of inference, and only then extended to the contents express by fragments of declarative sentences. ... The substitutional strategy that Frege devised for quarrying subsententially expressed contents from sententially expressed ones is of the first importance for carrying out the inferentialist semantic explanatory program (*MIE*, p. 95).

This passage describes at least one aspect where the inferentialism of Hacker's Frege is thought to be much narrower. The importance this passage assigns to Frege's principle of propositional priority and the principle of context, respectively, contrasts starkly with the very limited view Hacker has of them. He sees the context principle not motivated by and grounded on Frege's inferentialism, but by the needs of analysis: What an argument is, the role it plays in an assertion, depends on its place, he reminds us. If we decompose "Cato killed Cato" into different concepts by substituting "Cato" with "ξ", we obtain the concept of Cato being killed, the concept of Cato being a killer, and the concept of suicide, respectively. "So what a word means depends upon its occurrence in a sentential context and upon the manner in which the sentence is analysed into

argument–expression and function–name (Hacker, 2001b, p. 199)²⁰. Now this seems to be a viable illustration of how analysis works but not of the context principle as Brandom understand it; of how "Cato", in this case, depends on the whole sentence for its representational role. "ξ" is no name, but only indicates the argument place for the concept to be complemented. Hacker's account of the context principle, if it is meant to show why Frege insists on it, is perfectly compatible with the idea that names designate their meaning before they enter as arguments into the empty spaces in a concept. It seems difficult to reconcile this reading with Hacker's admission that Kant's principle of the priority of judgements is present in Frege's doctrine.

That Hacker believes that Frege's motivation to hold the context principle grows out only of his preoccupation with analysis seems to be confirmed by a note about the later Wittgenstein's motive to hold on to this principle and making a mistake by crediting Frege for it:

For the later Wittgenstein, the rationale for the context principle is that the sentence (even a one–word sentence) is the minimal move in a language–game. He remarks (*PI* § 49) that this is what Frege meant by the context principle —an observation that obscures Frege's motivation and his function–theoretic inspiration. Naming is not on the same level as describing. In the *Tractatus* he held that a sign fulfils a representational role only in the context of a representing fact. In the *Investigations* he held that a name contributes to *saying something* (i.e. to a move in the language game) only in the context of a sentence or if it is employed as a one–word sentence (Hacker 2001b, p. 204, FN 17).

However, this whole passage seems to be rather a hint that young Wittgenstein failed to grasp Frege's Kantian motivation for the context principle, perhaps under the influence of his own version of logical atomism, and that he later discovered that Frege constructed his system on the basis of a tacit holistic understanding of language and by trusting in the natural hermeneutical capacity of understanding —see how "Über Sinn und Bedeutung" is confident of any competent speaker's capacity to understand the sense of a word.

²⁰ Still more dismissive of the context principle is Kripke in his essay "Frege's Theory of Sense and Reference: Some Exegetical Notes" republished in Kripke, Saul A. *Philosophical Troubles*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (2011), pp. 254–291. He thinks of it as a tool for disambiguating ambiguous names which otherwise have their respective references settled before they can be used to form sentences. To account for the link between the name and its reference, that is, for senses, he proposes to introduce Russell's notion of direct acquaintance into Frege's doctrine. Dummett thought of it at times in a similar manner, until he changed his mind in 1993.

There seems to be another source of what I take to be a misreading of Frege by Hacker, which I already mentioned in the previous section: he wrongly puts Frege and Russell and, somewhat differently, young Wittgenstein in the same boat when it comes to their respective appreciation of the relation between natural languages and the formal language of logic. Frege and Russell "held natural language to be logically imperfect, containing vague and ambiguous expressions or names without reference, and hence, Frege thought, allowing the formation of sentences without a truth-value. They viewed their own notations as logically perfect languages" (Hacker, 2001, p 6). Hacker's description of Frege's attitude towards natural language is inaccurate in several respects²¹. Frege perfectly accepts that sentences, which are not about objects, have sense and he does not maintain that his concept script would be able to guarantee that each sign has a meaning (in his sense), except for the assertions of pure logic, void of concrete conceptual content (See *GGA I* §§ 31, 32). If "Ulysses" is the name of a real person or belongs to mythology is not something logic can decide, but science must make sure that whenever it asserts something about something, that this something is not a fiction. And the later Wittgenstein did not rule out, of course, that some expressions in some language games do play the role of representations.

