



MONASH University

**What Is Critical About Critical Theory?
Ontological Commitments As Cultural Critique
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Abstract

The idea of a critical theory is a dominant force in tertiary education, and has become an integral part of the pursuit of higher knowledge. Competing ideas have thereby become standard bearers in that critical theory acts as a measure of true understanding and/or social rank. The only problem, however, is that many of the distinct – and competing – theories similarly answering to the description raise two related questions – namely, ‘what is a critical theory?’ and what is ‘critical’ about the ‘theory’ (or theories) in question? The idea of a critical theory is not only itself subject to criticism, it also remains open to questioning and contestation. The following research provides an answer by questioning what has traditionally been taken as given. It addresses a perceived lack in the literature regarding the idea’s standard and/or truth-bearing and interrogates the relation between thought and language in (a) critical theory. The thesis explores the problematic connection between criteria and critique, or the distinct ways in which the relation between thought and language directs contested ideas of a critical theory. It does this by taking each’s measure through competing ontological standards of measurement and evaluation. The problem of the criterion and its relation to the question of being therefore becomes integral. The thesis primarily considers the critical theories of Derrida, Lyotard and Habermas via the circle of understanding. Heidegger and Gadamer pave the way towards the idea of a critical theory via hermeneutics’ conception of the circular relation between thought and language. The thesis moves towards Derrida, Lyotard and Habermas to follow the distinct ways in which the circle calls itself into being and/or question. The thesis’s contribution to scholarship is twofold 1) to recall the problematic of hermeneutics as a critical methodology and 2) to act as a stimulus for future research into the question of the direction of fit between thought and language: to what extent do they direct (inform, perform) each other within the circle of understanding? The aim is to rethink the hermeneutical circle via a consideration of the critical theories in question. The approach is performative in that the competing critical theories are interpreted as parts that form a complex whole, and are understood (questioned) with respect to each other. The critical theorists prove to be ‘critical’ in the following way: in prioritising linguistic parts over a complex whole – Derrida (the syntactic), Lyotard (the semantic) and Habermas (the pragmatic) – the corresponding critical theories return us to the circle in conflicting ways. The conflict of interpretations directs our questioning accordingly: in what ways do the related moving parts bring forth and/or hold back the complex whole being questioned? We argue that the critical issue between them is a normative conception of our practical and/or linguistic identities (moral being). The methodological approach to the circle therefore serves a critical function in that it is performed (enabled and directed) through the very idea(s) in question.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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Dedications and Acknowledgements

Dedications

I dedicate this thesis to Tracey Walker, Sarah-Aoun Walker, Ariel Aoun-Walker and Izzy Aoun-Walker. Their gentle nudging and occasional outbursts ensured the thesis was seen to completion. I look forward to the possibility that one of them might end up reading it too.

I also dedicate the thesis to my supervisors Professor Walter Veit and Professor Axel Fliethmann. I thank them for the unwavering support over many years, and for sustaining interest in it despite reading (seemingly) unending text many times over.

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INTRODUCTION : THESIS OVERVIEW

The thesis analyses the works of Derrida, Lyotard and Habermas in a new light by asking a) what is 'critical' about critical theory and b) how may hermeneutic principles be followed to answer our guiding question.

While the idea of a critical theory is traditionally associated with the Frankfurt School, it now encompasses many different – and competing – schools of thought. The recurring theme is the role self-reflective theoretical practice actively plays within cultural and philosophical studies. The thesis focusses on the works of Derrida, Lyotard and Habermas to represent a paradox at the heart of 'critical theory': the paradox arises from a situated reason reflecting on the conditions of its own possibility as well as its ostensible objects of inquiry. The critical theories are self-reflexive (or critical) in that they expressly turn on the question of the limits of their own activities and/or 'contrivances' (conceptual schemes, linguistic manoeuvres, etc.). We observe that the *idea* of a critical theory continues to have a political telos: it is informed by – and tries to transform – the social conditions of reality through questioning. The aim, however, is not to reduce the critical to the self-reflexive. The goal is to show how competing ideas attempt to realise the telos in question and/or potential conflict – by bringing themselves into existence through the ends to which they strive or compete.

During the course of the thesis, we identify distinct ontological standards and commitments. We invariably find ourselves faced with the problem of finding a criterion to critically evaluate the critical theories (or ontological standards) in question. The telos of our self-reflexive approach follows the lead of the hermeneutical circle in that it transforms the conditions of understanding existentially conceived and grounded. The question is therefore not just what constitutes the 'critical' in critical theory but in what way may competing ideas of a critical theory of social existence itself be trans/formed (criticised) in turn?

The hermeneutical paradigm is employed throughout the thesis as a mode of self-reference and reflection. We not only reflect on our own approach to the guiding question, we answer by referring to the way the critical theories turn back on themselves and/or towards each other. We therefore follow a performative approach informed by Heidegger's and Gadamer's conception of the hermeneutical circle. The act of self-reference occurs through the actions of a circle invariably calling itself (back) into question. The problem of finding a criterion is thereby resolved

(approached) insofar as the circle becomes its own standard bearer and/or may provide conflicting standard for evaluation.

Chapter 1 introduces the concepts relevant for approaching the *idea of a critical theory* within the *circle of understanding*. These include a) the problem of the criterion and its relation to the question of being b) the relation between ontological standards and ontological commitments c) the relation between criteria and critique and d) the relation between interpretation and understanding. While we might be referring to distinct *objects of thought*, they will nonetheless *perform* the same function throughout the dissertation. Specifically, it is part of the thesis statement that there is no getting around the problem of chasing elusive objects of thought within the circle of understanding and these objects necessarily recur as *tropes* across distinct contexts of interpretation. Chapter 1 follows the circle's lead by determining equivalences of meaning via an equivalence of function in context(s) – and such a *functional equivalence* involves a translation of possible meaning (performing the act of uniform movement between relevant – if immeasurable – contexts of interpretation). The first chapter is divided in three related parts. In the first part, we raise the *problem of the criterion of truth* within the context of Plato's *paradox of inquiry*. We note that the paradox calls into question the possibility and/or necessity of rational inquiry. We observe that the paradox invariably raises the question of an inquiry's *ontological commitments*, and the problem is trying to find an ontological criterion that doesn't presuppose the very ontological standard (or truth conditions) in question. In the second part, we observe that the idea of a critical theory has become an ontological standard for measuring (determining) the relation between meaning and truth via the "linguistic turn"¹ – or "fundamental gambit as to method"² – when approaching the relation between language and reality. Our selection of three critical theorists follows the distinct ways each turns towards language as an answer to the question of being. In ontologically committing to distinct parts over a complex whole – the syntactic (Derrida), the semantic (Lyotard) and the pragmatic (Habermas) respectively – the idea of a critical theory finds itself moving within an inescapable circle. The competing ideas of a critical theory thereby gives rise to the problem of navigating conflicting ontological standards and commitments. We argue that if there is no ontologically

¹ Bergmann, Gustav. "Strawson's Ontology" *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 57, No. 19, 1960, p.607. The phrase *linguistic turn* was coined by Bergmann in a review of P.F. Strawson's *Individuals*. According to Bergmann, the linguistic turn is an attempt to get around the problem of how to best approach the question of the relation between language and world. As the title of his review indicates, this is an ontological question in that the turn to language attempts to study what (truly) exists via the existence of language – namely, which way do we turn?

² *ibid.* The methodological gambit is whether it is possible to truthfully talk about an objective world through the concepts of language. Bergmann conceives the gambit in terms of disagreements about which way linguistic philosophers should turn: towards language's attempt to make true statements about an objective world or towards language's capacity to transform objects in a meaningful world in different ways (worldmaking).

neutral way of resolving the problem of the criterion, the requirement is to find a standard of measurement to compare and evaluate competing ontological commitments (standards and/or objects). In the third part, we situate this requirement within the ontological structure of the circle of understanding invariably calling itself (back) into question. We thereby direct ourselves towards the question of the ontological status of interpreted objects within the given critical theory. While we might follow Heidegger's lead by providing an *existential ground* for the hermeneutical circle, we also go to great lengths to distinguish ourselves from the hermeneutics of Heidegger's own situation and/or questioning. Nonetheless, Heidegger paves the way to our guiding question in the following way: the circle turns on the problem of its own normativity, and any normative stance taken toward (human) beings necessarily operates in the fore-structure of understanding either standing its (existential) ground or providing grounds for further direction and movement.

Chapter 2 introduces Gadamer's conception of the circle of understanding. The goal is twofold: to follow the pathways opened up by Gadamer's turn towards language, and to overturn Gadamer's concept of the linguisticity of understanding as a necessary precondition for critical reason. We observe that Gadamer's questioning proceeds from the following ontological standard: *to be is to be understood (differently) within a universal horizon of Being*. Gadamer approaches the problem of the criterion – and its relation to the question of being – via the linguistic structure and/or events of understanding. The beings in question turn on the way questioning is itself directed and moves through language. Gadamer's attempt to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place directs our inquiry in the following way: it provides a horizon in which to situate and mobilise the possibility of a critical theory. The Gadamer chapter is divided into two main parts – an elucidation of the concepts relevant to our guiding question, and a critical discussion seeking to redirect and/or repurpose them. These concepts include: the role of prejudices in the historicity of understanding, the proffering of a criterion of correct understanding, the dialectic of question and answer, and the hermeneutical circle's orientation towards self-correction and/or direction within language. Given these concepts, Gadamer conceives language as a universal horizon for a hermeneutic ontology, where objects of interpretation remain open to questioning and reinterpretation. Our critical discussion calls into question the rationality – and hermeneutics – of Gadamer's questioning. The goal is to bridge the presupposed divide between truth and method and allow for the possibility of movement between them. We observe that there are three main difficulties within Gadamer's conception of the circle and its relation to critical reason. The first is that the ground on which reason is said to move cannot direct rational criticisms in a truth-evaluative way, permitting competing interpretations to be equally true (or false) without contradiction. We provide an overview of conflicting interpretations of Gadamer's own approach to the circle to illustrate the

way the problem of the criterion re-turns there. The second difficulty is that Gadamer's understanding of the dialectic of question and answer fails to adequately clarify the conditions of its existence (occurrence) and needs to be corrected (directed) accordingly. We observe that the circle's movements are existentially grounded in a dialectic between knowledge and power and conflicting interpretations have their basis in the corresponding conditions of a (potentially) questionable social reality. The third difficulty is Gadamer's conception of prejudice as truth evaluative and/or normatively constraining. Gadamer's attempt to distinguish between true and false prejudices is falsified by his own failure to bridge the ontological divide between truth and method. Gadamer cannot provide a rational reason to determine the rationality of our reasons, and the problem is whether it is intelligible to invoke a truth evaluative understanding of our being-in-the-world in the first place. If prejudices constitute the historical reality of our being, the problem is finding a way to arbitrate between them in the circle of understanding. We introduce the distinction between motivating and justifying reasons to direct the critical question of the rationality of reason, permitting us to distinguish and/or move between (overturn) the prejudices in question. Such a linguistic turn calls into being and/or question the possibility of a critical theory, however contested or arbitrary.

Chapter 3 introduces Derrida's deconstruction of the circle of understanding. The objective is two-fold: to find our way (back) to language via Derrida's differential ontology and differentiate Derrida's ontological commitments there. Chapter 3 is also the first of two chapters discussing Derrida's quasi-transcendental approach to language: parts of our critical discussion are displaced into Chapter 6 with a critical discussion of Habermas (where our analysis comes full circle). We observe that Derrida proceeds from the following ontological standard: *to be is not to be on a horizontal axis or plane of non-Being*. Specifically, Derrida's questioning ontologically commits itself to *syntactical relations across contexts of interpretation*, and our guiding question is: to what extent is it possible to follow (understand) a differential ontology in a constant state of flux and transition? The problem of the criterion – and its relation to the question of being – occurs by way of the concept of the *undecidability of meaning* (the impossibility of deciding and/or moving contexts either way). Derrida understands his movements within language to be primarily directed towards interpretations of interpretations, and deconstructs contexts of interpretation in accordance with the problematic of the performative. That is to say, deconstruction is not only predicated upon a description of the reality in question, it purports to change the conditions of the reality being described. Derrida is thereby critical of the very idea of a critical theory in that it cannot meaningfully refer to the reality in question. Derrida is consistent in his approach insofar as his own interpretations may be deconstructed in turn, and deconstruction's conditions of possibility themselves remain undecidable (impossible, indecisive). Whilst he recognises that the term deconstruction has been domesticated by

academic institutions and popular culture alike, deconstruction remains directed by (or presupposes) the problem of the criterion and its relation to the question of the meaning of being. Consequently, Derrida's questioning calls into question the possibility and/or necessity of any methodological approach to contexts of interpretation. We witness Derrida 'perform' the limits of following such a contextual approach on one of Plato's text, and note the way a given linguistic construction invariably deconstructs its own ontological standards and commitments. Our critical discussion goes on to question Derrida's attempt to contextualize the relation between thought and language, and determines the extent to which they presuppose (or perform) each other within the circle in which deconstruction moves and is directed. Following Derrida's lead, we locate this question within the problematic of the performative and ask: is Derrida caught in a performative contradiction, or is it the circle of understanding that performs (enacts, directs,) the contradiction within language? The question of deconstruction's truth-value – whether it is possible to ground deconstruction in an object of rational thought and/or can make a meaningful difference to the objects caught moving within language – directs our overall movements. The question of its truth-value goes to the very heart of the 'object' (purpose, reality) of deconstruction itself. If we are to ontologically commit to 'beings' that remain in a state of flux or transition, what are we to make of our moral being – or normative stance towards objects of thought that include ourselves – in the first place? We argue that Derrida's attempt to displace the logical space of reasons is only possible within the historicity of understanding governing such interpretations of interpretations (via an ontological standard that may be meaningfully understood as a prescribed measure or norm). We further argue that an understanding of the undecidability of meaning is predicated upon conscious decision making that contradictorily commits to – seizes on and follows – a transitional and/or fluctuating ontology. The question of deconstruction's 'effectiveness' therefore turns on a critical activity made possible under historical conditions and rulings, and so moves within a linguistically constructed intentional horizon that remains open to questioning and reinterpretation.

Chapter 4 introduces Lyotard's semantic conception of (potentially) conflicting rules of understanding. Lyotard's movements within the circle of understanding are primarily directed towards the paradox of rule following, and we observe the way Lyotard (paradoxically) follows the rules of language there. The paradox is that Lyotard ontologically commits to a situation that pulls our understanding of interpreted objects in two different directions at once. Lyotard's inquiry insists on *following prescribed rules* as a standard for determining the nature of being, and he *prescribes going against the rules* in order to call into question such ontological standards and determinations. Lyotard provides a critical theory insofar as a crisis of criteria informs his approach to the limits of representing the very reality in question. Lyotard attempts to present what is not presented under the rules of language, and his mode of presentation

prescribes a conflict between rulings across contexts of interpretation. Lyotard questioning thereby turns on a semantic-referential axis that remains subject to reversals in direction and strategic withdrawals: it prescribes an understanding of the boundless or immeasurable via the performativity of the very language in question. The chapter's objective follows Lyotard's lead accordingly: it endeavours to find its way (back) to language by circling around the following question: what is the rule for following rules within the labyrinth of language? Unlike Lyotard, however, we endeavour to establish a commensurability of reality to concept so as to secure the sense of referents brought into conflict and/or question. We observe Lyotard proceeding from the following ontological standard: *to be is to be ruled (out) or overruled in contexts of action*. The concepts of language games and phrase regimes become integral here: the paradox is determining the rule for following rules when different semantic fields actively come into conflict over their respective borders and conceptual terrains. Lyotard introduces the notion of a differend to problematize the way distinct rulings may come into being and/or conflict, and his approach is critical insofar as it prioritises the role of transporting feelings. We thereby find ourselves moved to question the ontological status of conflicting standards and commitments. Our critical discussion questions Lyotard's conception of language as rule-governed and conflicted, and we follow his lead to direct us towards the reality in question. We find ourselves moving towards differends within Lyotard's own thinking, and resolve the conflict by way of the performativity of the circle of understanding. We argue that the existence of the differend turns on a performative contradiction in that it requires us to rule out or overrule an irresolvable conflict between rule governed contexts of action. Lyotard's (over)ruling recontextualizes the conflict by insisting upon an overriding context of interpretation. The critical discussion enacts and directs this performative contradiction in two main parts. In the first part, we follow the paradox of rule following by determining three conditions of possibility making such a paradox (or following) possible. In the second part, we determine a public criterion of moral correctness to normatively constrain and direct a transporting feeling's movements within the circle. We thereby argue that it is the distinction between motivating and justifying reasons that returns us to rules in (potential) question or conflict.

Chapter 5 introduces Habermas's reconstruction of the circle of understanding. It is primarily directed towards Habermas's rational reconstruction of a pre-theoretical rule consciousness, and the role rules pragmatically play within the language game of argumentation. The chapter's objective is to navigate the circle being rationally reconstructed and turns on the question: to what extent may the circle of understanding be followed (rule governed, directed, etc.)? Chapter 5 is also the first of two chapters discussing Habermas's quasi-transcendental approach to language: it acts to bring Habermas into irresolvable conflict with Derrida's quasi-transcendental approach to language in Chapter 6 (where our analysis comes full circle by way of a differend

between a deconstruction and reconstruction). We follow Habermas's methodological approach to the circle, and move towards the possibility of reaching mutual understanding and agreement via criticizable validity claims. Habermas's universal pragmatics emphasises the performative status of rule following across contexts of interpretation, and directs the circle towards a critical theory of communicative action. Habermas argues that language users are already ontologically committed to tacit rules making their linguistic interactions possible and/or necessary in the first place. Furthermore, rule-following may also potentially bring these linguistic interactions into question and/or conflict. Consequently, it is rules themselves which give rise to the possibility of a critical theory in that they direct communicative acts (back) towards the question of their own normativity. Habermas's attempt to identify and reconstruct universal conditions of mutual understanding thereby proceeds from the following ontological standard: to be is to be directed towards (potential conflicting and resolvable) rulings in action contexts. The concepts critical to our analysis include: universal conditions of understanding, the performative attitude, criticizable validity claims and rationally motivated agreements. Our critical discussion calls into question the validity of Habermas's rational reconstruction by arguing that it is neither rationally motivated or directed. The paradox of rule following becomes integral here and requires us to ask: to what extent – or by what rule – may courses of action be made to accord or conflict with the rules in question? Put another way: if rules are potentially arbitrary – without a rational ground to stand or move on – to what extent is it rational to follow them and how do we arbitrate between conflicting action contexts? We also introduce a distinction between rational motivation and motivated rationality: the distinction turns the performative status of mutual understanding and agreement on its head in that the pursuit of a universal(izable) truth remains relative to (or conditional upon) the hermeneutics of given situations (the very action contexts in question). We thereby observe that the performative attitude rationally motivating linguistic actors to reach mutual understanding and agreement is performatively contradictory in re-turn.

Chapter 6 brings our understanding full circle. The question of which way to turn – towards Derrida's deconstruction of understanding or Habermas's reconstruction of understanding – occurs by way of Lyotard's conflicting rules of understanding (differend). Specifically, the linguistic turn as a fundamental gambit regarding methodological approach takes place as an irresolvable conflict over how to follow (understand, go in the same direction as) conflicting rules put forward about what is possible or permissible in the circle. The problem, then, is giving expression to competing ontological standards and commitments (interpretations) within the circle enabling such contradictory directives and movements. Given that Habermas and Derrida follow the lead of the 'quasi-transcendental' in different ways, we turn (back) towards them through the very ontological pathways – standards, commitments – in question and/or conflict. We argue that these conflicting interpretations form a complex whole and should be understood

(interpreted, approached) with respect to each other. The chapter's aim is therefore twofold: to follow the ways in which the circle of understanding itself performs conflicting interpretations of its own movements and directives, and to reinterpret (critically evaluate) the interpreted 'objects' of the one critical theory within the context of the other critical theory. Approached another way: *we reconstruct Derrida*, and *deconstruct Habermas* via Lyotard's transporting notion of the differend, which enables passage between distinct parts (pathways, rulings) taken as a complex whole. While their interpretations of the circle might remain at cross purposes, they direct us through the same intersection anyway – ontological commitment as cultural critique. Given the competing ontological commitments, we thereby find ourselves turning towards the problem of critically evaluating the ontological standards in question, and approach the intersection cutting across them via the route of the quasi transcendental. The question before us, then, is the way we may move through intersecting pathways and turn back around. We attempt this maneuver by clarifying the conditions in which such conflicting interpretations may take place and/or move across each other. The aim is *not* to *interpret away* Habermas's reconstruction or Derrida's deconstruction: it is rather to better understand (follow, contextualize) their overall movements via the conflict of interpretations. The chapter is divided into two main parts. We begin by deconstructing Habermas, and argue that such a deconstruction becomes possible within the context of Habermas's own presuppositions. We problematize Habermas's attempt to ground validity within meaning, and question the limits of meaningfully determining conditions of possibility within given contexts of interpretation (i.e., can establish the necessary framework for the possible appearance of meaningful objects across contexts). We also deconstruct Habermas's corresponding notion of contexts of relevance, and ask whether it is possible to determine the contextual relevance of the very objects being interpreted and/or questioned (linguistically constructed) as such. The performative status of interpretations is problematized in turn, and we question whether the pursuit of an objective (context independent, unconditional) truth can ever be relevant (meaningful, possible). Our reconstruction of Derrida contextualizes the relevance of given deconstructive interpretations. We observe the way deconstruction necessarily defers to a prior identification of relevant elements – or (con)texts – to linguistically construct and put forward its own arguments. We go on to identify the conditions of possibility for deciding (resolving, settling on) instances of undecidable meaning and/or relevant conditions of impossibility. We argue that the performative attitude of Derrida's interpretations must occupy and move through the logical space of reasons if he is to displace the reasons put forth or held back across contexts of interpretation. Derrida's attempt to rise above the space of reasons is therefore similarly conditional upon the hermeneutic situation in question: his interpretations of interpretations must be stabilized within a context of relevance if they are to capture a transcendent moment (or movement) of unconditional truth found within critical reason itself. We reconstruct Derrida's argument with Plato's context(s) accordingly and claim validity for it

under universal validity conditions and corresponding world relations. In this way, Derrida's rule governed linguistic interactions are oriented towards all action contexts and remain open to questioning and criticism.

Chapter 1: The problem of the criterion, and its relation to the question of being.

Aim and objectives: The aim of this chapter is to introduce the problem of the criterion and its relation to the question of being. The objective is to foreground related themes and questions traced back to the philosophical discourse of antiquity. Our objective is not so much to provide an intricate argument but to thematically explore related problems and questions via a historical overview. We shall argue that variants of these problems continue to occur in the philosophical discourse of (post)modernity. We do this in order to orient our thinking towards the question of language and its role within 'critical theory'. Our approach occurs in three related ways. Firstly, we raise the problem of reason critically questioning its presuppositions, and explore the relationship between criteria and critique in determining the question of reason's rationality. We initiate this movement within the context of Plato's *paradox of inquiry*, and highlight concepts that will remain 'critical' to our own questioning – namely, the question of being and the problem of critically evaluating competing ontological commitments without presupposing the ontological standards in question. We observe that any attempt to be 'critical' presupposes the beings in question and remains answerable for its mode of being (criteria of relevance or adequacy). In the second part, we note that there are many different theories similarly answering to the description of a critical theory, and remain faced with the problem of meaningfully answering our own question. The problem is 'critical' in that the competing theories emerge within the cultural relations and practices critiqued: the question is determining their status – cultural relevance and/or adequacy – as a critical theory. Specifically, how should culturally situated thinkers relate to (critically question) competing presuppositions and commitments? We delimit our questioning by turning towards the axis on which the problem of the criterion re-turns – namely, via the way thought and language turn (back) towards each other within the critical theories in question. In the third part, we pave the way towards language by directing ourselves towards Heidegger's conception of the relation between the *question of being* and the *being of the question*. Following Heidegger's lead, the problem is the way an understanding of being belongs to the (human) being called into question. Heidegger calls this mode of being our being-there, and he argues that any given movement within the circle of beings must be questioned in turn. Although Heidegger orients our approach, we move beyond his interpretation of the circle of understanding. Heidegger not only calls into question the idea of a critique, his approach also highlights the limits of interrogating the very beings – and presuppositions – in question. Heidegger's attempt to move past (or square) the circle is questioned in turn, and we return to the problem of following the circle's directives and movements in a more critical (questionable) way.

Meno: And how will you inquire, Socrates, into that which you do not know? What will you put forth as the subject of inquiry? And if you do find what you want, how will you know that this is the thing which you did not know?

Socrates: I know, Meno, what you mean; but see what a tiresome dispute you are introducing. You argue that a man cannot inquire either about that which he knows, or about that which he does not know; for if he knows, he has no need to inquire; and if not, he cannot; for he does not know the very subject about which he is to inquire.³

Chasing our tale.

It is possible to ask a question as *if* it was already intelligible, and attempt to answer this question in accordance with this professed intelligibility. Take *our* question. In asking 'what is critical about critical theory', the question simultaneously puts forth a subject of inquiry and presupposes the possibility of answering it. Our question thereby seeks to determine a context for its meaningfulness and/or truthfulness. Such a determination, however, becomes questionable in turn: we risk begging the question in asking our question. Specifically, our question appears to presuppose the very concepts called into (a) question. Consequently, "the problem of beginning is the beginning of the problem,"⁴ and the requirement is to find our way towards the question of an *existing conceptuality's*⁵ *mode of being*. While it *is* possible to begin without avowed qualifications or commitments, presupposing the concepts in (our) question cannot occur without question. We need to proceed carefully here. As will be seen, *presuppositions* remain fundamental to the occurrence of meaning and truth and make questioning possible in the first place.⁶ An inquiry can only occur within "the context of presuppositions"⁷, and *the question* is determining the limits of the background knowledge enabling it as a question.

Perhaps if we asked *another question* we could better understand the role presuppositions play in intelligibility. Specifically, 'what is the time?' This question, of course, couldn't be more

³ *The Dialogues Of Plato*, Vol. 1 "Meno" 80 d – e, trans. Jowett, B, (New York: Random House, 1937).

⁴ Said, Edward. *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (London: Granta Books, 2012), p.42. Said is specifically paraphrasing Vico and Hegel here.

⁵ Tugendhat, Ernst. *Traditional and Analytical Philosophy: Lectures on the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p.104. Specifically, the problem of beginning is the beginning of the problem because "if an *existing conceptuality* turns out to be inadequate when applied to a wider thematic field, one is obliged to reflect on presuppositions of this conceptuality."

⁶ Simons, Mandy. "Foundational Issues in Presupposition" *Philosophy Compass*, Vol. 1. No.4, 2006, pp. 357–372.

⁷ Amico, Robert. *The Problem of the Criterion* (Boston: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995), p.5.

straightforward: it occurs on a daily basis without much thought or further ado. The question occurs against typically shared background knowledge, and its presuppositions can be readily brought forward if given some thought. The question presupposes, for example, claims to knowledge that are *unquestioned* or taken for granted – such as the *concept* of time, that people *can tell* the time, that they might have *access* to a watch, that their watch should be *working or accurate* and they would be *willing* to tell us the time *truthfully*. Our simple question presupposes many things as necessarily true before it has even been determined – about capacity, ownership, willingness and trust. To presuppose, then, is to require or imply knowledge as a necessary prior condition. Such a simple question, however, can also reveal the limits of prior knowledge and result in considerable confusion. While many of us can tell the time, who can tell us what time is? A simple question becomes very complex just by taking out the word 'the' – namely, 'what is time'? Our straightforward question finds itself moving within an increasingly questionable circle: why can we readily tell each other what the time is, but cannot say what time *is*?⁸ Approached from another direction, "in what sense can we ascribe being to time itself, and what is the nature of time as (a) being"?⁹

The ancient dialogue between Meno and Socrates remains both timely and timeless.¹⁰ Meno throws into question the very possibility and/or necessity of any given inquiry. He creates a dilemma by calling into being the *paradox of inquiry*. We shall be putting forth this paradox as *the* subject of our inquiry. Meno questions the status of the criteria for knowledge in that he forces us to ask if there is any way we can distinguish between true and false beliefs without presupposing the truth or falsity of the beliefs in question. The paradox is justifying any claim to knowledge without begging the question about the beliefs *in question*. Specifically, Meno questions the "conditions for the possibility of inquiry"¹¹ by problematizing our knowledge of the world of experience. Meno invokes the idea of experience as a vicious circle, and questions the meaningful limits of any given inquiry. The implication is that if we cannot break out of this circle we might as well not enter into it.¹² According to Meno's questioning, the lines at which

⁸ See, for example, Le Poidevin, Robin and MacBeath, Murray (eds.) *The Philosophy of Time* (London: Oxford University Press, 1993) and Dyke, Heather and Bardon, Adrian (eds.) *A Companion to the Philosophy of Time* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013) for an overview of the *many* questions raised by the concept of time throughout time.

⁹ Chernyakov, Alexei. *The Ontology of Time* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishing, 2002), p.11.

¹⁰ Glymour, Clark and Kelly, Kevin "Thoroughly Modern Meno" in Earman, John (ed.) *Inference, Explanation, and Other Frustrations: Essays in the Philosophy of Science* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

¹¹ Fine, Gail. *The Possibility of Inquiry: Meno's Paradox From Socrates to Sextus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.3.

¹² Klein, Jacob. *Commentary on Meno*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), p.44. Klein has suggested that the very name of Meno might be relevant here, which could be associated with – or derived from – the Greek stem of 'menein', meaning 'to stay put' or 'stay as before'. Consequently, Meno becomes a mode of being in the world of experience.

knowledge and experience appear to intersect remains imperceptible. Claims to knowledge merely run parallel to the plane of experience, and can only be determined by the given boundary lines. Meno's line of questioning is obviously (performatively) contradictory.¹³ Meno's questions are only possible by presupposing the very being (questioning) in question. Meno questions the conditions of inquiry in a paradoxical manner – by questioning the possibility and/or necessity of questioning. The paradox of inquiry *presupposes* the rationality of its mode of being and directs reason (back) to the question of the nature of *its* being – namely, *what is a question* anyway? Approached from another direction, in what sense can we ascribe being to a question itself, and what is the nature of questioning as (a) being?¹⁴

Sextus invariably formulated Meno's paradox as the *problem of the criterion*¹⁵ of truth. The "problem of the criterion of truth... is the problem of how we discover or ascertain the truth – the truth that we need to find in order to attain knowledge."¹⁶ If a criterion has already decided what is relevant or adequate to an inquiry – i.e., what should be presupposed and/or questioned in the first place – how can we "critically"¹⁷ question (decide, evaluate) its corresponding truth-value (relevancy, adequacy) without being "forced into circular reasoning"?¹⁸ As Chisholm argued many centuries later, the problem of the criterion has remained "one of the most important and one of the most difficult problems of all the problems of philosophy."¹⁹ The main difficulty is that any inquiry into the theory of knowledge can only "deal with the problem by begging the question."²⁰ Our main difficulty thereby raises a related question: what does presupposing the 'being' in question mean here? Heidegger provides a provisional answer by drawing attention to an etymological connection between 'critique' and 'criterion'.²¹ Specifically, they share a root term in the form of *krinein* which originally means to separate or distinguish thinking. To critically evaluate is to decide on a criterion in which to order or arrange (prioritize

¹³ We shall be returning to the notion of *performative contradiction* time and time again, and merely anticipate it via the paradox of inquiry.

¹⁴ We are obviously paraphrasing Chernyakov here. We are also anticipating Heidegger's conception of the being of the question and its relation to the question of being.

¹⁵ Sextus, Empiricus. *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* trans. R.G. Bury, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1933), p.15. While Sextus is officially credited with this term, he makes it clear that he is discussing an age-old dispute between the Sceptics and Stoics. See, also, Kyriacou, Christos. "Meno's Inquiry Paradox and the Problem of the Criterion" *Skepsis* Vol.22, No.4, 2012 for an elucidation of the connection between Meno and Sextus.

¹⁶ Striker, Gisela. *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.151.

¹⁷ Ibid, p.67.

¹⁸ Ibid, p.165.

¹⁹ Chisholm, Roderick, *The Foundations of Knowing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p.61.

²⁰ Ibid, p.75.

²¹ Heidegger, Martin, *What Is A Thing?* trans. W.B. Barton and Vera Deutsch, (Indiana: Gateway Editions, 1967), p.119.

and question) our presuppositions. It means to "sort out"²² and involves the "positing of what must be established in advance in all positing as to what is determinative and decisive."²³ Such a "critical operation"²⁴ would ideally be "the very condition through which something can come into its proper own."²⁵

Plato's concept of time helps clarify the problem of the criterion and its relation to reason's attempts to critically question – sort out, prioritize – its presuppositions. Plato's questioning presupposes a distinction between *being* – identity, structure – and *becoming* – events, plurality – and the problem is bridging the divide when inquiring into the nature of reality. Plato's cosmology revolves around the idea of a rationally ordered and divided universe,²⁶ and that reason "circles around upon itself"²⁷ when determining its place within the scheme of things. Specifically, Plato defines time as a "moving image of eternity"²⁸ to question the nature of being, or everything that "always is", "has no becoming" and "does not change."²⁹ Plato contrasts the realm of Forms (or Ideas) with the physical world (or senses), and in the sensory world everything "comes to be and passes away, but never really is."³⁰ The beings that *exist* (occur, appear) in the temporal world are therefore moving images of "the ground of all existence"³¹, and the question is determining the relationship between *the One* (unity, stability,) and *the Many* (particulars, motion). Consequently, "as being is to becoming so truth is to belief."³² Plato's inquiry into the nature of being raises the question of a rational discourse's *ontological commitments*,³³ or the relation between *meaningful concepts* (thoughts, categories, etc.) and

²² *ibid.*

²³ *ibid.*, p.120.

²⁴ Gasche, Rodolphe. *The Honour of Thinking: Critique, Theory, Philosophy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p.108. Gasche is elaborating on Heidegger's thoughts here.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p.109.

²⁶ *Timaeus*, 37a.

²⁷ *ibid.*,

²⁸ *ibid.*, 37d.

²⁹ 28a.

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ Dillon, John. "The Question of Being" in Brunschwig, Jacques and Lloyd, Geoffrey (eds.) *Greek Thought: A Guide to Classical Knowledge* (London: Harvard University Press, 2000).

³² *Timaeus*, 29c.

³³ Quine, Willard. "On What There Is" in *From A Logical Point of View* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), p.12. Quine introduces the term *ontological commitment* within the context of Plato's inquiry into (non)being (p.1) and extends it the problem of delimiting the meaning of being within other contexts of inquiry. While this term of reference might originate with Quine and has a specified meaning and objective – as a way of deciding how the existential presuppositions and boundaries of a given theory are to be determined – it is important to stress two things in advance. Firstly, the *meaningful content of the concept* ontological commitment remains a *contested object of inquiry* and so becomes theory-laden in turn. See, for example, Balaguer, Mark, *Platonism and Anti-Platonism in Mathematics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) on the age old question of whether abstract numbers really (or independently) exist. Secondly, competing definitions of the meaning of ontological commitment recur in distinct contexts of inquiry, extending from the social and physical sciences to computer programming. Contrast, for example, Kivinen, Osmo and

those *independent objects* presupposed or stated to be true (existent or necessarily related). While concepts might *refer to* or presuppose a meaningful world, they can only *represent* (act or speak for) the objects in question. A given ontological commitment *already* presupposes claims to knowledge about reality or existence as a necessary prior condition³⁴ and so first occurs at a fundamental (or pre-theoretical) level. Ontological commitments presuppose the independent existence of objects represented by the concepts of a given theory or practice, and are typically referred to as "*existential presuppositions*, i.e., a presupposition about reality"³⁵ that may be questioned in turn. The question is whether it is possible to determine the ontological status of presupposed objects: in what way is the 'presupposition about reality' true? Put another way: what is a "fundamental conceptual scheme"³⁶ really referring to – its own conception (bounding, interpretation) of reality or a potentially boundless (meaningless) objective reality itself? While the study of being is careful to distinguish between the existential domains of a rational discourse (representations) and the existential realms of possible objects or worlds (represented), the problem is whether rational thought can break out of the circle – schemes or interpretations – in which it invariably moves. The distinction between pre-theoretical and theoretical knowledge claims is relevant for that very reason: an inquiry into being is a representation – or *re-representation* – of (other) representations and attempts to bring implicit presuppositions about 'reality' (the state of being actual or real) to the fore and into interrogation.³⁷ Consequently, it becomes "a question about which theory we end up adopting

Piirainen, Tero, "The Relevance of Ontological Commitments in Social Science: Realist and Pragmatic Viewpoints" *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, Vol.34, No.3, 2004, pp.231-248, Esfield, Michael and Deckert, Dirk, *A Minimalist Ontology of the Natural World* (New York: Routledge, 2018) and Poli, Roberto (ed.) *Theory and Applications of Ontology: Computer Applications* (New York: Springer, 2010).

³⁴ Chalmers, David Manley, David and Wasserman, Ryan (eds.) *Metametaphysics: New Essays on The Foundations of Ontology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009).

³⁵ Lightfoot, David. *Natural Logic and the Greek Moods* (Paris: Mouton, 1975), p.81.

³⁶ Quine, Willard. *Word and Object* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 2013), p.254.