As I already tried to convince the reader in the previous sections, that it is not the purpose of Frege's *Begriffsschrift* to explain by means of a formal language, designed to gain perspicuity for inferences, how the natural language manages to represent objects. He rather takes for granted that natural language provides the means to talk about the world, and merely attempts to create a pure language of thought²² that does in a logically *perspicuous* way what natural language already does in ways that may include tacit assumptions and hidden steps of reasoning that make our inferences vulnerable to error. The mature Wittgenstein too thought that natural language might mislead us with superficial formal similarities that occult real differences of use. Frege's view of logic is certainly different from the later Wittgenstein's, but a respect for the unquestionable aspects and the power of natural language is something they share.

²¹ Not that Hacker would not know better. I suppose he just uses the quoted assertions as shorthand for the point he currently wants to make. If so, he uses this shorthand in a misleading way, though.

²² Although he lacks the explicit notion of the *social* character of the norms regulating language, Frege still takes thoughts, which are expressed by true sentences, to be facts that obtain. It is not necessary to postulate a Platonic realm for them, much less for the senses of subsentential expressions.

So, if the principle of propositional priority excludes that names have, respectively, a sense and a meaning, prior to and independently of their use in sentences or language games, and if Frege adheres to this principle, as Brandom maintains to be true at least until the 1890s, how —according to Brandom—does he account for the representational role of expressions like proper names? And what is it in such an account that other Frege scholars cannot accept?

Frege, who held that science was possible only through the construction of a system, didn't make any systematic attempt to account for the representational role of proper names in natural languages, since —as I already mentioned several times— he built his language of pure logic by taking a working natural language for granted, and only tried to avoid some of its misleading features to assure transparency for the transitions by logic. But, as Brandom observes, the need to account for the fact that we know (what Frege takes to be) logical objects which we cannot know through experience, creates the need to explain how we pick out particulars by means of representing expressions for language in general without recourse to dead end ideas such as sense data or imagery in our mind²³. Brandom himself has a slightly different motive, though: he strives to account for the ways in which language is able to provide representational expressions without recourse to intuition, not maintaining though, that this is *all* that normally happens in language²⁴.

In chapters 6 and 7 of *MIE* Brandom presents a panoramic account of Frege's basic idea, and hints also at the shortcomings of the detailed theory Frege built on it, which may perhaps provide a partial explanation for the impression, shared by some, that Frege had abandoned the context principle after 1890.

Roughly, Brandom starts his explicating account for representing expressions recurring to Frege's proposal in *Foundations of Arithmetic* to have knowledge of logical objects, in particular numbers, to paint a general picture of how language is capable of having singular terms that function as representations

²³ In *MIE* and *Between Saying and Doing*, Brandom faults Wittgenstein for not providing an account for the representational power of singular terms. In Brandom (2019), contained in this volume, he allows that Wittgenstein might have good reasons to advice against attempts to construct a semantic theory following traditional paradigms which, however, should not be seen as speaking against his own way of developing an inferentialist semantics of *MIE* or the analytical tools of *BSD*.

²⁴ See Brandom's answer to Michael Kremer's essay "Representation or Inference: Must we Choose? Should We?" in Bernhard Weiss & Jeremy Wanderer, ed. *Reading Brandom On Making it Explicit*, London and New York: Routledge. pp.347-352. I do not mean to say that Frege *did* think that his *Begriffsschrift* reflected the way in which proper names obtain there representing power in natural languages. This is just a question he was not concerned with while trying to work out the details of logicism.

of particular objects. Since we are capable of referring to the same object with different expressions ("5", "2+3", "4+1" in the case of a particular number, "the Morning Star", "the Evening Star", "Venus", in the case of a particular celestial object), what allows us to identify the particular thing an assertion is about, is the recognition that these terms are designating the same object with the help of identity statements, such as "2+3 = 5" or "The Morning Star is the Evening Star". We *must* be able to designate an object in at least two different ways in order to recognise it as the same again: "An object that can be referred to in only one way is the sound of one hand clapping" (*MIE* p. 425).