³⁷ Quine, Willard. *Ontological Relativity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), pp.49-50. Quine argues that we cannot break out of the circle of representations and the requirement is to try and find our way around distinct interpretations accordingly. The *problem of representation* – or the way concepts refer to objects – turns into a *problem of translating* one "background language" into another. Consequently, he urges *ontological relativity*, or a relational theory of objects that may represent (act or speak for) other objects in potentially competing theories or practices. If as Quine argues, that there can be no *objective facts of the matter* about what meaningful terms can *possibly refer to or mean*, his own conception of the meaning of *ontological commitment* is ironically rendered meaningless by his own *theory of meaning as indeterminate* (i.e., ontologically commits the study of being to nothing, or 'no thing.') Given that there is no independent reason – or value free way – to prioritise one existence domain over another, competing theories are reduced to *ontologically relative inquiries into being*. On the one hand, then, Quine's relativisation of being purports to be ontologically neutral or agnostic. On the other hand, it permits the study of being to reduce or multiply (the meaning of) beings according to the prioritised theory. Note, however, the way he attempts to translate the language of physics into a universal ontological standard or measure – i.e., where the theoretical objects and applications of physics may help us to meaningfully represent the problem of representing all other representations in ontologically relative terms. Quine's position is worth

as our (best) view of the world"³⁸ and the "existential claims are the ontological commitments"³⁹ potentially thrown into question. A rational inquiries' ontological commitments, then, is an answer to the *real question*: in what way can we truthfully think about an already meaningful (or presupposed) world? If an inquiry can only occur within a context of presuppositions, the question is determining its relationship to the "prior ontological standard"⁴⁰ making questioning of an ontologically prior understanding possible and necessary in the first place. Jacqueline characterises the potentially *questionable relation* between word and world in the following way.

To be ontologically committed is to accept the existence of an entity or type or kind or category of entities. As individual thinkers we make ontological commitments to the things we believe exist, while theories in the abstract are ontologically committed to whatever entities would need to exist in order for the theories to be true.⁴¹

If, for example, human beings believe in 'things' like clocks and watches, they are ontologically committed to the belief that 'small portable timepieces' or extended 'periods of time' exist. A theoretical determination, however, approaches the beings in question in a more circumscribed way – by trying to sort out (prioritize and delimit) the existential presuppositions enabling its own

quoting in full because the questions become: if we don't ontologically commit to an objective (extra-linguistic) reality, can his own universe of discourse be thought objectively true or false -i.e., be applied universally and/or meaningfully? Furthermore, if we deny the existence of universals (class of language-independent or universal objects and relations) *what* is actually being translated from one language to another (reinterpreted)? Specifically, "we need a background language to regress into. Are we involved now in an infinite regress? If questions of reference of the sort we are considering make sense only relative to a background language, then evidently questions of reference for the background language make sense in turn only relative to a further background language. In these terms the situation sounds desperate, but in fact it is little different from questions of position and velocity. When we are given position and velocity relative to a given coordinate system, we can always ask in turn about the placing of origin and orientation of axes of that system of coordinates; and there is no end to the succession of further coordinate systems that could be adduced in answering the successive questions thus generated. In practice of course we end the regress of coordinate systems by something like pointing. And in practice we end the regress of background languages, in discussions of reference, by acquiescing in our mother tongue and taking its words at face value. Very well; in the case of position and velocity, in practice, pointing breaks the regress. But what of position and velocity apart from practice? What of the regress then? The answer, of course, is the relational doctrine of space; there is no absolute position or velocity; there are just the relations of coordinate systems to one another, and ultimately of things to one another. And I think that the parallel question regarding denotation calls for a parallel answer, a relational theory of what the objects of theories are. What makes sense is to say not what the objects of a theory are, absolutely speaking, but how one theory of objects is interpretable or reinterpretable in another."

³⁸ Michaelis, Michael. "Implicit Ontological Commitments" *Philosophical Studies* Vol. 141, No. 1 2008, p.46.

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Quine, Willard. "On What There Is" in *From A Logical Point of View* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), p.15.

⁴¹ Jacqueline, Dale. *Ontology* (Chesham: Acumen Publishing Limited. 2002), p.156.

questioning. As Palore observes, an inquiry into being attempts to "rethink, coherently and systematically, the totality of objects, in their irreducible characteristics."⁴² It therefore explores "the field of what exists insofar as it exists, and only relatively to such a specification."⁴³ A theory's ontological commitments thereby act as a standard bearer in that it carries a mobilized flag or banner when determining the truth-value of potentially meaningful statements.⁴⁴ The difficulty, however, is that the study of being presupposes the very being at issue: the specificity of the prior ontological standard 'rethinking, coherently and systematically, the totality of objects, in their irreducible characteristics.' The problem of the criterion invariably calls into question the relativity of any given specification and boundary line (the conditions under which existential presuppositions may be thought meaningful and true). If reason is to critically determine the ontological status of 'beings', it is forced to acknowledge *the way* a criterion may itself determine the quality or state (being) of the very objects (boundaries, qualities, relations) in question.⁴⁵ Such an acknowledgment invariably redirects the study of being back to the problem of evaluating an ontological standard of evaluation – i.e., calls for an inquiry into an ontological standard's mode of being. Pike notes that conflicting "modes of explanation"⁴⁶ presuppose ontological commitments in two distinct ways. "On the one hand, different *ontological commitments* throw up different series of questions to be answered, on the other, *competing* ontologies entail different conceptions of what counts as a (true) answer."⁴⁷ The notion of ontological commitment thereby conceives contexts of 'meaning' in terms of possible world *truth conditions* and presupposes an absolute or *context-transcendent* standard of measurement when answering "the ontological question"⁴⁸ – that of *ontological relativity* (the existential

⁴² Valore, Paolo. *Fundamentals of Ontological Commitment* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), p.3.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p.4.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.7. Valore observes that the study of being "specifies the fundamental categories of being by listing which entities are admitted to exist; this, in turn, is done by offering a typological characterization of such entities, and at times, a hierarchical taxonomy. Such a conceptual taxonomy is mirrored by an articulation of different layers of reality."

⁴⁵ Quine, Willard. "On What There Is" in *From A Logical Point of View* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), p.13. Quine, for example, proffers the following prior ontological standard as the true standard bearer for truth : to be is to be the value of a variable. Quine's argument about existence (or existential boundaries) is an attempt to prevent non-existing objects such as unicorns or Homeric gods into a given ontology. Although these terms obviously refer to meaningful objects, Quine attempts to circumvent the problem of reference – or *reference to non-existing objects* – by way of quantifications over categories of objects. Thus: if we can express or measure the quantity of given objects, we can determine the real boundaries between word and world.

⁴⁶ Pike, Jonathan. *From Aristotle To Marx: Aristotelianism in Marxist Social Ontology* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1999), p. 59.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Quine, Willard. *The Ways of Paradox* (New York: Random House, 1966), p.68. To reiterate, we need to distinguish the meaning of Quine's theory laden terms *ontological commitment* and *ontological relativity* from other potential meanings and/or theories. If the ontological question is itself linguistically bound and determined, then 'different *ontological commitments* throw up different series of questions to be answered', and '*competing* ontologies entail different conceptions of what counts as an answer' in the theory. Witness the way Quine paradoxically attempts to shift the meaning of

presupposition that the meaning of being is relative to a context of inquiry and/or possible world). The question is whether it is intelligible to translate competing existential presuppositions into distinct contexts of inquiry – i.e., express another ontology in a more meaningful way without a loss or negation of meaning. Specifically, can the concept of ontological commitment adequately convey another theories' true or complete meaning, or does 'the ontological question' itself get lost in translation via competing ontological commitments and the relativization of meaning (ontologies)?⁴⁹ Bricker summarises the problem of the criterion and its relation to existential presuppositions in the following way.

The problem of ontological commitment ...asks what entities or kinds of entity exist *according to a given theory or discourse*, and thus are among its *ontological commitments*. Having a criterion of ontological commitment for theories is needed, arguably, if one is to systematically and rigorously attack the problem of ontology: typically, we accept entities into our ontology via accepting theories that are ontologically committed to those entities. A criterion of ontological commitment, then, is a pre-requisite for ontological inquiry. On its face, the notion of ontological commitment for theories is a simple matter. Theories have truth conditions. These truth conditions tell us how the world must be in order for the theory to be true; they make demands on the world. Sometimes, perhaps always, they demand of the world that certain entities or kinds of entity exist. The ontological commitments of a theory, then, are just the entities or kinds of entity that must exist in order for the theory to be true.

But complications arise as soon as one tries to specify a theory's truth conditions: different accounts of truth conditions lead to different accounts of ontological commitment. Moreover, theories couched in ordinary language do not wear their truth conditions—or their ontological commitments—on their sleeves. Thus, the need arises to find a *criterion* of ontological commitment: a test or method that can be applied to theories in a neutral way to determine the theory's ontological commitments...(However)... the notion of ontological commitment, introduced to help resolve disputes in ontology, becomes hostage

his own terms onto another theory. "Shifts of language ordinarily involves a shift of ontology. There is one important sense, however, in which the ontological question transcends linguistic convention: how economical an ontology can we achieve and still have a language adequate to all purposes of science? In this form, the question of the ontological presuppositions of science survives" and the requirement is to develop a universal "language adequate to science" in the linguistic form of "logic and mathematics."

⁴⁹ Alston, William. "Ontological Commitments" *Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1-2, 1958, p.8. As Alston observes, "many philosophers have occupied themselves with translating one linguistic expression into another, or with providing general schema for such translations. And some of them, sensitive to charges of engaging in parlour games during working hours, have tried, in various ways, to exhibit the serious value of such activities". If the ontological question is an attempt to delimit the relation between word and world, the charge is whether such a formal pursuit is mere logic or word play (i.e., lacks definitive form or limits because of the very activity in question).

to disputes over the existential presuppositions of the theory. Strife over the ontological commitments of theories begins to appear inevitable.⁵⁰

Witness the way Plato's ontological commitments invariably call into question his own conception of 'reality'. Plato's questioning is committed to the possibility and/or necessity of inquiries into the nature of being (existence) and nature itself is thought to be "providentially designed"⁵¹ and so directs the inquiry into being (existing things). Specifically, Plato is seeking an answer to two related questions – namely, what is existence (being) and what kinds of beings *really* exist? To question the being of anything, then, was to determine "the function or purpose which it was intended to serve"⁵², and the only way that human beings can properly "determine the object in question"⁵³ was to fulfil reason's purpose: acquire knowledge through questioning. Plato's *theory of recollection* attempts to get around the problem of circularity by looking for rationality in a reason questioning itself in time. Specifically, the dialogues provide criteria for knowledge in the form of a "foreknowledge principle"⁵⁴ that insists on the "procedural priority of definition."⁵⁵ Plato describes a Form as the "common nature"⁵⁶ possessed by many different beings, and "customarily hypothesize a single form in connection with each collection of many things to which we apply the same name."⁵⁷ The dialogues argue that we don't really acquire new knowledge of the world of the experience but recollect what was *previously* known about a more definitive realm (objective and transcendent reality). Socrates thereby searches for definitions in his inquiries: acquiring knowledge of (say) *the concept* of 'virtue' is to ask 'what virtue is' and where its being truly originates or resides. While there might be many different virtues – and as many disagreements about what counts as virtuous – it's nonetheless still possible to know virtue's true (or original) form. To put forth a subject of inquiry involves a search for *an object* that meaningfully answers to such a description – a search allegedly made both possible and necessary by recollecting knowledge through the "practice of question and answer argument" (dialectic).⁵⁸ Given the priority of definition in the search for (fore)knowledge, language nonetheless remains questionable. The *Cratylus* famously turns on the question of

⁵⁰ Bricker, Phillip, "Ontological Commitment", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/ontological-commitment/>>

⁵¹ Guthrie, William. *A History of Greek Philosophy* Vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1969) p. 442.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Scott, Dominic. *Plato's Meno* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 64.

⁵⁵ Brickhouse, Thomas *Plato's Socrates* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.55

⁵⁶ *Meno*, 72, a-c.

⁵⁷ Plato, *Republic*, 596a.

⁵⁸ Fink, Jacob. (ed.) *The Development of Dialectic from Plato to Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.5.

whether language is 'natural' or 'conventional', and the question is whether conventional words "divide things according to their natures"⁵⁹ and/or whether the "dividing (of) being"⁶⁰ can be questioned through knowledge of (a) given language. Socrates attempts to find definitive knowledge of meaningful beings via a true definition – by defining the nature of the being in question. The dialogues turn towards language to *move beyond* it – towards the beings themselves. Plato's transcendental claim is "that all knowledge is *a priori* in the sense that its source is independent of the experience of present incarnate experience"⁶¹ but depends on an experience of 'reincarnation' to bring our knowledge full circle (to completion).

The theory of recollection is, of course, primarily intelligible within Plato's historical and cultural context. Socrates' questioning presupposes, for example, a belief in prior lives and/or an afterlife – one where an eternal soul is striving to perfect (recollect) itself through knowledge of an ideal world. The quest for a meaningful definition of (say) the concept of 'virtue' allegedly provides knowledge of true virtue, and recollecting part of this knowledge supposedly provides access to a more complex whole via *questioning*.⁶² The only problem, however, is that Plato's theory of Forms could not withstand his own "criticism"⁶³ (questioning) and invariably found itself caught in a vicious circle regarding the relation between the One and the many.⁶⁴ The problem emerges within the context of Plato's presuppositions and throws the relation between their structure and event(s) back into question. Specifically, the problem of One over Many reintroduces the problem of the criterion when questioning the nature of the relation between "part"⁶⁵ and "whole",⁶⁶ and asks how Being can be *included in* and/or *separated from* the beings in question. If we are to presuppose *unity* (Being, or a common identity) in many distinct beings, how can we maintain a *distinction* between Being and beings when determining their relationship? The dialogues readily acknowledge that the presupposition of the unity of many beings divides

⁵⁹ Cratylus, 388b.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 388c.

⁶¹ Gulley, Norman. *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 12.

⁶² "As the whole of nature is akin, and the soul has learned everything, nothing prevents a man, after recalling one thing only – a process men call learning – discovering everything else... (for) searching and learning are, as a whole, recollection." *Meno* 81d.

⁶³ Russell, Bertrand. *History of Western Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2004). As Russell observes, Plato's *Parmenides* "contains one of the most remarkable cases in history of self-criticism by a philosopher", p.128.

⁶⁴ Plato, *Parmenides*, 131a–166c, *Complete Works*, Cooper, John (ed.) (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997).

⁶⁵ 131a.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

against itself and multiples Beings indefinitely.⁶⁷ Either way, Plato's "critique of impure reason"⁶⁸ thereby assumes "all our knowledge must *conform* to *objects*...establishing something in regard to them *a priori*, by means of concepts."⁶⁹ The circular nature of Socrates' inquiries is perhaps nowhere better exemplified in his conception (definition) of virtue – namely, virtue is knowledge.⁷⁰ Socrates quest for knowledge also begs the question as to whether he lived a virtuous life. As Vlastos notes, there is a "paradox"⁷¹ at the heart of Socrates' quest. Socrates' attempt to perfect the soul through the acquisition of knowledge contradicts his famed disavowal of knowing anything truly worthwhile.⁷² Equally telling was Socrates infamy: calling shared beliefs and practices into question was widely interpreted as a moral defect and invariably made him very "unpopular."⁷³ While the questions asked were intelligible within a given cultural context, Socrates' questioning proved to be antisocial. Socrates was "known to his fellow citizens as a destructive critic"⁷⁴ since he spent most of his time arguing with people. Greek society answered his questioning by eventually putting him to death for impiety and corrupting the youth. Nonetheless, the philosophical question remains the *source* of knowledge and experience, and asks *how* the objects of the one (experience) can either conform to or deviate from the objects of the other (knowledge).⁷⁵ Socrates characterizes this question as the problem of the *divided line*,⁷⁶ and subsequent inquiry becomes an attempt to bridge the divide between Being and beings. Specifically, it involves an inquiry into the nature of the distinction between *kinds* of being/s and (their) *modes* of being. The concern that motivates our questioning is therefore the *nature of being* – namely, what *is* an object (of knowledge and/or experience), and how do such objects come *to be* (in such conformity or deviation)?

⁶⁷ *ibid*, 131c. "So the forms themselves are divisible, and things that partake of them would partake of a part; no longer would a whole form, but only a part of it, be in each thing" (and so) "our one form is **really** divided" and no longer "one." At 133 a, "therefore nothing can be like the form, nor can the form be like anything else. Otherwise, alongside the form another form will make its appearance, and if that form is like anything, yet another; and if the form proves to be like what partakes of it, a fresh form will never cease emerging."

⁶⁸ Schindler, D.C. *Plato's Critique of Impure Reason: On Truth and Goodness in the Republic* (Washington: Catholic University Press, 2008).

⁶⁹ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason* trans. Norman Kemp, (London: Macmillan, 1986). p.22.

⁷⁰ *Meno*, 89c.

⁷¹ Vlastos, Gregory. "The Paradox of Socrates" in *Socrates, Plato and Their Tradition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995).

⁷² *Apology*, 21d.

⁷³ *ibid*, 21e.

⁷⁴ Vlastos, Gregory. "The Paradox of Socrates" in *Socrates, Plato and Their Tradition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), p.10.

⁷⁵ We do not mean to imply that the dialogues end with the *Parmenides*. While the problem of an infinite regress threatens to undermine the Platonic inquiry, the dialogues themselves continue on regardless. The spectre of Parmenides (in the form of the Eleatic Stranger) returns in the *Sophist*, which is a late dialogue concerned with the relation between being and non-being. It is here that the dialectical process of division and collection (or synthesis) is explicated in order to put a stop to an infinite regress within the realm of beings (256 d –268 d).

⁷⁶ *Republic*, 509d–511e.

Critical Theory (the idea of).

The "*idea* of a critical theory"⁷⁷ has "become a dominant force in higher education...(and) is now considered an essential part"⁷⁸ of knowledge acquisition. Indeed, "knowledge of critical theory" has become a "mark of status, an educational property for which students and professors compete."⁷⁹ The only problem is that many of the theories answering to such a description raise a puzzling question – namely, what is a critical theory? The very idea of a critical theory remains a contested object of inquiry and "critical theories compete with one another for dominance in educational and cultural communities."⁸⁰ The *idea* might have become institutionalized, but there appears to be little rhyme or reason for identifying distinct 'theories' as 'critical'. The competing theories not only remain subject to criticism but the idea of a critical theory has taken on the form of a Platonic ideal. Witness the way many distinct theoretical orientations – such as deconstructionism, Marxism, feminism, semiotics, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, etc. – have been similarly positioned and arranged as critical theories within anthologies⁸¹ and across courses. Consequently, the idea of a critical theory has "undertaken a fetishist function"⁸² and become "the opium of the intelligentsia"⁸³ in that academic institutions have compulsively pursued its study and/or contestation in the name of 'higher knowledge'.⁸⁴ Nonetheless, the criteria for identifying a critical theory remain so broad as to render the very idea meaningless and/or questionable. Particularly questionable is that the original self-professed critical theorists – Adorno and Horkheimer – were critical of such *identity thinking* (objectification through naming, defining, etc.). The situation in which we find ourselves appears to have resulted from the *reification* of the theoretical in a traditional social setting. Specifically, where *qualitatively* distinct objects have been conceptualised into a similar quantitative identity and turned into a 'thing' via subsumptive reasoning. Adorno and Horkheimer's concern was the role reason played in administering social relations and practices, and claimed that the "whole logical order,

⁷⁷ Geuss, Raymond. *The Idea of a Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁷⁸ Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today: A User Friendly Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p.xiii.

⁷⁹ Ibid, p.1.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p.3.

⁸¹ See, for example, Badmington, Neil, Thomas, Julia (eds.) *Routledge Critical and Cultural Theory Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2008), McGowan, Kate and Easthope, Antony (eds.) *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), Parker, Robert (ed.) *Critical Theory: A Reader for Literary and Cultural Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) and Leitch, Vincent, et al (ed.) *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (London: Norton and Co, 2010).

⁸² Adorno, Theodor and Horkheimer, Max. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, (London: Allen Lane, 1973), p. 21.

⁸³ Eagleton, Terry. *Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), p.207.

⁸⁴ See, for example, McArthur, Ann, *Rethinking Knowledge within Higher Education* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013) and Paulsen, Michael (ed.) *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research, Volume 30* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015) for overviews.

dependency, connection, progression and union of concepts"⁸⁵ has its basis in the historical impetus to reify objects in the first place. Reification was said to occur when "being and occurrence"⁸⁶ can be "apprehended in unity"⁸⁷ via "position and arrangement"⁸⁸, and was "grounded in the corresponding conditions of social reality."⁸⁹ The irony, then, is that the original critical theorists wanted to throw traditional forms of knowledge into question – and yet their idea of a critical theory has since being subsumed and institutionalized under a 'traditional' concept that remains open to questioning and criticism.⁹⁰

According to one criterion, what distinguishes critical theory from (say) theories not *ideally* identified as such is the attempt to locate questioning in a "new historical moment"⁹¹ to transform our knowledge and/or practices. Such an attempt, however, runs the risk of "misjudging the current situation"⁹² since the idea of a critical theory needs to be constantly "renewed"⁹³ through questioning. While there can be "no ideal moment"⁹⁴ to identify a critical theory, there are nonetheless "canonical questions"⁹⁵ which distinguish a critical theory – and so "many of the theorists select themselves."⁹⁶ Given these generally accepted rules or questions, "critique involves the determination of rational standards of evaluation and the application of those standards to given modes of thought and practice."⁹⁷ The problem, of course, is whether it is possible to evaluate the standards of evaluation without presupposing their truth-value. Witness Hoy and McCarthy's *Critical Theory*, which acknowledges that the "idea of a critical theory"⁹⁸ has given rise to competing – if not contradictory – conceptions of the "nature, scope and limits of human reason."⁹⁹ Hoy and McCarthy attempt to mediate the dispute within academic circles, and the question is what should *ideally* answer to the description of a critical theory. While the debate might go under the seemingly uncontentious heading *Critical Theory*, it arguably

⁸⁵ Adorno, Theodor and Horkheimer, Max. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (London: Allen Lane, 1973), p.21.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p.7.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Thompson, Michael (ed.) "What is Critical Theory?" in *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Theory* (New York: Palgrave, 2017). Thompson's introduction recognizes that the idea of a critical theory needs to be located within a specific tradition even if it would *ideally* be a "radically different form of knowledge from mainstream theory and social science", p.1.

⁹¹ Wexler, Phillip. *Critical Theory Now* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p.1

⁹² Honneth, Axel. "The Social Dynamics of Disrespect: On The Location of Critical Theory Today" *Constellations*, Vol. 1, No. 2 1994, p.255.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Tallack, Douglas (ed.) *Critical Theory: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p1.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p.2.

⁹⁷ Sinnerbrink, Robert et al (ed.) *Critique Today* (Boston: Brill, 2006,), p.3.

⁹⁸ Hoy, David and McCarthy, Thomas. *Critical Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p.7.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p.8.

provides "the best statement of the paradigms wars which (has) dominated philosophy as well as social and cultural criticism"¹⁰⁰ and could have conceivably "been called critical theory-hermeneutics-poststructuralism."¹⁰¹ Hoy and McCarthy are quick to remind us, however, that the "complex configuration of present-day critical theory"¹⁰² has its origins in Kant's attempt to make *objects conform to our concepts*. The Kantian revolution involves, of course, a reversal of Plato's attempt to make *concepts conform to objects*, and similarly attempted to answer the call of reason by questioning the limits of reason's rationality.¹⁰³ Either way, their *transcendental arguments* turn on the same problem regarding the ontological status of objects of possible experience: whether an inquiry into the "sources and conditions of possibility of such criticism"¹⁰⁴ can *transcend the context of their occurrence* (i.e., have objective validity or truth). The *idea* is therefore perhaps best approached "as a set of theoretical discourses variously predicated upon...highly unstable tendencies and preoccupations."¹⁰⁵ The question is not so much *what is* a critical theory, but whether rational thinkers can adopt a "conceptual framework"¹⁰⁶ in which to critically question and/or transform social practice – including the practice of questioning. Such an idea, however, is hardly modern – it has its origins in the philosophical discourse of antiquity. As Horkheimer reminds us, questioning the 'nature, scope and limits of human reason' was the "original function of philosophy"¹⁰⁷ and "precisely the issue in the trial of Socrates."¹⁰⁸

The main difficulties, however, are whether critical theory threatens to be "a kind of comedy without the humour"¹⁰⁹ or a form of "intellectual masturbation."¹¹⁰ Rorty questions, for example, how 'critical' a 'theory' could possibly be, and observes that academia's distinctive contribution to society involves research into other researchers' *ideas*. "If I had to define 'critical theory'...it

¹⁰⁰ Benhabib, Sylvia. "The Local, Contextual and/or Critical" *Constellations*, Vol. 3, No.1, 1996, p.83.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² Hoy, David and McCarthy, Thomas. *Critical Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p.1.

¹⁰³ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason* trans. Norman Kemp, (London: Macmillan, 1986). p.22. To provide the full quote cited earlier. "Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects. But all attempts to extend our knowledge of objects by establishing something in regard to them a priori, by means of concepts, have, on this assumption, ended in failure. We must therefore make trial whether we may not have more success in the tasks of metaphysics, if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge. This would agree better with what is desired, namely, that it should be possible to have knowledge of objects *a priori*, determining something in regard to them prior to their being given."

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.14.

¹⁰⁵ Tallack, Douglas. (ed.) *Critical Theory: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p.3.

¹⁰⁶ Honneth, Axel. *The Fragmented World of the Social: Essays in Social and Political Philosophy*, (Albany, State University of New Press, 1995,) p. xiii

¹⁰⁷ Horkheimer, Max. "Social Function of Philosophy" in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 1972), p.261.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p.260.

¹⁰⁹ Geuss, Raymond. *A World Without Why* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 207.

¹¹⁰ Francois, Damien. *The Self Destruction of the West: Critical Cultural Anthropology* (Paris: Publibook, 2007), p.83.

is the attempt of philosophy professors to make the study of...books intelligible only to philosophy professors, relevant to the struggle for social justice"¹¹¹ within academic circles. Another critic mocks the "executive committee of the bourgeoisie's"¹¹² attempt to justify purely academic exercises. Specifically, "academia is one huge circle jerk. All the sequestered people desperately defending the one good idea they have had in their lives."¹¹³ The author of *The Idea of a Critical Theory* surprisingly concurs.¹¹⁴ According to Geuss, being a critical thinker involves "training aspiring young members of the commercial, governmental or administrative elite in the glib manipulation of words, theories and arguments."¹¹⁵ Questioning invariably turns out "the pliable, efficient, self-satisfied cadres that our economic and political system uses to produce the ideological carapace that protects it from criticism and change."¹¹⁶

Perhaps the best way to illustrate the circuitous route taken when employing a term like 'critical theory' is to draw attention to a recent historical development. We shall briefly travel the route taken by Hazard Adams, and then return the way we came. Specifically, there exist three compilations of source material edited by Adams. These are: *Critical Theory Since Plato* (1971), *Critical Theory Since 1965* (1986) and *Critical Theory Since Plato* (revised and updated, 2005). It's surprising to observe that Adams is not the editor of *Critical Theory Now*¹¹⁷ (2003), *Critical Theory Today*¹¹⁸ (2015) or the *Handbook of Critical Theory*¹¹⁹ (2017). It is also possible to be taken further aback by *Plato As Critical Theorist* (2018) – an unrelated text traversing a hazardous path of development.¹²⁰ Either way, the 'critical theorists' included within Adams's

¹¹¹ Rorty, Richard. "The Ambiguity of Rationality" *Constellations*, Vol. 3, No.1, 1996, p.81.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ This definition of academic pursuit was famously provided by the character Brenda Chenoweth (Rachel Griffiths) in "The Plan" – the third episode of the second season of *Six Feet Under* (2002).

¹¹⁴ Geuss, Raymond. *A World Without Why* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 232. According to Geuss, "the experience I have of my everyday work environment is of a conformist, claustrophobic, and repressive verbal universe, a penitential domain of reason-mongering in which hyperactivity in detail – the endlessly repeated shouts of "why," the rebuttals, calls for "evidence," qualifications, and quibbles – stands in stark contrast to the immobility and self-referentiality of the structure as a whole. I suffer from recurrent bouts of nausea in the face of this densely woven tissue of "arguments," most of which are nothing but blinds for something else altogether, generally something unsavoury; and I feel an urgent need to exit from it altogether."

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p.231.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Wexler, Phillip. *Critical Theory Now* (New York: Routledge, 2003),

¹¹⁸ Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today: A User Friendly Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2015), p.xiii.

¹¹⁹ Thompson, Michael (ed.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Theory* (New York: Palgrave, 2017).

¹²⁰ Thakkar, Jonny. *Plato As Critical Theorist* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018). Thakkar reinstates Plato's "notorious claim that philosophers should rule" the world (p.20) to "ensure the harmony of the whole" (p.79). The hazard, of course, is that the regime of a philosopher king (or citizenship based on philosophical kinship) arguably leads to a tyrannical social system. Equally problematic is Thakkar's view that "philosopher citizens" (p.227) could ensure a harmonious whole. The history of philosophy is the history of disputes, or philosophers arguing with (over-ruling) each other. See Thakkar's own "On Being an Arsehole: A Defence" in *The Point*, Vol. 16, 2018, for an illustration of the philosopher's tendency "to appear a right royal arsehole" when attempting to

volumes range from (say) Plato to Frye (1971), Chomsky to Wittgenstein (1986) and Plato to Derrida (2005). Now, what is significant about these compilations is the way Adams's idea of a critical theory comes full circle. Adams originally tries to distinguish his use of the term by way of cultural specificity and theoretical orientation. Unlike the term originally employed by the Frankfurt school, the North American appropriation is *not* taken to mean cultural theory. Adams concern was to delimit its meaning to *literary* theory, despite the reliance upon other cultural traditions and practices. Particularly interesting is what happens between the original and revised editions via the intermediate compilation. In the first edition, there is the tendency for Adams to isolate Plato's aesthetic theory from its broader theoretical context(s). Plato's question concerning the "problem of being"¹²¹ is displaced, and determining the kind of meaning or truth available through literary 'objects' is prioritized. In the subsequent editions, we get a more integrated account of Plato's problematic. The issue of the nature of meaning and truth comes to determine the question of the nature and object of knowledge in the first place. The question of language was originally conceived as a background issue and subsequently foregrounded via the "linguistic turn"¹²² in contemporary thought, or the modern claim that "philosophical questions are questions of language."¹²³ Such a historical development, however, is not so much a turn but a return – as evident by Plato's interrogation of language that figures more centrally in the revised edition. Unlike Plato, however, the linguistic turn does not attempt to move *beyond* the medium of language and reveals the self-referential paradox of language: the turn towards language remains directed by language's delimitation of the beings in question. The linguistic turn revolves around the problem of the "direction of fit"¹²⁴ between language and world, and claims that language is the "medium in which we think."¹²⁵ Given this approach, there is no "ontological gap"¹²⁶ between the structure of thought and the questions of language.¹²⁷ The question, however, is the nature of the direction of the fit between linguistically determined concepts and corresponding objects of thought.¹²⁸ The necessary presuppositions of the

harmonize disparate beliefs and pursuits via their own (ontological) commitments and rulings. <https://thepointmag.com/2018/examined-life/on-being-an-arsehole>

¹²¹ Adams, Hazard and Searle, Le Roy (eds.) *Critical Theory Since 1965* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1986), p.2.

¹²² Adams, Hazard (ed.) *Critical Theory Since Plato* (Boston: Thomson Learning, 2005), p.630.

¹²³ Rorty, Richard (ed.) *The Linguistic Turn: Recent Essays in Philosophical Method* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p.41.

¹²⁴ Austin, J.L. "How to Talk: Some Simple Ways" in *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 142.

¹²⁵ Sellars, Wilfrid. "Mental Events" in *In The Space Of Reasons* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), p.283.

¹²⁶ McDowell, John. *Mind and World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.27

¹²⁷ Williamson, Timothy. "Past The Linguistic Turn?" in Leiter, Brian (ed.) *The Future of Philosophy* (London: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹²⁸ Humberstone, Lyoyd. "Direction of Fit" *Mind*, Vol.101, No.401, 1992), pp. 59–83. Humberstone provides a delineated account of this 'directive'.

linguistic turn, then, are that language conceives – constructs, interprets – objects as meaningful, and that knowledge of the world of experience is only possible by questioning the *internal relationship* between them. While the linguistic turn distinguishes between (a) concept and (an) object to account for the intelligibility of its questions, the question of "what makes language and thought possible remains circular."¹²⁹ Specifically, how is it possible to distinguish between language and thought when they presuppose each other? Consequently, an inquiry into language remains faced with the problem of critically questioning – sorting out, prioritizing – its own *relations of presupposition*. Before we can turn to the question of language, then, we need to invoke two provisos. Firstly, we need to invoke the proviso of a *formal mode of thinking*. Specifically, we need to stress that since our concepts become (and remain) the ostensible subject matter of a formal inquiry, they are themselves the *object* of such inquiries. Secondly, we need to invoke the proviso of their *intentional relation* to each other, or the way concept and object are already directed upon and/or refer (back) to each other in language. Although concepts and objects may be provisionally distinguished, they continue to circle each other and move within the orbit of *intentionality* (the relation between language and thought). Intentionality is the phenomenon in which our thoughts – or rather, those concepts by which we think and question – point outside themselves: to those objects they are *of* or *about*. The proviso of a formal mode of thinking itself becomes questionable in that any given inquiry is already 'informal' by way of the everyday occurrence of intentionality. If intentionality is *the way* in which objects are thought and questioned, such thinking and/or questioning remains directed towards the objects linguistically conceived (specified) as such. Given that "intentional relations depend on how their objects are specified"¹³⁰, the problem is distinguishing between a *linguistic concept* and/or *object of thought* within the given specification.

The problem of specification is brought into question via *Critical Theory Since Plato* (revised and updated, 2005). In the original edition, Adams attempted to distinguish literary theory (and objects) from cultural theory (and objects). Generally speaking, the initial emphasis was upon how literary texts may produce and interrogate the 'culture' in question. The exclusivity and primacy of literature as a cultural category is therefore highlighted and questioned through selected texts. However, in the subsequent editions, we encounter an *inversion* of this relationship. Such an inversion bears witness to the rise of cultural studies within comparative literature departments across the English-speaking world. Critical theory has now become the way in which literary theorists may identify and critique 'culture', including the literature – and

¹²⁹ Verheggen, Claudine. "Triangulation" in Lepore, Ernie and Ludwig, Kirk (eds.) *A Companion To Donald Davidson* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), p.466.

¹³⁰ Dennett, Daniel and Haugeland, John. "Intentionality" in Gregory, Richard (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.385.

theories – reproduced within the language of a given culture. The notion of the exclusivity and primacy of 'literature' as a cultural category is problematized, and the *question of language* becomes integral when questioning cultural relations and practices. Objects of knowledge are now thought of as linguistically constituted and/or historically mediated – i.e., determined by relations of signification and norms of action. The concept of 'culture' is taken as given, namely, as that "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."¹³¹ We find ourselves returning to the 'problem of being', or the relation between part and whole (unity in divisible parts). Consequently, the critical question is how 'culture' produces and interrogates meaningful 'objects', including the 'theories' questioning them. Such a historical inversion was the result of "continental philosophy"¹³² finding its way into English literature and cultural study departments. The Anglo-American cultural landscape was transformed by an encounter with German and French philosophy which (of course) emerged within culturally distinct traditions¹³³, and historically moved in different directions across the world.¹³⁴ Nonetheless, original experiences of "profound change and disquiet"¹³⁵ culminated in paradigm wars and repressive

¹³¹ Tylor, Burnett. *Primitive Cultures; Researches Into The Development of Mythology*, Vol. 1 (London: John Murray Publications, 1871), p.1. This is arguably the most famous – and least controversial – definition of culture. The controversies emerge across attempts to make sense of such a complex whole. As it will become increasingly apparent, our questioning presupposes this working definition insofar as it calls the *relation between part and whole into question*.

¹³² Adams, Hazard (ed.) *Critical Theory Since Plato* (Boston: Thomson Learning, 2005), p.633.

¹³³ Leiter, Brian (ed.) "Introduction" in *The Future of Philosophy* (London: Oxford University Press, 2009). Leiter reminds us that the distinction between 'analytic' and 'continental' philosophy is provincial, and motivated by an ideological struggle over what should ideally be called 'philosophy' in Anglo-American institutional settings. According to Leiter, "we now recognize" that so called continental philosophy that "emerged two centuries after Kant in Germany and France actually encompass anywhere from seven to nine distinct, if occasionally, overlapping traditions. German Idealism, German Materialism, neo-Kantianism, Phenomenology, Existentialism, Hermeneutics, Structuralism and Post-Structuralism", p. 12.

¹³⁴ The so-called 'critical theorists' should not be identified with – or reduced to – continental philosophy. As Michael Dummett has reminded us in his *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (London: Duckworth, 1993), analytical philosophy has its basis on the European continent – in particular, it derives from a Franco/Germanic tradition and was the result of European philosophers (Frege, Tarski, Wittgenstein, Carnap, Popper, etc.) emigrating to Britain and America. Nonetheless, it derives from a split within German philosophy over the ancient question of the ontology of meaning and truth, which is said to have given rise to conflicting traditions or movements – the Husserlian and the Fregean. Dummett develops a metaphor of his own concerning their respective routes and destinations, comparing Husserl and Frege to the Rhine and Danube. Specifically, where each "arise quite close to the other and for a time pursue roughly parallel paths, only to diverge in utterly different directions and flow into different seas", p.26. Consequently, Dummett urges that history obliges us to call analytical philosophy "Anglo – Austrian", p.1-2. If certain 'continental' philosophers had not fled Nazism and settled in Britain and America, 'analytic' philosophers might not have felt the need to distinguish between philosophy in terms of geography but rather between philosophical presuppositions and questions.