One consequence of his context principle, Frege thought, is what has been called the "Frege principle", or compositionality: Since the meaning of the components of assertions is determined by their role in the sentence, this meaning is *just* their contribution to the conceptual content of the sentence. Wittgenstein rebelled against this idea as well as against the next step in Frege's reasoning: the content of the assertion, then, is composed only of the meaning of its component and its structure – nothing else, as might be, e.g., its real use in a language game. It is important to bear in mind, though, that this "Frege principle", so-called, is a consequence of the principle of propositional priority or the context principle, and is meaningless without it.

What is hard to accept for traditional analytic philosophers about Frege's top-down account for representing expressions is that it is exactly the contrary idea to the bottom-up strategy of semantic theories they prefer. I will not further dwell on this topic. A more detailed account of the controversy might be found, e.g., in Frápolli (2017).

Brandom, following Wittgenstein, acknowledges that Frege's account ultimately fails because it is missing the vital *social* aspect of the norms involved in justifying the recognition of particulars by means of identity statements. The details of Brandom's account are enormously complex and detailed —as should be expected— and I shall not dwell on them. The upshot is that identity statements are based on norms, and are accounted for by the entire analytical and expressivist apparatus that Brandom grows out of these norms by making them explicit, in synergy with the resources provided by inferential semantics. Brandom thus does not rely on compositionality to justify singular terms with representational power. How this account may be compared to what the later Wittgenstein may be seen to get out of Frege will be one of the topics of the next section.

§ 5. Bandom between, beyond, Frege and Wittgenstein

Young Wittgenstein acknowledged that his thoughts were inspired in important ways by the great works of Frege, though many of Frege's thoughts that had him inspired were severely criticised, as Hacker correctly notes. The later Wittgenstein reversed some of this criticism, but with regard to some other aspects his criticism became sharper and he added some new topics to the list of rejected aspects. In Bandom's philosophy, on the other hand, there are some Fregean themes alive, it would seem, that the later Wittgenstein had rejected. In this section we will have a look at some of these topics.

In what follows I shall rely on the philosophical convictions Frege and the later Wittgenstein might be seen as sharing according to the story told by Sluga, Reck, Gabriel and others. On a wide range of topics Bandom's ideas reflect in particular results of the previous investigations by Frege and Wittgenstein. But, of course, neither all of Frege, nor all of Wittgenstein²⁵. One thing that connects Bandom with Wittgenstein, but not with Frege, is the social character of the norms that regulate the language behaviour he is interested in. One other thing that connects him with Frege, but not with the later Wittgenstein, is the exploitation of linguistic form; and he goes beyond both by using these features to make the implicit norms available in explicit form for the language users.

Wittgenstein and Bandom took very different lessons from Frege: while Wittgenstein was pushed by the shortcomings he found in his teacher's philosophy of logic and language—in Bandom's words—to a philosophy of descriptive particularism, theoretical quietism and semantic pessimism, Bandom was inspired, to a constructive undertaking of inferentialist semantics relying on an expressivist theory that makes the norms explicit which underlie human communicative behaviour.

Seen from Wittgenstein's point of view, he accused the philosophers of his time—and this might refer to Frege too—of relying too much on the form of the expressions, instead of concentrating on the role each word plays in the language game. Glock notes rightly, I think, that for Wittgenstein it is the *word* that is used in the language game; of course in the context of what Wittgenstein

²⁵ Doubts have been raised about Bandom's reading of Wittgenstein. For example, McDowell (2019, p. 17), contained in the present volume in a bilingual English–Spanish version, thinks that Bandom's treatment of Wittgenstein in *MIE* might "give currency to a travesty of his predecessors", in particular Wittgenstein. For the purpose of my paper, Bandom's reading of either Wittgenstein or Frege is unproblematic and will not be questioned.

loosely calls a sentence (Glock, 2009, p. 376–377; see *PI* § 43): What may be meant by "meaning" for a large class of cases is the *use* of the *word* in language—that is, in any language game—but not of how it is arrived at through the analysis of sentential expressions. This is also how the use of words in sentences and hence the meaning of the sentences is regulated. What makes sense to say in a sentence, and what not, is regulated by the rules that regulates the word uses: it makes sense to ask where the gold was, but not the pain, before they are in the tooth. Why? Because we can't make sense of the second of these questions – there are no conceptual connections, no inferentially obtained consequences available. We can ask how the pain began, but not, where it was before it began. The structural form or articulation of language sometimes reveals these differences of the rules regulating the use of words and sometimes they hide them. Hence Wittgenstein's warning.