¹³⁵ Adams, Hazard (ed.) *Critical Theory Since Plato* (Boston: Thomson Learning, 2005), p.1.

orthodoxies.¹³⁶ Specifically, the complex configurations found within *Critical Theory Since Plato* find expression in the dispute over the *idea* of critical theory debated in Hoy and McCarthy's *Critical Theory*. The rise of 'critical theory' has taken on imperialist tendencies – as evident by the colonizing of the consciousness of academia and power struggles over objects of inquiry.¹³⁷ The turn to language might have inaugurated the first "genuine moves to self-conscious reflective thought"¹³⁸, but the cultural status of 'critical theory' has become questionable in turn: what do the fortified positions and theoretical allegiances themselves signify? Consequently, there have been renewed calls for a "genuine critique of critique"¹³⁹ – particularly since critical thought allegedly "feeds on its own impotence"¹⁴⁰ as it has given rise to 'theory's empire,'¹⁴¹ or "passive assent to established routines."¹⁴² As one critic complains, critical theory has become "an empire zealously inquisitorial about every form of empire but its own."¹⁴³ While the paradigm wars might be over, conceptual terrain(s) nonetheless continue to be occupied and resisted.¹⁴⁴ The 'occupation' has either retreated into the background – in the form of tacit knowledge – or is actively brought forth via advancing social positions (specialized knowledge in the higher ranks) at the expense of the proletarianization of academia.¹⁴⁵ The situation remains critical in that there still is the problem of critically questioning – sorting out, evaluating – distinct presuppositions and commitments. We return, then, to the problem of the criterion and the cultural status of competing knowledge claims. We've claimed that our inquiry is directed by the question: what is 'critical' about (a) critical theory? We also observed that there are many competing – if not contradictory – cultural theories answering to the description of a 'critical theory'. Consequently, there appear to be conflicting criteria as to what might ideally be called a critical theory, and the problem is critically questioning (evaluating) their respective knowledge

¹³⁶ Eddings, Dwight (ed.) *The Emperor Redressed: Critiquing Critical Theory* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995).

¹³⁷ Skinner, Quentin (ed.) *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Skinner talks, for example, of "invading hordes" and "theoretical allegiance", p.6.

¹³⁸ Adams, Hazard (ed.) *Critical Theory Since Plato* (Boston: Thomson Learning, 2005), p.633.

¹³⁹ Ranciere, Jacques. "The Misadventures of Critical Thought" *The Emancipated Spectator* (New York: Verso, 2014), p.25.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid*, p.33.

¹⁴¹ Patai, Daphne and Corral, Will (eds.) *Theory's Empire. An Anthology of Dissent* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

¹⁴² *Ibid*, p.13.

¹⁴³ Ricks, Christopher. "The Pursuit of Metaphor" in Kernan, Alvin (ed.) *What's Happened to the Humanities?* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), p.181.

¹⁴⁴ Patai, Daphne and Corral, Will (eds.) *Theory's Empire. An Anthology of Dissent* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

¹⁴⁵ Harpham, Geoffrey, "Theory as Profession" in Patai, Daphne and Corral, Will (eds.) *Theory's Empire. An Anthology of Dissent* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013). Harpham critically comments on the rise of the star system within academia – where the search for the latest theory has resulted in some academics being 'overcompensated' in a system encouraging exploitation of lesser-known intellectuals that would ideally know their place and/or be similarly star struck.

claims. We have followed tradition and delimited our question by acknowledging the axis on which the problem of the criterion turns. Given the linguistic turn, the problem of knowledge nonetheless moves around the question of language and/or turns (back) towards questions emerging within traditional patterns of thought.

Measure for Measure

We thereby need to question the nature of the direction of fit between a theory of 'culture', and the contradictory way/s that culture may direct (inform, inscribe) the content and/or referent of competing 'critiques'. Specifically, the problem of the criterion is predicated upon the recognition that we need to distinguish between the objects of knowledge and experience to account for the relations between them. The problem is particularly acute when we recognize that competing theories similarly converge around the claim that (self)knowledge is a cultural object or event, and has its basis in linguistic experience. The question of the *constitutive* – constructive, interpretive – element in cultural experience occurs across the theories considered – namely, via *the way* historical relations and/or linguistic practices reproduce the objects in question. The *claim to knowledge* that culture in some way constitutes the object as experienced and known is, therefore, a *recurring question*, and directs us towards *the way* language constitutes the objects in question. We shall primarily consider the so-called critical theories of Habermas, Lyotard and Derrida by way of Heidegger and Gadamer. Our question follows the lead of the problem of the criterion and the way language directs (divides, multiplies) 'beings' into distinct questions and movements. Following Heidegger and Gadamer, we emphasize the *being of the question*, or the way 'beings' emerge within the context of meaningful interpretations and/or questioning. Particularly critical is the concept of the *hermeneutical circle* and the problem of questioning language as a complex whole. While the idea of the hermeneutical circle predates Heidegger and Gadamer, their turn to language will direct our inquiry into the circularity of questioning. Originally emerging within the context of textual and/or historical studies,¹⁴⁶ the

¹⁴⁶ See, for example, Frederick Schleiermacher's *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977) and Wilhelm Dilthey's "The Development of Hermeneutics" in *Selected Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). Schleiermacher distinguished between the grammatical and psychological meaning of a given text, and argued that each part formed a complex whole and so needed to be interpreted with respect to each other. Specifically, since these two parts were "completely equal", it was "necessary to move back and forth between the grammatical and the psychological sides, and no rules can stipulate how to do this", *ibid*, pgs.99-100. In discussing the development of hermeneutics, Dilthey is acutely aware of the "general difficulty of all interpretation" because it moves within a "circle", p.259. Specifically, any attempt to understand a given text by moving back and forth as such merely directs understanding towards the problem of making a definitive ruling. "Theoretically, we are here at the limits of all interpretation, it can only fulfil its task to a degree, so all understanding always remains relative and can never be completed", *ibid*. Nonetheless, Dilthey would go on to develop a hermeneutics pushed to its rational limits – by attempting to make the understanding of history compatible with the relativity and/or

concept of the hermeneutical circle turns on the problem that all meaningful objects are contextually determined, bound and/or mediated. The irony is that *Critical Theory Since Plato* invariably comes full circle again. If objects of knowledge emerge within contexts of interpretation, a given inquiry returns to a problem familiar from textual analysis and/or the study of history. As Grondin notes, the concept of the hermeneutical circle proceeds from the presupposition that there can be no "understanding without presuppositions"¹⁴⁷ and directs itself towards the question of "a more reasonable concept of rationality."¹⁴⁸ The question, however, is: how can reason rationally determine the status of the presuppositions brought into question by way of the relation between part and whole? Specifically, if we "always understand or interpret out of some presuppositions"¹⁴⁹, interpreters will invariably find themselves moving within a complex whole throwing itself back into question. The concept of the hermeneutical circle raises the question of the direction of fit between part and whole insofar as the problem of self-referentiality becomes integral to the question of the structure and/or events of understanding itself. Questioning the rational status of a critical theory turns on the same problematic. We not only find ourselves faced with the problem of delimiting a critical theory but determining the limits of their interpretations within the circle of language and thought: what is an object (of knowledge or experience), and how do these objects come *to be* (in such conformity or deviation) *there*? We shall argue that the *being of the question* determines the *question of being*, or what a given theory assumes *to be* relevant and/or adequate to its own questioning. More specifically, what a cultural theory already presupposes to be 'critical' – meaningful and/or truthful – in accordance with its criteria. The status of competing cultural theories thereby raises a 'critical' question: if a criterion is an attempt to determine what is relevant or adequate to its questioning, how can we determine (question) the relevance or adequacy of competing criteria?

incompleteness of meaning. In *Hermeneutics and the Study of History* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), Dilthey claims that "if understanding is basic for the human sciences" then "the epistemological, logical and methodological analysis of understanding is one of the main tasks for the human foundation of the human sciences. The importance of this task becomes fully apparent when one makes explicit the difficulties contained in the nature of understanding with reference to the practice of a universally valid science", pgs.252-253.

¹⁴⁷ Grondin, Jean. "The Hermeneutical Circle" in Keane, Nialle and Lawn, Chris (eds.) *The Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics* (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), p.299.

¹⁴⁸ Grondin, Jean. *The Philosophy of Gadamer* (Chesham: Acumen Publishing, 2003), p.140. It is worth stressing that this characterization of the hermeneutical circle emerges within Gadamer's philosophical project. As we shall see, Heidegger is not as interested in delimiting the rationality of reason, and attempts to locate understanding beyond what can be reasonably conceived and/or questioned.

¹⁴⁹ Grondin, Jean. "The Hermeneutical Circle" in Keane, Nialle and Lawn, Chris (eds.) *The Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics* (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), p.299.

We shall attempt an answer via a consideration of the hermeneutical circle, or *through* the question of the relation between the parts and/or whole of the language reproducing the objects – and presuppositions – in question. The overall aim is to rethink the hermeneutical circle by questioning *the way* conflicting interpretations bring forth and/or hold back relations of presupposition within language.¹⁵⁰ The questions, therefore, become: what are the presuppositions in question, and how do we turn towards – relate to – relations of presupposition within competing conceptions of language? We shall argue that the requirement is to inquire into distinct objects of inquiry by way of the corresponding ontological commitments. If the linguistic turn provides a way to interrogate the direction of fit between word and world, our questions turn into: which way do we turn (back) towards 'language'? We follow tradition by dividing the (study of) 'language' into interdependent parts forming a complex whole¹⁵¹ – via language's *syntactic* (Derrida), *semantic* (Lyotard) and *pragmatic* (Habermas) parts.¹⁵² Our inquiry into critical theory will provide distinct ways to approach (relate to) the circle of understanding. Specifically, we shall argue that competing critical theories are parts that form a complex whole, and should be understood (questioned, interpreted) in relation to each other. The conflict of interpretations thereby directs us towards competing conceptions of 'critique' (delimitations of self-understanding). Consequently, we shall find ourselves moving towards the problem of interpreting other interpretations and evaluating their respective movements and commitments. We argue that the circle of understanding directs the conflict of interpretations (back) towards the question of being and its relation to the problem of the criterion. Furthermore, the conflict that occurs within the circle shall direct the question of being in a related way – towards the question of ontological commitment as cultural critique.

¹⁵⁰ Davidson, Donald. "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" in *Truth, Language and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.107. We shall also try to resist the tendency to objectify 'language'. At least one philosopher of language has argued that 'language' is merely a concept that emerges within the context of a theory and our ordinary (or pre-theoretical) understanding of the primary *object in question* would ideally be interpreted away. As Davidson theorized, "there is no such thing as a language, not if a language is anything like what many philosophers and linguists have supposed." Davidson goes on to argue that "there is therefore no such thing to be learned, mastered, or born with. We must give up the idea of a clearly defined shared structure which language-users acquire and then apply to cases. And we should try again to say how convention in any important sense is involved in language; or, as I think, we should give up the attempt to illuminate how we communicate by appeal to conventions", *ibid.*

¹⁵¹ See for example, Charles Sayward's "The Received Distinction between Pragmatics, Semantics, and Syntax", *Foundations of Language*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1974, pp. 97-104.

¹⁵² Morris, Charles. *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938), p.3. The distinction between *the syntactic* (relation between signs), *the semantic* (relation between sign and signified) and *the pragmatic* (relation between signs and sign users) is traditionally attributed to Morris. While such a conceptual scheme may be view as 'the received distinction' within the study of language, Morris originally pointed out that he received the distinction from the philosophical discourse of antiquity (by way of "the Greek's" inquiry into language), *ibid.*

Getting Our Bearings

Every confrontation of ...different interpretations of work...is in reality a mutual reflection on the guiding presuppositions: it is the discussion of these presuppositions, a task, which strangely is only tolerated marginally and covered up with empty generalisations...The attempt at *translation* proposed...is possible only on the way on which we are already engaged when we ask the question: *what calls on us to think?* With this, the prior assumption of our interpretation is both identified and submitted for discussion.¹⁵³

If meaning is function in context...then equivalence of meaning is equivalence of function in context. What the translator is doing when translating or interpreting is making decisions all of the time about what is the relevant context within which this *functional equivalence* is being established.¹⁵⁴

Let's turn around prior to proceeding further. Chapter 1 begins with a section called 'Chasing Our Tale' to orient ourselves. The subtitle attempted to capture two related themes in advance: that the *pursuit of truth* involves going around in circles and that such back and forth movements are akin to *spinning tales*. In chasing our tale, we've rotated rapidly on an axis and ran the risk of pursuing non-existent or inaccessible objects. If a truth-value is an object of thought about the world,¹⁵⁵ the spinning of tales is a *way of worldmaking*¹⁵⁶ in the meaningful form of make-

¹⁵³ Heidegger, Martin. *What is Called Thinking* trans. Jesse Glenn Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p.176.

¹⁵⁴ Halliday, Michael. "Language Theory and Translation Practice" *Rivista Internazionale* Numero 0, 1992, p.16.

¹⁵⁵ Frege, Gottlob. "On Sense and Reference" in Geach, Peter and Max, Black (eds.) *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p.63. Frege introduced the notion of *truth-value* into modern discourse. Truth-values are objects of thought in that the corresponding objects are *truth-evaluable* (i.e., are either true or false propositions). These objects are specified in terms of their *truth conditions*, or the objective conditions under which the objects must themselves *exist* if they are to be thought true or false. The truth condition of a proposition, then, is the condition the world must objectively meet if the thought is to be true. See, also, Frege's "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry" *Mind*, Vol. 65, No. 259, 1956 pp. 289-311 for an elucidation of his attempt to navigate the circle of his own thinking. Whilst the notion of *truth-value as an object of thought* might be a modern thought, Frege nonetheless has recourse to a realm of Platonic forms (p.302) to make his own concept of truth-value truth conditional. Specifically, "the truth of a thought is timeless. Therefore the truth cannot have come into existence with its discovery" or via the bearers of those thoughts (p.308).

¹⁵⁶ Goodman, Nelson. *Ways Of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett Press, 1978). The phrase *ways of worldmaking* was coined by Goodman: it captures the idea that there is no one *universe of discourse* to truthfully understand the world but there are many different ways in which "universes of worlds as well as worlds themselves may be built" (p.5). In other words, the truth-values of all objects of thought (be they fictional or real objects) recreate an objective world in their own way and their truth conditions may vary accordingly. Specifically, all modes of discourse are creative languages and may recreate worlds in meaningful ways. Furthermore, the different ways of

believe.¹⁵⁷ We've thereby put a stake in the ground of the "linguistic turn"¹⁵⁸ – the "fundamental gambit as to method"¹⁵⁹ – when navigating the circle between language and thought (or relation between word and world). In other wor(l)ds, we've tethered ourselves – and moved between – seemingly opposing poles in order to orient our thinking and get the measure of the very objects in question. As will be seen, we've partially taken our lead from the critical theorists in question in that they attempt to ground the truth-value of their objects of inquiry in a *methodological and/or rhetorical fiction*. The problem of going around in circles therefore becomes a critical question in turn: if we are to ground the *ontological status* of our beliefs in the world of make-believe, what are we to make of our beliefs? The methodological 'fictions' also raise the question of the nature of the *object substitution*¹⁶⁰ going on within critical theory: in what way does the theorist use an imaginary object to determine the truth-value of their reasoning? Specifically, if we must imagine a situation to be true for their own arguments – i.e., impose meaning or value beyond what can be truthfully grasped or evaluated – does that locate the idea of critical theory within the realm of fiction or turn it into a "mere language game"?¹⁶¹

worldmaking necessarily "start from worlds already at hand. The making is remaking" (p.6) and "whether written, painted or acted apply...albeit metaphorically, to actual worlds" (p.104).

¹⁵⁷ Puckett, Kent. *Narrative Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p.2. As Puckett observes, storytelling is a way of *world making*: we not only spin tales to create other worlds in which to temporarily live, storytelling is a way of telling us how we should always live our lives in the real world. Specifically, "narrative...is what results from the effort to make real or imagined events and objects meaningful in relation to one another, whether that effort is fictional, historical, political, financial, psychological, social, or scientific; narrative theory is, in that case, what we do when we try in a variety of ways to understand those different efforts to arrange events and make them meaningful. Narrative theory focuses...on the necessary relation between two aspects of narrative: (1) the events, the actions, the agents, and the objects that make up the stuff of a given narrative and (2) the shape that those events, actions, agents, and objects take when they are selected, arranged, and represented in one or another medium."

¹⁵⁸ Bergmann, Gustav. "Strawson's Ontology" *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 57, No. 19, 1960, p.607. The phrase *linguistic turn* was coined by Bergmann in a review of P.F. Strawson's *Individuals*. According to Bergmann, the linguistic turn is an attempt to get around the problem of how to best approach the question of the relation between language and world. As the title of his review indicates, this is an ontological question in that the turn to language attempts to study what (truly) exists via the existence of language – namely, which way do we turn?

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.* The methodological gambit is whether it is possible to truthfully talk about an objective world through the concepts of language. Bergmann conceives the gambit in terms of disagreements about which way linguistic philosophers should turn: towards language's attempt to make objectively true statements about the world or towards language's capacity to transform objects in different ways (worldmaking).

¹⁶⁰ Taylor, Marjorie (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook to the Development of the Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 178. Object substitution typically occurs in pre-school age children during playtime, and refers to a child's "ability to substitute objects that are dissimilar and invisible." By assimilating one object (say a stick) to another (a horse or plane) they can pretend that the substituted object is real.

¹⁶¹ Harris, David. *Teaching Yourself Social Theory* (London: Sage, 2003), p.237.

While following our tale, we have pursued a dizzying array of *guiding presuppositions* across distinct contexts of inquiry and found our bearings accordingly. Although these presuppositions have guided us in different ways, they have also directed us towards related questions and problems. Their measure of functionality occurred in a roundabout way for the following reason: while we might be referring to distinct *objects of thought*, they nonetheless *perform* the same function throughout the dissertation. Specifically, it is part of the thesis statement that there is no getting around the problem of chasing our tales and these elusive objects necessarily recur as *tropes* across distinct contexts any-way. The thesis statement therefore purports to more than just state the situation in question – its stating *functions performatively* in that it (re)creates the circle being navigated by way of potentially related contexts and questions. The task ahead, then, is to follow pursuit by determining equivalences of meaning via an equivalence of function in context(s) – and such a *functional equivalence* involves a translation of possible meaning (performing the act of uniform movement between relevant – if immeasurable – contexts of interpretation). If the thesis has a thematic through-line, it is that research objects are "as much made as they are found"¹⁶² and the problem is finding (making) our way around conflicting "value construction of objects of inquiry."¹⁶³

There is, of course, a more straightforward – and relatively risk averse – approach available. If a thesis is a proposition (statement, argument, theory, etc.) to be put forward and proved, it would ideally move in the direction straight in front of it – towards the very 'objects' in question and/or contention. The thesis would follow a direct line of reasoning and seeks to establish a *formal equivalence* between (logical) form and content. By following a methodical process of reasoning, such courses of action directly lead towards their avowed objective – the 'truth' of the matter. The whole point of adopting a formal argument is to make our conceptual frameworks as *airtight* as possible – to create a *logical space* so tightly sealed that little air can enter or leave it. In formally protecting ourselves from environmental conditions and forces, seemingly "airtight arguments"¹⁶⁴ try to forcibly exclude the passage of (hot or cold) air and enter a more rarefied atmosphere – that of an objective or irreversible 'truth'. The ideal of an airtight argument, however, rarely *measures up* to the reality – they invariably leave themselves open to counter arguments or further investigation. The reality necessarily runs counter to (or outruns) the ideal any-way: the guiding presupposition of research is to reframe (reposition or reshape) bones of contention and objects of inquiry – and these *contexts of shifting meaning* may go on

¹⁶² Goodman, Nelson. *Ways Of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett Press, 1978), p.22.