As we have seen, Brandom lauds Frege for identifying the conceptual content of a judgement or proposition with its inferential power, its capacity to serve as a premise or conclusion in a transition from expression to expression that preserves the truth or falsity of each assertion involved. Brandom certainly abandons the idea that it is the *truth* that is preserved in these transitions, and maintains instead that it is entitlements and commitments in the game of asking for and giving reasons, assimilating Frege's reliance on inferences to the later Wittgenstein's understanding of grammar. One might wonder, however, if this is enough to escape Wittgenstein's criticism.

What is at stakes here might be seen to present itself thus: While Wittgenstein treats the verbal aspect of language games as an integral part of a changing human behaviour which boosts the dynamic of behaviour with the help of permanently developing language games (Cf. *Philosophy of Psychology*, § 151), Brandom does appeal to abstract features, for example, to explain how the norms made explicit become available to language users. Brandom's underlying mechanism is different from Frege's, but it is still a transition that relies on some sort of formal analysis and not directly on the use of words in observable human behaviour. For Wittgenstein, the simple language games are modified and amplified, little by little and it is by taking these connections into account that we prevent grammatical misunderstandings (Cf. Tolksdorf, 2008). The point here is, when comparing it to Brandom's strategy, that these modifications are *not* themselves subject to any norm or rules of inference but are completely arbitrary, as it would seem. That is, there are—normally or at least sometimes—no implicit norms available to account for the progress from simpler to more complex language games, and the game of giving and asking for reasons cannot be applied

to this kind of language evolution but depends on agreements that cannot be discursively justified. Brandom has no problem to acknowledge this in principle, but maybe is not always clear about it in practice, as Tolksdorf's observation perhaps suggests.

The problem may also be formulated thus: the (meta)–vocabulary used to make the rules explicit which allow our language games to function, belong to a different language game than the vocabulary of the basic language. What is it that guarantees, for example, that we don't run into a Frege–Geach²⁶ problem with our inferences based on such attempts of making the implicit norms explicit?

Questioned about the need Wittgenstein felt to stay on the rough ground instead of trying to walk on the crystal clarity of hard logic (*PI* § 107), related to the topic raised in the last paragraph, Brandom says in an interview with María José Frápolli:

I think there are various ways in which one can be in contact with the rough ground, that is so important to [Wittgenstein]. Contact is maintained by appropriate philosophical theorising, in my view, if one is introducing vocabulary with the specific expressive task of letting you say explicitly how ground–level expressions are used. ... we keep control of that pragmatic metavocabulary by stipulating how we are using it in language that we take ourselves to understand well enough to do that. And then the expressive role that it plays in making explicit features of the use of ground level vocabulary keeps us in contact with, keeps us controlled by, those practices of using the ground level vocabulary. So it seems to me, we are not unusually in danger of this metalinguistic vocabulary going on holiday, because we have kept explicit control over the use of the new vocabulary by tying it to the use of the vocabulary that it has the expressive job of making explicit (Brandom 2019b, pp. 22–23).

But Brandom acknowledges that not all details have been settled in *MIE* when it comes to keeping in touch with the rough ground. *Between Saying and Doing* might be seen as proposing a complementary project to *MIE* in order to find answers to some of the doubts about the details of the foundations for the inferential relations alluded to. In the Afterword Brandom proposes that an algorithmic expansion of more basic language games is a logic of practical abilities. I think we could see these as an expressivist extension of the abilities that are characteristic of understanding in general, according to Wittgenstein. And just as for Wittgenstein we cannot question all the tacit suppositions at once that

²⁶ See Geach (1965), as well as Fairhurst (2019) in the present number.

underlie our everyday language games, as he tells in particular in *On Certainty*, the logic ability of algorithmic expansion may rely in the end on nothing else but norms, as Brandom maintains, and not on eternal laws of thought and truth, as Frege would claim, an apparent methodological kinship with Frege rather than with Wittgenstein notwithstanding. The expansion of Wittgenstein's point, that understanding is an ability, would consist in the additional ability to learn, starting with a basic vocabulary, how to use a target vocabulary (*BSD* p. 225).

Brandom is fully aware, though, that the analytic method has limits when it comes to account for our understanding of natural language, just as does Frege:

The mathematized mature natural sciences have had great success in achieving what we might call *algebraic* understanding of great swathes of the inanimate natural world. But when the topic is *culture* rather than *nature*, another sort of approach is called for. Here the paradigm of understanding is that exhibited by competent native speakers of natural languages when confronted by everyday utterances expressed in familiar vocabulary. This sort of practical grasp of meanings ... is not in the most fundamental cases a matter of explicit theorizing at all. [...]

A pragmatist line of thought common to the Dewey of *Experience and Nature* and *Art and Experience*, the Heidegger of *Being and Time*, and the Wittgenstein of *Philosophical Investigations* is that there is such a thing as hermeneutic understanding in this sense, it is a genuine and distinctive kind of understanding, in the sense that all other sorts of understanding are parasitic on it and develop out of it. It is the primordial sort of practical discursive know-how: the capacity to engage in an autonomous discursive practice (*BSD*, p. 212).

So far, this seems pretty compatible with what Wittgenstein would allow and argues for²⁷. But Brandom goes on to say that none of this is a good reason to abandon all systematic philosophy and to give up all hope of obtaining an *algebraic* understanding of our linguistic behaviour where it is feasible, staying thus within the tradition of analytic philosophy and making use of its many valuable aspects, while he pleads for giving up on empiricism and naturalism, as

²⁷ "Algorithmic elaboration is a way of *leveraging* practical agreement in the use of one vocabulary into practical agreement in the use of another. It is true that what plays the role of a base vocabulary for one such constructive enterprise may be the target vocabulary whose proper use is algorithmically reconstructed by another. But the point Wittgenstein was after here is that it cannot be algorithmic elaboration all the way down. At some point each such chain must be anchored in practical agreement about what it is and is not correct to do with a vocabulary that is *not* settled by being algorithmically handed off to some prior one" (*BSD*, p. 215).

well as on methodological monism as practiced by "figures ... as diverse as Russell, Ramsey, Carnap, Quine and Fodor" (*BSD*, p. 209).

This might provide at least a partial solution, as far as Brandom is concerned, for Wittgenstein's criticism of a semantic theory inspired by classical analytical philosophy for relying on formal aspects of language instead of looking at the use. In more general terms, there is also the question of Wittgenstein's opposing any attempt of philosophical theorising. And further the question if this is something for Brandom to worry about or how he thinks his own work relates to this aspect of Wittgenstein's philosophy.

Brandom goes to great lengths to clarify his reasons why and in what sense he prefers to see his philosophical work as part of the tradition of analytic philosophy²⁸. He found one important motive in David Lewis' view of philosophy:

He thought that what philosophers should do is lay down a set of premises concerning some topic of interest as clearly as possible, and extract consequences from them as rigorously as possible. Having done that, one should lay down another, perhaps quite different set of premises, and extract consequences from them as rigorously as possible. The point was not in the first instance to endorse the conclusion of any of these chains of reasoning, but to learn our way about in the inferential field they all defined, by tracing many overlapping, intersecting, and diverging paths through the terrain. That is how we would learn what difference it would make, in various contexts, if we were to endorse some claim that figures as a premise in many of the inferences, and what might entitle us to a claim that shows up as many of the inferences. ... The principal aim is not belief, but understanding (*BSD*, p. 225–226).

Between Saying and Doing may be an undertaking more clearly in the tradition of analytic philosophy as, say, *Making it Explicit*, as it strives to provide a pure tool of analysis that is topic neutral as is, in a way, Frege's *Begriffsschrift*. It is a tool that may or may not prove useful to provide answers for open questions in Brandom's project. As for this project, in its elaboration Brandom has accepted and accepts notions, transforms concepts and liquefies borders between Frege and Wittgenstein: the apparent conflicts and contractions are turning out to be

²⁸ In part, I suppose, as an answer to Richard Rorty's question "Why in the world would you want to extend the death throes of analytic philosophy by another decade or two?" and McDowell's even more mischievous contention that he is "perversely transplanting perfectly healthy pragmatist organs into the rotting corpse of analytic philosophy, so as artificially, and not doubt temporarily, to revive it as a kind of Frankenstein monster. (*BSD*, p. 202)

something like the *Aufhebung* of both, and a confluence into a mightier stream of philosophy.