¹⁶³ Hall, John. *Cultures of Inquiry: From Epistemology to Discourse in Sociohistorical Research* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.63.

¹⁶⁴ Boutelle, Tony and Gibilisco, Stan. *Logic Demystified* (New York: The McGrawHill Companies Inc., 2011), p.3.

to be re-contextualized (reshifted and reinterpreted) in turn. Given the seemingly *makeshift* nature of contexts of inquiry – i.e., where interpretations invariably act as an interim or *temporary measure* and can only be done using whatever *interpreted objects* may become available a given time and place – the question turns into: what are we to make of such a situation and how are we to orient ourselves toward it?

The Hermeneutical Situation

Following Heidegger's lead, we shall approach the circle as an "ontological question"¹⁶⁵ – as a problem directed towards the constitution of the meaningful objects within a complex whole invariably calling itself back into question.¹⁶⁶ We will need to proceed carefully however. While the (hermeneutical) circle might figure centrally in Heidegger's questioning, the circular relation between interpretation and understanding is *not* his avowed object of inquiry. Heidegger is primarily directed towards something that (allegedly) remains "obscure and hidden"¹⁶⁷ in the circle, and he raises the "*question of the meaning of Being*"¹⁶⁸ in order to "reawaken our understanding for the meaning of this question."¹⁶⁹ Heidegger's goal is to try and understand the circle in a *more meaningful* way, and his thoroughgoing interpretations attempt to navigate the circle in many different ways. Heidegger goes on to claim that his own conception of the circle remains "superficial"¹⁷⁰ any-way and urged that "at *bottom*, the *ordinary* is *not ordinary*; it is *extra-ordinary*"¹⁷¹ as he purportedly plumbed the depths (or "wellsprings"¹⁷²) of Being. Consequently, many interpreters have found Heidegger's approach to the circle "downright bewildering"¹⁷³ while a tradition of competing interpretations attempt to decipher the "arcane mysteries of Heidegger's obscure texts."¹⁷⁴ The paradox before us, then, is that Heidegger's

¹⁶⁵ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.375.

¹⁶⁶ We are primarily *introducing* Heidegger's ontological conception of the circle of understanding in the Prefix – the following merely sets up the problem that lies before us and we shall return to it when considering Heidegger's questionable approach in our Introduction. Also see the Appendix for a more thoroughgoing approach.

¹⁶⁷ *ibid*, p.21.

¹⁶⁸ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time* trans: Macquarie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.20.

¹⁶⁹ *ibid*.

¹⁷⁰ Heidegger, Martin, "A Dialogue On Language" in *On The Way To Language* trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p. 51.

¹⁷¹ Heidegger, "The Origin Of The Work Of Art" in Krell, David (ed.) *Basic Writings*, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p.179.

¹⁷² Heidegger, Martin. *What is Called Thinking* trans. Jesse Glenn Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p.130.

¹⁷³ Cerbone, David. *Heidegger: A Guide For the Perplexed* (New York: Continuum, 2010), p.x.

¹⁷⁴ Rockmore, Tom. *Heidegger and French Philosophy: Humanism, Antihumanism and Being* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.108.

conception of the circle *moves against* the possibility of a straightforward understanding and actively encourages conflicting interpretations of his own movements there.¹⁷⁵ Part of the problem is Heidegger's disavowal of traditional thought or practice – or moving within the circle of a *levelled and/or closed off* understanding – since

Tradition takes what has come down to us and delivers it over to self-evidence; it blocks our access to those primordial sources from which the categories and concepts handed down to us have been in part quite genuinely drawn. Indeed, it makes us forget that they have had such an origin, and makes us suppose that the necessity of going back to these sources is something which we need not even understand.¹⁷⁶

The ontological question that particularly concerns us, then, is the way the circle of understanding itself 'turns': it is primarily directed towards the question of whether the "ontological structure"¹⁷⁷ turns back on itself or may become a place of a change of direction and forward movement. The question of its turning moves our interpretation to the complex whole's two main constituent parts, and so directs our questioning towards the "essential conditions under which it can be performed."¹⁷⁸ Firstly, there is the issue of the circle's *normativity*, or its capacity to (re)direct the way enclosed human beings stand in relation to their social being and other 'beings' (objects, entities). The ontological question partially turns on the problem of the circle of understanding's sense of *well-being* : in what way may the equilibrium of potentially unstable elements (essential conditions of existence) be held to a truly appropriate ontological standard? Heidegger called our "mode of being"¹⁷⁹ *in* understanding our *being-there*

¹⁷⁵ Faulconer, James. "Appropriating Heidegger" in Faulconer, James and Wrathall, Mark (eds.) *Appropriating Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.1. As Faulconer observes, there continues to be the problem of making sense of Heidegger's guiding question – a (hermeneutical) situation compounded by the hermeneutics of Heidegger's own situation. Heidegger's refusal to navigate the circle in a meaningful (coherent and consistent) way raises the question of whether he really wanted to be understood and/or understand the circle meaningfully (see Introduction for further elaboration). Heidegger's way-ward approach has therefore resulted in conflicting and/or competing interpretations of what to really make of his movements within the circle of understanding. Specifically, within the constellation of Heidegger scholars "we find considerable difference over what might seem to be basic issues: why is Heidegger important? What did his work do? What should we do with it? – and the differences on these issues sometimes carry with them considerable philosophical suspicion. No one is surprised when John Searle says, "most philosophers in the Anglo-American tradition seem to think that Heidegger was an obscurantist muddlehead at best or an unregenerate Nazi at worst." However, many would be surprised to hear similar, though usually more guarded and less caustic, remarks of one Heideggerian about another: there is little consensus among Heideggerians as to what Heidegger's work does or how we are to deal with it".

¹⁷⁶ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time* trans: Macquarrie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.43.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibi*, p. 226.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid*, p.195.

¹⁷⁹ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time* trans: Macquarrie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.27.

(Dasein) in that "understanding is a basic determination of existence"¹⁸⁰ and "existence is the determining character of Dasein."¹⁸¹ Meaningful interpretations of the world are therefore "possible only because the Dasein as existent is itself an intrinsically understanding entity."¹⁸² Heidegger problematizes the way human beings stand in the midst of the "immediate circle of beings,"¹⁸³ and it is their *normative stance* (or moral standing) that becomes the ontological issue there. Heidegger goes on to "pursue the phenomenon of interpretation in understanding the world"¹⁸⁴, and his goal is to distinguish its "mode of genuineness"¹⁸⁵ via the circle in question. Heidegger pursues our "being-there as understanding"¹⁸⁶ and argues that interpretation is understanding made explicit with respect to "its possible authenticity and totality."¹⁸⁷ The "condition of possibility"¹⁸⁸ for meaningful understanding is therefore determined by Dasein's relationship to its own being-in-the-world: the question is whether Dasein should conform to a standard of correctness through prescribed social norms and conventions or whether our being-there can be held to a higher standard of living (*way of being*). Consequently, "existence formally indicates that Dasein is an understanding potentiality-for-Being, which in its Being, makes an issue of that Being itself."¹⁸⁹ Put another way, "in the being of this being it is related to its being. As the being of this being, it is entrusted to its own being. It is being about which this being is concerned "¹⁹⁰ and moves (back) towards. Secondly, there is the related issue of "the fore-structure"¹⁹¹ of understanding in that "every understanding of the world...and all interpretation operates in the fore-structure."¹⁹² The fore-structure is the *existential ground* on which human beings *normatively stand and move*. The possibility of finding our way around in the world is said to be the result of a thrown "projection"¹⁹³ insofar as interpretations necessarily move "forward into (meaningful) possibilities."¹⁹⁴ Such forthright movements receive their directions

¹⁸⁰ Heidegger, Martin, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* trans: Hofstadler, Albert, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 276.

¹⁸¹ *ibid*, p.33.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, p.277.

¹⁸³ Heidegger, "The Origin Of The Work Of Art" in Krell, David (ed.) *Basic Writings*, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p.179.

¹⁸⁴ *ibid*, p.189.

¹⁸⁵ *ibid*.

¹⁸⁶ *ibid*, p.192.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid*, p.358.

¹⁸⁸ *ibid*, 276.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p.274.

¹⁹⁰ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* trans. Joan Stanbaugh (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), p.37. We quote Stanbaugh's translation of the relevant text here because it better captures Heidegger's idea of standing in relation to a practical conception of our identities – i.e., a conception under which we value (understand) ourselves and/or those actions worth pursuing.

¹⁹¹ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.194.

¹⁹² *ibid*.

¹⁹³ *ibid*, p.185.

¹⁹⁴ *ibid*, p.184.

from within a "totality of (implicit) involvements"¹⁹⁵ that may be partially brought forth and called into question. This meaningful totality "need not be grasped explicitly by a thematic interpretation"¹⁹⁶ and "even if it has undergone such an interpretation, it recedes into an understanding which does not stand out from the background."¹⁹⁷ Interpretations occur *by way of guiding presuppositions* that are projected *in advance of* what is being interpreted and so determine *the way* human beings immediately stand in the midst of the circle of beings. A given understanding cannot always explicitly understand what is understood because it always moves against a background of tacit cultural capacities, stances and presuppositions. Nonetheless, "explicitness"¹⁹⁸ is the determining feature of interpretation: it exhibits an "as structure,"¹⁹⁹ or the "structure of something as something."²⁰⁰ The "'as' makes up the structure of the explicitness of something that is understood. It constitutes the interpretation" in that we "see it as a table, a door, a carriage or a bridge."²⁰¹ Heidegger claims "whenever something is interpreted as something, the interpretation will be founded essentially upon fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception."²⁰² The fore-having of an interpretation is the object of interpretation – a 'being' that the interpretation tacitly possesses and remains directed to within the circle in some way. The fore-sight is the orientation (point of view) directing the interpretation, or the way an object of interpretation may be actively seen and understood. The fore-conception is the conception (or directed understanding) itself: it constitutes the way objects within the circle may be approached (interpreted). The possibility for meaning may therefore be held in 'reserve' in two distinct ways – as a reservoir of potential meaning that is invariably called on when needed, or refraining from making a final decision without further consideration or evidence (more understanding, interpretation). The "way in which the entity we are interpreting is to be conceived can be drawn from the entity itself, or the interpretation can force the entity into concepts to which it is opposed in its manner of Being. In either case, the interpretation has already decided for a definite way of conceiving it, either with finality or with reservations."²⁰³ Either way, the fore-structure charts a course for understanding and actively provides a formative standard or quality to those objects already standing before it. Consequently, "an interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us"²⁰⁴ and "what stands there in the first instance"²⁰⁵ are the presuppositions of interpreting beings.

¹⁹⁵ *ibid*, p.p.191.

¹⁹⁶ *ibid*.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid*.

¹⁹⁸ *ibid*, p.189.

¹⁹⁹ *ibid*.

²⁰⁰ *ibid*.

²⁰¹ *ibid*.

²⁰² *ibid*, 189.

²⁰³ *Ibid*, p.191.

²⁰⁴ *ibid*, pp.191-192

²⁰⁵ *ibid*, p.192.

We've observed Heidegger arguing that human existence is itself interpretive, and "any interpretation which is to contribute understanding must have already understood what is to be interpreted."²⁰⁶ Interpreters thereby remain an *integral part* of the objects in question: they belong to – and move within – a *complex whole* determining the possibility of a meaningful world in the first place. The interpretation of 'objects' is "the working-out of possibilities projected in understanding"²⁰⁷ and it is our involvement with an already meaningful world that "gets laid out by the interpretation."²⁰⁸ Heidegger calls such projections the "hermeneutical situation,"²⁰⁹ or "the totality of presuppositions...which needs to be clarified and made secure beforehand, both in a basic experience of the object to be disclosed and in terms of such an experience."²¹⁰ Heidegger attempts to disclose "the world as a phenomenon"²¹¹ so as to question the way we "always conduct our activities in an understanding of Being."²¹² The "world has already been presupposed, and indeed in various ways."²¹³ Understanding is conceived as a *mode of being* in which our being-in-the-world and/or being-there invariably moves and remains directed. By moving within the immediate circle of beings, different entities may be encountered and understood "as such"²¹⁴ – i.e., as being already meaningful and/or distinguished according to different "things that are 'in' the world: houses, trees, people, mountains, stars."²¹⁵ The "circle of understanding"²¹⁶ must therefore be approached via the "avenue of the entities within the world and the Being which they possess."²¹⁷ Given "the interpretedness of the world"²¹⁸ – objects that are "always already"²¹⁹ disclosed as meaningful within the circle – the problem is determining the "hermeneutics unique to each situation."²²⁰ Heidegger's conception of the hermeneutical situation actively resists the ideal of objects as *hermetically sealed* entities – as

²⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p.194.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p.189.

²⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p.191.

²⁰⁹ *ibid.* p.275.

²¹⁰ *ibid.*

²¹¹ *ibid.*, p.91.

²¹² Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 25.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

²¹⁴ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time* trans: Macquarie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.92.

²¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.91.

²¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 195.

²¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.92.

²¹⁸ Heidegger, Martin. "Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation" in *Becoming Heidegger On the Trail of his Early Occasional Writings, 1910–1927* (Seattle: Noesis Press, 2010), p.144.

²¹⁹ Heidegger, Martin. *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* trans. Michael Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 126.

²²⁰ Heidegger, Martin. "Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation" in *Becoming Heidegger On the Trail of his Early Occasional Writings, 1910–1927* (Seattle: Noesis Press, 2010), p.150.

objects potentially sealed off from environmental forces invariably throwing them (back) into question or a state of disrepair. Contexts of interpretation remain open to question, and their corresponding objects may shift in meaning when *passing through* porous borders or potentially accessible *spaces of meaning*. The hermeneutical situation presupposes that we are already "thrown"²²¹ into "the interpretedness which life itself stands:"²²² Living beings don't so much *stand under* interpretations but *move with* the circle enabling a projected understanding to work out further possibilities for meaning. Consequently, "a concept is not a scheme but rather a possibility of being, or how things look in the moment- i.e., is constitutive of the moment – a meaning drawn out of something."²²³ The hermeneutical situation "always moves within a particular interpretedness that has been handed down, or revised or reworked anew."²²⁴ The hermeneutical situation, then, is only intelligible (possible, meaningful) in relation to a "whole of significance"²²⁵ in which interpretations are already situated (move, occur). These situations (or interpreted parts) form a complex whole in two related ways: they are directed by a totality of presuppositions that may remain unquestioned and partial – are *taken as given* and may be incomplete or one-sided – or the corresponding objects may be called into question and transformed via interpretations favouring one side (situation) over another.

We have thus far been talking around the circle in question. We have been approaching the *ontological structure of understanding* in a circumscribed way – through the hermeneutical situation, or the event of a given understanding. The question, however, is what gives understanding its 'events' (situations that occur *as interpretations* within a given time and place)? Following Heidegger's lead, there can be no straightforward answer to this question. We can only approach the circle as an "ontological clue"²²⁶ to be followed and "progressively worked out."²²⁷ Although Heidegger talks about the importance of 'entering'²²⁸ and/or 'leaping'²²⁹ into the circle in the 'right way'²³⁰, Heidegger's own directives are (unfortunately) misleading

²²¹ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 435.

²²² Heidegger, Martin. "Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation" in *Becoming Heidegger On the Trail of his Early Occasional Writings, 1910–1927* (Seattle: Noesis Press, 2010), p.155.

²²³ Heidegger, Martin. *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity* trans. John van Buren, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p.12-13.

²²⁴ Heidegger, Martin. "Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation" in *Becoming Heidegger On the Trail of his Early Occasional Writings, 1910–1927* (Seattle: Noesis Press, 2010), p.155.

²²⁵ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time* trans: Macquarie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.192.

²²⁶ *ibid*, p.47.

²²⁷ *ibid*.

²²⁸ *ibid*, p.195.

²²⁹ *Ibid*, p.363

²³⁰ *ibid*, p.195.

here. Given his own understanding, we are always already *in the circle* anyway – it can never be a question of entering or leaving but approaching (moving within) the circle from a given direction. Furthermore, Heidegger remains intent on *distinguishing between the hermeneutical and the methodological*, and maintains that the hermeneutical situation cannot be reduced to (or interpreted away) via systematic directives and procedures (established ways of proceeding into an area of inquiry or activity). It is more a question of finding our way around the circle of understanding *through* questioning and interpretations that remain open to question and reinterpretation. Heidegger raises the *question of the meaning of Being* in order to situate and redirect the hermeneutical situation (i.e., provide indirect access to the enigma of understanding our mode of *being in the circle*). The question of the meaning of Being is therefore a *leading question* – it is not only thought to imply or contain its own answer, it is asked (directed) in such a way as to indirectly and/or subtly guide human beings to respond (answer) in a particular way. In this way, we need not move methodically in the circle but may follow its lead back to the hidden depths of Being. Specifically, the "circle of understanding is not an orbit in which any random kind of knowledge may move; it is the expression of the existential fore-structure of Dasein itself. It is not to be reduced to the level of a vicious circle, or even of a circle which is merely tolerated. In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing."²³¹ Nonetheless, Heidegger's misleading talk of 'entering' and/or 'leaping' into the circle in the 'right way' still finds itself moving within a *logical circle* in two related ways: it presupposes the possibility of finding our way around an *obstacle to understanding* – i.e., circumvent the very circle in question – and intimates that it is possible that there may exist a *correct principle or standard* (criterion, norm) by which we can move around the obstruction standing in our way of a truer understanding. Heidegger might attempt to circumvent the problem of finding and/or needing a criteria for moving in the circle but he still presupposes the very being (normativity) at issue: the possibility and/or necessity of a *prior ontological standard* for determining the correctness our movements (existence) there.

Since "Dasein already understands itself in terms of its existence – in terms of a possibility of itself"²³², the question becomes *the way* our being-there relates to its own possibilities (relationship to a meaningful world or a world thus made possible and/or questionable). The hermeneutical circle may be said to be "existential-ontological"²³³ for this very reason.