§ 6. Concluding questions

Brandom not only explains his strong motives to insist on a version of philosophy that seeks systematic explanation, he also addresses the motives the later Wittgenstein has for maintaining a theoretical quietism and semantic pessimism. In an article which Robert Brandom (2019b) wrote as a contribution to this monograph, he sees two possible motives for these attitudes, a bad one and a justifiable one, but which—in his view—should not be seen as an obstacle to the construction of semantic theories, but rather as a motivation to construct many such theories in order to overcome the limitations each particular theory will certainly have to reckon with due to the dynamic nature of their subject.

While this might be as Brandom says, I think Wittgenstein's quietism cannot be explained as motivated only by an anti-scientism in philosophy, or only by the semantic nihilism that Brandom describes in his article. The bright line that for Brandom, but not for Wittgenstein, separates linguistic from non-linguistic animals, seems to reveal a deeper scepticism of the latter about the capacity of the human mind. The idling mind broke loose from the practice that keeps it earthbound, is—in his eyes—a sickness that needs cure. The paradox of the lying Theban is just one instance of the mind creating philosophical puzzles when it abuses language to idly turn on itself. Philosophy sets in when the mind creates fantastic entities, not because this is a method admissible for science only, but because this may be a symptom for having been misled by language on holiday. When philosophy does not take care of this danger, it risks becoming a disease. As I read Wittgenstein, he would say that there is no bright line, because humans are no less bound to earth by their practice than other animals and that the linguistic capacity that penetrates all human activity is a motley just as the other practices. Frege is the philosopher of sharp boundaries, but not the later Wittgenstein. Brandom seems to be on Frege's side here not only when it comes to algorithms, but also when it comes to *tertium non datur*. Historically, sharp boundaries tend to fail us when it comes to describing us humans as part of nature²⁹. Brandom certainly is aware of all that and explicitly acknowledges the difference to Wittgenstein I mention (*MIE* p. .

²⁹ Tolksdorf (2008) sees a blind spot in Brandom's overlooking intermediate cases between thermostats and humans, and between a theory based on an algorithmic relation between speech acts and quietism,

Wittgenstein, contrary to declared anti-metaphysicians like Schlick, Carnap and Neurath, who ironically were practical metaphysicians in spite of themselves, was not only convinced that metaphysics is hopeless, he practices a philosophy free of any metaphysical traces.

Not so Brandom: He takes metaphysics, rightly understood, to be "a perfectly reasonable undertaking" if it is "pursued in the open-minded, pluralistic spirit of Lewis, and not in a more small-minded and exclusionary one." (*BSD* p. 228) He concludes this discussion about the prospects of an open-minded metaphysical undertaking saying

The parallel between the metaphysical goal of crafting a regimented universally expressive vocabulary and that of constructing a universal pragmatic metavocabulary, the genus of which these two tasks are species, is invisible if we think of metaphysics exclusively in ontological terms. The wider perspective is available only if we construe it semantically, in terms of relations between vocabularies. So viewed, they show up as complementary, corresponding to elements not only of the dimension defined by the semantic/pragmatic distinction, but also of the objective/subjective dimension: what is talked about and talking about it (*BSD*, p. 231).

In the end, though, while he sees metaphysics as a perfectly reasonable, though quixotic enterprise, he does not practice it. In *MIE* not, because there he is busy setting up normative pragmatism and inferentialist semantics, and in *BSD* not, because there he "is looking for a different kind of metavocabulary. It is at a higher level, making it possible to express crucial features of the *relations* between the dimensions of discursiveness they take as their targets, relations between what is said and what is done" (*loc.cit.*).

So, what of the bright line? What kind of meta-vocabulary does it belong to?

What about Wittgenstein's attitude towards philosophy as a disease calling for a cure in order to restore a sound relation between man and world? Brandom does not buy it:

...the search for such semantic relations among vocabularies and the discursive practices-or-abilities they specify or that deploy them [must not] be motivated by some deep-seated philosophical anxiety or puzzlement, the proper deflating diagnosis of which then exhibits or renders the task of exploring those relations otiose. Simple curiosity, the desire to deepen our understanding, can suffice as much for this sort of philosophical theorizing as for the

according to his reading of *Between Saying and Doing*.

empirical scientific variety. Indeed, as Kuhn has taught us in the latter case, it really does not matter *why* the scientists do what they do, since the institution can ensure that so long as they act professionally, the result will be to extend our knowledge and deepen our understanding. So we might strive to make it be in philosophy — a light and harmless sort of motivational scientism.

Would Wittgenstein buy this answer?

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