²³¹ Ibid, p.195.

²³² Ibid, p.195.

²³³ Ibid, p.192.

The circle in understanding belongs to the structure of meaning, and the latter phenomenon is rooted in the existential constitution of *Dasein*—that is, in the understanding which interprets. An entity for which, as Being-in-the-world, its Being is itself an issue, has, ontologically, a circular structure.²³⁴

Heidegger's conception of the circle of understanding finds itself directed and moving in accordance with this hermeneutical situation: by finding our place within the circle in question we may lay bare the grounds of questioning and inquire into our own mode of being (meaningful existence as a questioning being). Whilst Heidegger obviously recognises the "manifest circularity"²³⁵ in such an approach, he nonetheless maintains that we should direct ourselves towards "what we are asking about when we ask this question."²³⁶

Such a situation is *hermeneutical* – meets (encounters, copes with) a critical need – insofar as the finitude of existence remains an integral part of the structure of meaning. The circle is *ontological* because objects of interpretation are situated (belongs to an understanding which is placed and interprets) and it remains possible to question the significance of given situations (displace the meaning of interpreted objects). Furthermore, the "hermeneutics unique to each situation has to develop the transparency of its current situation and bring this hermeneutical transparency into its starting point and approach to interpretation."²³⁷ Interpreters therefore need to distinguish between "the thematic object in the how of its being interpreted"²³⁸ and "the comprehensive object of concern, in which the world is put to tasks and takes refuge."²³⁹

In approaching the thematic object of our inquiry – the linguistic turn as a fundamental gambit as to method for proceeding to the world – we will invariably find ourselves moving within the circle potentially calling itself (back) into question there. We simultaneously run the risk of receding into an understanding that does not stand out from the background knowledge enabling such forward movement. If a gambit is an opening move designed to gain an advantage at the outset of given situations, the hermeneutical situation invariably calls into question the ontological significance of such movements. Thus, if we are to ask the question: what calls on us to think we are obliged to answer the circle directing us to move back and forth as such. It is only by performing (enacting) the circle of understanding that we can bring forth

²³⁴ *ibid*, p.195.

²³⁵ *Ibid*, p.27.

²³⁶ *ibid*, p.35.

²³⁷ Heidegger, Martin. "Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation" in *Becoming Heidegger On the Trail of his Early Occasional Writings, 1910–1927* (Seattle: Noesis Press, 2010), p.150.

²³⁸ *ibid*, p.149.

²³⁹ *ibid*, p.155.

the critical question remaining in the background: what is the hermeneutical significance of distinguishing between thematic and comprehensive objects of concern (competing value constructions of objects)? Prior to proceeding further, we turn back to Heidegger regarding the ontological status of the interpretedness of the world and its relation to competing value constructions (interpretations) of objects.

The objects are there as significant, and it is only in definitively directed and layered theorising that what is objective (in the sense of what is object-like or thing-like) arises from the world's factual character of encounter (i.e. from what is already significant)...to *understand* means not to simply recognise established knowledge, but rather to repeat in an original way what was once understood in terms of its own situation and for that situation.²⁴⁰

Paving the way to language: Heidegger and the quasi-transcendental.

We have already observed that Heidegger notes the etymological connection between 'critique' and 'criterion'. Specifically, critique comes from *krinein* "which means to 'sort out' and thus to 'lift out that of special sort'. This contrast against others arises from an elevation of a new order."²⁴¹ Heidegger is noting two related things here – the occurrence of a *prior* ontological standard and the *prioritization* (evaluation of) the given ontological commitments. The idea of a critique, then, presupposes a criterion attempting to distinguish and/or assign a value to the very 'beings' – and presuppositions – in question.²⁴² Heidegger, however, raises the question of Being to problematize the *rational ordering* of beings. Although Heidegger's questioning sets out to interrogate relations of presupposition, the critical question becomes: how should we relate to the presuppositions in question? The question of Being requires a degree of "force against"²⁴³ whatever is presupposed, forcing the circle of understanding in "the direction of a more originary

²⁴⁰ *ibid*, pp.155 and 152 respectively.

²⁴¹ Heidegger, Martin. *What Is A Thing?* trans. W.B. Barton and Vera Deutsch, (Indiana: Gateway Editions, 1967), p.119.

²⁴² Let's compare distinct ontological standards to illustrate the circular relation. As we already seen, Plato argued that *to be is to be idealized*, or a concept exalted to an ideal object of perfection. Kant reversed Plato's conception of being, and argued *to be is to be conceived*, or grounded in an ideal necessity rationally ordering (conceiving) the objects in question. Compare, also, Berkley's idealism in *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Knowledge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) which urged *to be is to be perceived* (p.127) and Leibniz's "Principles of Nature and Grace Based On Reason" in *Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1989) which ontologically commits itself to the view *to be is to be active*, or to be grounded in another being's activity (pp.206-7).

²⁴³ Heidegger, Martin. *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p.178. In this passage, Heidegger talks about the historical necessity of understanding the works of Kant in a different way.

grasping."²⁴⁴ Heidegger claims that such a "destructive"²⁴⁵ approach to "hardened tradition"²⁴⁶ is not to be identified with a "critique...of culture"²⁴⁷ since the "destruction of the history of ontology"²⁴⁸ must occur "by way of a critical dismantling of traditional logic down to its hidden foundations."²⁴⁹ Heidegger is not so much concerned with the conditions of possibility for knowledge but with the conditions of possibility for asking about the Being of beings in the first place. Heidegger's "quasi-transcendental"²⁵⁰ approach obviously raises the more fundamental question: what does he mean (presuppose) by 'Being' within the context of his questioning? Part of the answer is that even an "unoriented and vague"²⁵¹ understanding of being "bears...the possibility of the question within itself."²⁵² In "the question which we are to work out, what is asked about is Being – that which determines entities as entities, that on the basis of which entities are already understood."²⁵³ Heidegger approaches the circle between language and thought through an *existential analytic*²⁵⁴ (in terms of what it means *to be* or exist as a human being in a meaningfully constituted world). Heidegger thereby attempted to adjudicate the question of Being via our "being-in-the-world."²⁵⁵ That is to say, concerning the way a meaningful world remains an integral part of the fundamental constitution of those human beings "inclined to fall back upon the world (the world in which it is)"²⁵⁶ and moves around. Heidegger called this "mode of being"²⁵⁷ our *being-there* (Dasein). Since human beings *move within* an understanding of being, "Dasein is its disclosedness"²⁵⁸ in that it is only by being

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Heidegger, Martin. *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity* trans. John van Buren, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p.81.

²⁴⁶ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.44.

²⁴⁷ *ibid*, p.211.

²⁴⁸ *ibid*, p.44.

²⁴⁹ Heidegger, Martin. *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* trans. Michael Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p.21.

²⁵⁰ Apel, Karl-Otto. *From A Transcendental Semiotic Point Of View* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), p.107.

²⁵¹ Heidegger, Martin. *History of the Concept of Time* trans. Theodore Kiesiel, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p.144.

²⁵² *ibid*.

²⁵³ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 25-26. Approached another way, "when being is thus asked for, it involves inquiring into the basic character of the entity, what defines an entity as entity. What defines the entity as entity is its being" Heidegger, Martin, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena* trans. Theodore Kiesiel, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p.144.

²⁵⁴ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.34

²⁵⁵ *ibid*, p.90.

²⁵⁶ *ibid*, p.42.

²⁵⁷ *ibid*, p.27.

²⁵⁸ *ibid*, p.171.

thrown into an "always already"²⁵⁹ meaningful world that anything can be 'known' (disclosed) "in the immediate circle of beings."²⁶⁰ The question of Being tries to determine what 'Being' could possibly mean or refer to within the context of a "pre-ontological understanding of Being"²⁶¹ (a prior understanding implicitly understood without question). Heidegger's "guiding question"²⁶² goes on to ask "what is the mode of being of the entity in which world is constituted?"²⁶³ Given the question of what makes a meaningful world possible and/or questionable, "the problem of being is related – all inclusively – to what constitutes and what gets constituted."²⁶⁴ We therefore need to find our way back towards a more originary question about the meaning of being and we can only do this by way of "fundamental ontology"²⁶⁵ (the making explicit of what it means to be via formulating the question of the Being). Such an approach can only meaningfully occur when the question of "being in time...functions as a criterion for distinguishing realms of Being"²⁶⁶ or can seek to determine how our temporal existence comes "to have this distinctive ontological function."²⁶⁷ Consequently, it is only by first questioning the meaning of our being-in-the-world that human beings can properly understand "that entity which in its Being has this very Being as an issue."²⁶⁸ The primary goal of Heidegger's questioning is to "arrive at the horizon for the understanding of Being and for the possibility of interpreting it."²⁶⁹ Further, "any interpretation which is to contribute understanding, must have already understood what is to be interpreted."²⁷⁰ Heidegger directs us to approach the question of Being through the "phenomenon"²⁷¹ of a meaningful "world itself"²⁷² and calls this phenomenon the "hermeneutical situation"²⁷³ or the "totality of...presuppositions"²⁷⁴ determining the horizon of a meaningful understanding. In so far as it is possible to move back and forth within a given understanding,

²⁵⁹ Heidegger, Martin. *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* trans. Michael Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 126.

²⁶⁰ Heidegger, Martin. "The Origin of the Work of Art" in Krell, David (ed.) *Basic Writings* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p.179.

²⁶¹ *ibid*, p35.

²⁶² Heidegger, Martin. *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p.28.

²⁶³ Heidegger, Martin. "The Idea of Phenomenology – Heidegger's Letter to Husserl" in Kisiel, Theodore and Sheehan, Thomas (eds.) *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p.331.

²⁶⁴ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 25.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 34

²⁶⁶ *ibid*, p.39.

²⁶⁷ *ibid*.

²⁶⁸ *ibid*, p.68.

²⁶⁹ *ibid*, p. 63.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.194.

²⁷¹ *ibid*.

²⁷² *ibid*, p.91.

²⁷³ *ibid*, p.275

²⁷⁴ *ibid*.

Heidegger points the way backwards and/or forwards by "presupposing"²⁷⁵ the being/s in question and asks us to *find our way* around accordingly. We will therefore need to proceed carefully and distance ourselves from Heidegger's approach. Although Heidegger paves the way to the circle of understanding, it is Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics that provides the decisive turning point for our questioning. Part of the reason is *methodological*. Exploring the relation between *way* and *weigh*, Heidegger cautions against tipping the balance (moving) either way²⁷⁶ and urges that any attempt to take the measure of Being hangs in the balance (remains in a critical state and carries certain risks). Furthermore, "Being, which holds all beings in the balance, constantly attracts beings towards and unto itself" and "Being, as the risk, holds all beings, as risked, in this relation of attraction."²⁷⁷ Given Heidegger's "way-making"²⁷⁸ movements, the entrance to Heidegger's collected thoughts bear the signpost: Ways, not Works.²⁷⁹ Heidegger advises us to approach his thinking as parts that cannot add up to an intelligible whole.²⁸⁰ Each part is "merely a way—station along a way (where) the lasting element in thinking is the way."²⁸¹ The idea of a way, of course, not only implies direction or movement,

²⁷⁵ *ibid*, p.27.

²⁷⁶ Heidegger, Martin. "Why Poets?" in Young, Julian and Haynes, Kenneth (eds.) *Off the Beaten Track* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.210.

²⁷⁷ *ibid*.

²⁷⁸ Heidegger, Martin. "A Dialogue On Language" in *On The Way To Language* trans. Peter Hertz, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.130.

²⁷⁹ Heidegger, Martin. *Gesamtausgabe* (Collected Works), Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1976-1996. *Wege – nicht Arbeiten* (Ways – not Works).

²⁸⁰ Heidegger's major contribution to traditional philosophy – via a seminal text generally understood to espouse a holistic approach to meaning and truth – is itself comprised of various parts which do not add up to a meaningful whole. *Being and Time* not only remains incomplete, the path taken pulls Heidegger in different directions. Of the proposed two parts consisting of an intended three divisions (pp.63-64) only Part 1 appears, and the third division of the first part was never published. According to Heidegger in the "Letter On Humanism", the missing third division was deliberately "held back" because he couldn't manage the proposed reversal from 'being and time' to 'time and being', p.231. And as Theodore Kisiel observes in *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) the relation between part and whole "is a story of the movement of drafts and redrafts, the shuffling of texts ...still bearing signs of incomplete integration, with the gaps still showing", p.312-13.

²⁸¹ Heidegger, Martin. "A Dialogue On Language" in *On The Way To Language* trans. Peter Hertz, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.12. Following Heidegger's lead, the tendency within the literature is to divide Heidegger's thinking into distinct temporal parts – into before and after 'the turning' ("Letter on Humanism," p.231) that emphasizes the question of *the meaning* and *the truth* of Being respectively. Nonetheless, Heidegger's movements form a *complex whole*. The question of Being is complex insofar as Being and beings remain on *the way*: as either moving towards a given understanding and/or calling whatever is understood back into question. By his own reckoning, the possibility of moving towards meaning or truth presuppose each other in that "turning is counter-turning" (Heidegger, Martin, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p.286-7). Specifically, understanding has its "innermost occurrence and its widest reach in the turning" around the question of Being. Being called upon re-turns us to Being's own movement, requiring thinking beings to fall back upon their "guiding questions and the circle of under-standing...Turning holds sway between the call (to the one belonging) and the belonging (of the one who is called). Turning is counter-turning." Heidegger's approach actually begins with a 'turning' *anyway*, where questioning turns back upon

it suggests a path being prepared or is available for travelling upon. Questioning may thereby offer a way by enabling movement or direction. Heidegger, then, merely paves the way back and forth, and such a 'pavement' is the ground upon which the *question* of being moves. Heidegger is acutely aware that any attempt to clear the way through questioning threatens to throw into question the relations within thinking. Any questioning potentially involves mutually exclusive parts, and so requires piety *in* thinking questions.²⁸² Thought must remain observant of and devoted to the question of its own way-making movements – by being wary of its own thinking/questioning. On the one hand, thought is preparatory in that it attempts to make a way accessible: questions guide thought in a particular direction and seek to uncover or access something.²⁸³ On the other hand, questions may be misguided in that they may lie over or cover up something: the very thing being thought *through* questioning.²⁸⁴ While the question of Being might have directed Heidegger's overall movements, *thinking about* that question took him in various directions. If there is a guiding principle, it's Heidegger's attempt to move past the "language of metaphysics"²⁸⁵ by thinking about the "ontological difference,"²⁸⁶ or the difference between Being and beings in different ways.²⁸⁷ Although Heidegger originally claimed that the

itself in order to question the pathway/s of thinking. As Scharff observes, "clarification of the being-question is made dependent upon turning the seemingly closed and unreflective circularity of everyday understanding into a radically deepened sense of hermeneutical circularity... In its beginningless (i.e., circularly situated) beginning (i.e., point of departure), philosophy turns towards a hermeneutic of Dasein", Scharff, C. Richard. "Heidegger's Path of Thinking And The Way of Meditation In The Early Upanisads" in Sprung, Mervyn (ed.) *The Question of Being: East/West Perspectives* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978), p.68.

²⁸² Heidegger, Martin. "The Question Concerning Technology" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* trans. William Lovitt (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977), p.35.

²⁸³ Preparation is "opening the way, yielding to the way... (where) the territory first comes to be through a pathway," *Contributions To Philosophy (From Enowning)*, p.60.

²⁸⁴ According to Heidegger, "questioning builds a way" along a (conceptual) terrain and "building belongs to (a) dwelling" – that is, threatens to go hand in hand with a tendency to build on top of and occupy a territory along a pathway. See his "The Question Concerning Technology" and "Building Dwelling Thinking" in *Basic Writings*, pp. 311 and 347-353 respectively.

²⁸⁵ Heidegger, Martin. "Letter on Humanism" in Krell, David (ed.) *Basic Writings* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p.231.

²⁸⁶ Heidegger, Martin. *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* trans. Albert Hofstadler, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 227.

²⁸⁷ Sheehan, Thomas. "What, After All, Was Heidegger About"? *Continental Philosophy Review*, 47, 2 (2014), p. 249. Although Sheehan argues that Heidegger remained a "phenomenologist from beginning to end", there is the question of whether he followed the way of phenomenology to begin with. Specifically, Husserl and Heidegger famously *parted ways over the way* 'phenomenology' should lead questioning. The *way of phenomenology* not only remained open to interpretation, but following the lead of the very objects in question (phenomena) remains subject to conflicting interpretations. See, for example, Sheehan's own "Introduction" within Sheehan, Thomas and Palmer, Richard (eds.) *Husserl, Edmund. Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997). Sheehan quotes a young Heidegger lamenting in 1919 that he and Husserl were at a "methodological crossroads" before he even set out, p.18 and Husserl found Heidegger's subsequent approach (and relationship to his own thinking) increasingly incomprehensible, p.31.

"fundamental task"²⁸⁸ was to determine the "meaning of Being,"²⁸⁹ the "relation of Being and human being"²⁹⁰ was "unsuitably conceived"²⁹¹ insofar as "the truth of Being remains unthought"²⁹² and lies "concealed"²⁹³ within any given understanding. Heidegger was forced to approach the question of Being in a roundabout way because the "usual conception of intentionality misunderstands"²⁹⁴ the way rational thought can meaningfully relate to the objects of its own questioning. Rational thought was obliged to make "intentionality itself into a problem"²⁹⁵ since "intentional relations"²⁹⁶ are not only "related to beings themselves"²⁹⁷, they throw into question the "relatedness"²⁹⁸ and "relating-to"²⁹⁹ Being in the first place. As Crowell and Malpas observe about Heidegger's approach, the "scope of the transcendental question"³⁰⁰ extends to "the conditions...of all intentionality, all consciousness of something as something."³⁰¹ Consequently, Heidegger's questioning is itself directed upon and moves within "the 'understanding of being' upon which all directedness toward objects 'as' something depends."³⁰² The question of Being can therefore only be approached (truthfully understood) "as a question into the very possibility of any intelligibility or meaning at all."³⁰³

Heidegger originally distinguished between practical and theoretical intentionality, or distinct ways in which rational beings intentionally relate to the world. The distinction is between the *ready-to-hand*- and the *present-to-hand* and relates to "an assignment or reference to something."³⁰⁴ Heidegger presents a hammer to distinguish our modes of being-there³⁰⁵ and observes that such tools can be approached in two distinct ways. We could either take it in our

²⁸⁸ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.31.

²⁸⁹ *ibid.*

²⁹⁰ Heidegger, Martin. "The Origin of the Work of Art" in Krell, David (ed.) *Basic Writings* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p. 211.

²⁹¹ *ibid.*

²⁹² Heidegger, Martin. "Letter on Humanism" in Krell, David (ed.) *Basic Writings* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p.242.

²⁹³ *ibid.*, p.246.

²⁹⁴ Heidegger, Martin. *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* trans. Albert Hofstadler, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 63.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.64.

²⁹⁶ Heidegger, Martin. *Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* trans. Michael Heim, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 134.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.132.

²⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p.133.

³⁰⁰ Crowell, Steven, and Malpas, Jeff (eds.) "Introduction" in *Transcendental Heidegger* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p.3.

³⁰¹ *ibid.*

³⁰² *ibid.*

³⁰³ *ibid.*

³⁰⁴ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.97.

³⁰⁵ *ibid.*, pp.95-102.

hand and hammer away without thinking or we could present it to conscious thought and contemplate it as an object from a distance. When using a hammer, we don't normally understand it as a 'handle and a heavy metal top with a flat side' – the object's physical properties retreat into the background (context of presuppositions) from which it emerges. We relate to the hammer by way of the task literally at hand: by being orientated to the act of hitting nails on the head and become an integral part of an activity occurring within a referential whole. Only a breakdown in understanding would typically render it present-to-hand: a broken hammer becomes a question insofar as there is a problem calling for immediate resolution. The question of Being, however, needs to be approached in different ways. The *question* is neither *ready for* understanding or can be readily *presented in* understanding: determining the true meaning of Being or the task assigned to human beings lies beyond understanding because Being as the determination of beings remains *referentially opaque*.³⁰⁶ Heidegger argues that the problem of intentionality is determining how we should truthfully "think about"³⁰⁷ the relation between thought and language since "we do not know what is called thinking and what calls for thinking."³⁰⁸ Heidegger's questioning purports to answer a higher "calling"³⁰⁹ when directing thought back towards the original "source of the calling."³¹⁰ Thinking is therefore a "recalling"³¹¹ in "the sense that it originally directs us to thinking."³¹² Heidegger goes so far as to attribute significance to the etymology of select words – such as truth,³¹³ calling³¹⁴ and way³¹⁵ – to recall

³⁰⁶ Quine, Willard. "Reference and Modality" in *From A Logical Point of View* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), p.143. We adopt Quine's phrase from a different context here.

³⁰⁷ Heidegger, Martin. *What is Called Thinking* trans. Jesse Glenn Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p.19.

³⁰⁸ *ibid.*

³⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p.121.

³¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.127.

³¹¹ *ibid.*, p.141.

³¹² *ibid.*, p.124.

³¹³ Heidegger, Martin. *Parmenides* trans. Andre Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992). During the course of this lecture on Parmenides' famous poem, Heidegger tries to find his way back to the essence of truth via an interpretation of the word *aletheia*. Heidegger attempts to retrieve 'truth's' more original or primary meaning via an etymological analysis of the ancient Greek word *aletheia* as it originally occurs in "Parmenides' doctrinal poem", p.2. Heidegger thereby arrives at the understanding that since truth originally meant unconcealment, Being can only meaningfully occur if a world is disclosed or brought out "into the open that is lighted by itself" (clearing, true history, etc.), p.162-163.

³¹⁴ Heidegger, Martin. *What is Called Thinking* trans. Jesse Glenn Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1968). According to Heidegger, "The Greek verb *keleuein* properly means to get something on the road, to get it underway. The Greek noun *keleuthos* means way. And that the old word "to call" means not so much a command as a letting-reach, that therefore the "call" has an assonance of helpfulness and compliance, is shown by the fact that the same word in Sanskrit still means something like to invite", p.117.

³¹⁵ Heidegger, Martin. "Why Poets?" in Young, Julian and Haynes, Kenneth (eds.) *Off the Beaten Track* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Heidegger notes the etymological connection between way and weigh, and claims that it is only possible to get underway because the weight of a given concern or directive "is able to tip the balance one way or another into the play of motion", p.210.

a long "forgotten"³¹⁶ question. Calling on the etymological connection between *thinking* and *thanking*,³¹⁷ questioning turns into an expression of gratitude for Being's consideration (the condition of possibility for more careful thought).³¹⁸ Heidegger's recall occurs as a "mutual calling of origin and future"³¹⁹, and human beings may answer the call by bringing "together what is concealed within the old."³²⁰ Heidegger's back and forth movements have their origins in his quasi-transcendental approach to the question of Being *in* time. Specifically, where the question of the conditions of possibility of "world meaning constitution"³²¹ is located within a temporal and/or originating horizon.³²² Consequently, the "unity of the horizon of temporality is nothing other than the temporal condition for the possibility of *world* and of world's essential belonging to *transcendence*."³²³ The question of Being is transcendental in that it is thought to be immanent and/or imminent – it determines the Being of beings by *moving with* human beings *in time*. The problem, however, is the intelligibility of conceiving an ontology that points beyond (or exists prior to) phenomenal existence: is it possible (meaningful) to introduce a dividing line between Being and beings in history? Heidegger claims to be able to bring forth the distinction between Being and beings *through* that "unitary phenomenon"³²⁴ passed down and levelled off into an undifferentiated mode of being. The difficulty is *the way* a meaningful whole raises the question of "the structure of self-referentiality"³²⁵ when *throwing* its directives and movements (back) into question. Any move towards quasi-transcendental questioning necessarily moves within the complex whole structuring its movements, and so becomes an inquiry into the

³¹⁶ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.21.

³¹⁷ Heidegger, Martin. "Why Poets?" in Young, Julian and Haynes, Kenneth (eds.) *Off the Beaten Track* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.139-144.

³¹⁸ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997). According to Heidegger here, "Being-in-the-world has the stamp of care, which accords with its being" (p.243) but such a mode of being typically occurs without much thought since it involves a "disclosive submission to the world, out of which we can encounter something that matters to us" (ibid, p.370). Heidegger considers in "The Origin of the Work of Art", however, that we have become increasingly careless as a result since we have lost our way and fallen into worldly concerns. Specifically, "We believe we are at home in the immediate circle of beings. Beings are familiar, reliable, ordinary... At bottom, the ordinary is not ordinary; it is extraordinary", p.179.

³¹⁹ Heidegger, Martin, "A Dialogue On Language" in *On The Way To Language* trans. Peter Hertz, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.12.

³²⁰ ibid, p.36.

³²¹ ibid.

³²² Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997). According to Heidegger, temporality "*is the primordial 'outside of itself' in and 'for itself'*" (p.377) and "temporalizes itself in temporality" (p.417).

³²³ Heidegger, Martin. *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* trans. Michael Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p.21.

³²⁴ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 192.

³²⁵ Bubner, Rudiger. "Is Transcendental Hermeneutics Possible?" in Manninen, Juha and Tuomela, Raimo (eds.) *Essays on Explanation and Understanding* (Dordrecht: D.Reidel Publishing, 1976), p.69.

conditions of its possibility (existence, occurrence). As Bubner observes, the "transcendental presupposition"³²⁶ is directed by the question of its being-there and so attempts to uncover "the conditions for the possibility...of understanding"³²⁷ by determining the limits of its own "ontological commitment."³²⁸ Specifically, questioning referred to as (quasi) "transcendental" takes as its subject, together with the general conditions of knowledge, the conditions of its own genesis and functioning.³²⁹ The question, then, re-turns to the problem of whether a self-referential structure can determine the limits of its own objects and events: is it even meaningful (intelligible, possible) for reason to question itself in such a roundabout way? Lafont notes that Heidegger substitutes the "ontological difference for the empirical/transcendental dichotomy"³³⁰ to distinguish between the "ontological structures of Dasein *in general* and its historical, *ontic* concretizations."³³¹ In this way, Heidegger ascribes a "quasi-transcendental status...to the particular world-disclosure in which Dasein is thrown"³³² and Heidegger can "do this in virtue of the possibility of affirming that a world-disclosure is something ontic (factually given, a cultural product) but at the same time always already ontological."³³³ Heidegger's concept of a world meaningfully constituted thereby attempts to have it both ways simultaneously – to interrogate our understanding of being within the line at which history and culture meet and yet circumvent the circular boundary in which both appear together or move. Heidegger attempts to *move beyond* the circle to question that which bounds and "encircles"³³⁴ understanding, and so determines *its* mode of being as a circular boundary. The problem was moving towards the "determining"³³⁵ of understanding – a determination which encompasses and relates to the circle's own directives and movements. Heidegger's "transcendental historicism"³³⁶ has been called a "non-viable mongrel"³³⁷ because Heidegger attempts to "historicize the Platonic dividing

³²⁶ *ibid*, p.61.

³²⁷ *ibid*, p.69.

³²⁸ *ibid*, p.63.

³²⁹ Bubner, Rudiger. "Kant, Transcendental Arguments, and the Problem of the Deduction", *Review of Metaphysics*, Vol.28, 1975, p.462.

³³⁰ Lafont, Cristina. *Heidegger, Language, and World-Disclosure* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.18

³³¹ *ibid*, p.17.

³³² *ibid*, p.18.

³³³ *ibid*.

³³⁴ Heidegger, Martin. *Discourse On Thinking* trans. John Anderson and Hans Freund, (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p.63.

³³⁵ *ibid*, p.77.

³³⁶ Guignon, Charles. *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Indianapolis: Hackett University Press, 1983), p.232.

³³⁷ *ibid*.

line"³³⁸ by turning the distinction between Being and time around.³³⁹ Heidegger subsequently came to the understanding that there was a "thinking more rigorous than the conceptual"³⁴⁰ and being understood was "suicidal to philosophy"³⁴¹ any-way. Heidegger originally conceived language in instrumental terms,³⁴² and his questioning rigorously applied an "act of appropriation"³⁴³ to apportion out the "appropriation of understanding."³⁴⁴ Concepts *through* which understanding was brought forth or held back had its basis in Dasein's *prior* potentiality for meaning: language was therefore merely the way in which an always already meaningful world was understood. Heidegger came to the understanding, however, that it was really the other way around and the requirement was to find our way back to the language calling the world into being and/or question in the first place. Heidegger thereby answered the call of being "appropriated to Being"³⁴⁵ by turning the "ancient quarrel"³⁴⁶ between poetry and philosophy on its head.³⁴⁷ It is rational thinking which finds itself lost in exile,³⁴⁸ and poetry paves the way towards a "homecoming"³⁴⁹ insofar as Being's dwelling within language permits human beings

³³⁸ Rorty, Richard. "Heidegger, Kundera and Dickens" in *Essays On Heidegger And Others* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.70. According to Rorty, "the Heideggerian counterpart of Plato's world of appearance seen from above is the West seen from beyond metaphysics. Whereas Plato looks down, Heidegger looks back. But both are hoping to distance themselves from, cleanse themselves of, what they are looking at", *ibid*.

³³⁹ Heidegger, Martin. "Letter On Humanism" in Krell, David (ed.) *Basic Writings* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p.231. One of the reasons Heidegger offers for *Being and Time*'s indeterminate status is that he claimed to misconceive his own question from the outset. Specifically, Heidegger's original approach was "bound to lead immediately and inevitably into error" because the question of Being cannot be understood rationally. i.e., brought under rational grasp or control.

³⁴⁰ *ibid*, p.258.

³⁴¹ Heidegger, Martin. *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p.307.

³⁴² Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.203.

³⁴³ *ibid*, p.191.

³⁴⁴ *ibid*.

³⁴⁵ Heidegger, Martin. *Identity and Difference* trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p.31. According to Heidegger, human beings and Being are now "determined by their belonging" together and so "are appropriated to each other."

³⁴⁶ Plato, *Republic*, Book X, 607b. As Plato's phase indicates, he did not start the argument – their quarrel predates his own inquiries and merely informs his thinking.

³⁴⁷ Plato's *Republic*, of course, famously urged that poetry is mere imitation: since its mode of being was further from the truth than rational thinking it threatens to corrupt the immortal soul and should be banished until it can argue its case rationally. (Book X, 598-607).

³⁴⁸ Heidegger, Martin. "Letter On Humanism" in Krell, David, (ed.) *Basic Writings* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993). According to Heidegger, the requirement is to approach the "homelessness of contemporary man from the essence of Being's history" (p.241) and "only thus does the overcoming of homelessness begin from Being, a homelessness in which not only man but the essence of man stumbles aimlessly about. Homelessness so understood consists in the abandonment of Being by beings. Homelessness is the symptom of oblivion of Being" (p.242).

³⁴⁹ Heidegger, Martin. *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* trans. Keith Hoeller, (New York: Humanity Books, 2000). When Heidegger moves towards (interprets) Hölderlin's "The Homecoming/To Kindred Ones", he argues that the poem is not *of* or *about* the theme homecoming. Rather, being-with the poem *brings about* (enacts, makes possible) a homecoming by enabling the question of our

to enter a region where rational method must relinquish its reign.³⁵⁰ Following language's "poetic activity"³⁵¹ may direct thought's return to "nearness to the origin."³⁵² Heidegger calls upon poetry not just because he thinks it provides privileged access to language – rather; language is now thought to be the original (and long forgotten) poem.³⁵³ Heidegger's way to language determines that human beings are more than a being-in-the-world: they are part of an "originary oneness"³⁵⁴ that calls forth a deeper understanding. The possibility of a meaningful world is said to be disclosed via the "relation of all relations"³⁵⁵ called the "fourfold"³⁵⁶ (referential structure/dwelling *unfolding* the possible relationship between mortals, earth, sky and gods). Consequently, "Language is the house of Being in which man ek-sists by dwelling, in that he belongs to the truth of Being, guarding it."³⁵⁷ Heidegger, then, attempted to situate his own questioning *outside* the limits of philosophical understanding and within the realm of poetic understanding (a *thoughtful poeticising* determined by the immeasurable or boundless).³⁵⁸ If the 'task of thinking'³⁵⁹ was to find a way to delimit what could be understood, we need to determine the boundaries our own questioning accordingly. A related reason for existentially bounding *our inquiry* is that Heidegger is a "genuinely novel thinker who breaks with established patterns of thought"³⁶⁰ and his language is notoriously "difficult to understand"³⁶¹ anyway. Given the

being-there. The "elegy 'Homecoming' is not a poem about homecoming; rather, the elegy, the poetic activity which it is, is the homecoming itself" (p.44).

³⁵⁰ Heidegger, Martin. "Building Dwelling Thinking" in *Poetry, Language, Thought* trans. Albert Hofstadter, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

³⁵¹ Heidegger, Martin. *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* trans. Keith Hoeller, (New York: Humanity Books, 2000), p.44.

³⁵² *ibid*, p.42.

³⁵³ Heidegger, Martin. "Language" in *Poetry, Language, Thought* trans. Albert Hofstadter, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p.208.

³⁵⁴ Heidegger, Martin. "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" in *Poetry, Language, Thought* trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p.149.

³⁵⁵ Heidegger, Martin. "The Nature Of Language", in *On The Way To Language* trans. Peter Hertz, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.107.

³⁵⁶ Heidegger, Martin. "Building Dwelling Thinking" in *Poetry, Language, Thought* trans. Albert Hofstadter, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 149.

³⁵⁷ Heidegger, Martin. "Letter on Humanism" in Krell, David (ed.) *Basic Writings* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p.231.

³⁵⁸ Heidegger, Martin. "The Thinker As Poet" in *Poetry, Language, Thought* trans. Albert Hofstadter, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 12. Heidegger illustrates the relationship between thought and poetry by composing a piece of writing that resembles a poem.

³⁵⁹ This is a paraphrase of a title of one of Heidegger's late contributions to philosophy (1964). The actual text is provocatively called "The End Of Philosophy and The Task Of Thinking" and is an attempt to rethink the question of Being as posed in 1927's *Being and Time*. It can be found in Heidegger, Martin, *On Time and Being* trans. Joan Stanbaugh, (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

³⁶⁰ Rockmore, Tom. *On Heidegger's Nazism and Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p.18.

³⁶¹ *ibid*.

"tortured intensity"³⁶² and/or "wilful obscurantism"³⁶³ of Heidegger's *general approach*, the relation between Heidegger's thinking and language are among the "obstacles to its comprehension"³⁶⁴ and "tends to paralyse the capacity for lucid thought."³⁶⁵ If Heidegger purports to be thinking about the enigma of Being, it follows that Heidegger's "innovative but often obscure language"³⁶⁶ preserves "the enigmatic character of what is to be thought."³⁶⁷ Heidegger doesn't so much ask us to beg the original question but to prostrate ourselves before a question that defies rational understanding and directs thinking into an "impenetrable fog, in which ideas not clearly understood have to be taken on trust."³⁶⁸ As Heidegger readily sees, it "remains *unclear* what we are supposed to think under the name Being"³⁶⁹ when determining the "Being of beings"³⁷⁰ since the "distinction (is) made only in thought"³⁷¹ and remains "questionable"³⁷² in turn. Heidegger's questioning subsequently turned towards what he called the concealed "clearing of Being,"³⁷³ or an "unmeasurable (that) first opens up the open region for every measure."³⁷⁴ In thinking the *question* of being, the critical question becomes: what is called thinking and/or calls thought forth (into being and/or question)?³⁷⁵ Thought remains directed and "on the way"³⁷⁶ insofar as it has been called into thinking via Being's own directive

³⁶² Mulhall, Stephen. *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Heidegger and 'Being and Time'* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. viii.

³⁶³ Geuss, Raymond. *Outside Ethics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), p.26.

³⁶⁴ Rockmore, Tom. *On Heidegger's Nazism and Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p.18.

³⁶⁵ Philipse, Herman. *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p.371. Philipse claims that "the appearance of novelty and profoundness was produced by a spectacular apparatus of verbal fireworks and hocus pocus, which dazzles the reader and tends to paralyse the capacity for lucid thought."

³⁶⁶ Watts, Michael. *The Philosophy of Heidegger* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. viii.

³⁶⁷ Fynsk, Christopher. *Heidegger: Thought and Historicity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p.65.

³⁶⁸ Glover, Jonathon. *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p.375.

³⁶⁹ Heidegger, Martin. *Introduction to Metaphysics* trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), p.35.

³⁷⁰ *ibid.*

³⁷¹ *ibid.*

³⁷² *ibid.*

³⁷³ Heidegger, Martin. "Letter on Humanism" in Krell, David (ed.) *Basic Writings* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p.230.

³⁷⁴ Heidegger, Martin. "On The Essence Of Truth", in Krell, David (ed.) *Basic Writings* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p.126-127.

³⁷⁵ Polt, Richard. *The Emergency of Being: On Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2013), p.5. Heidegger's quest for an ontology of unconcealment thereby becomes a critical area of concern. As Polt observes, the "heart of history, for Heidegger, is not a sequence of occurrences but the happening of Be-ing – the eruption of significance at 'inceptions' or critical junctures. Such a juncture decides the course of an epoch... (and)...brings us into our own by making all being, including our being, into an urgent issue. In emergency, being emerges."

³⁷⁶ Heidegger, Martin. "What Calls For Thinking" in Krell, David (ed.) *Basic Writings* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p. 379.

(calling) and thus "directs us into thought and gives us directives for thinking."³⁷⁷ Heidegger's subsequent "pursuit of an "ontology of unconcealment"³⁷⁸ commits itself to the "being of language"³⁷⁹ and urges that rational thought must find its *way back to language* in order to *undergo* it. Specifically, our being-there must open itself to "the possibility of undergoing an experience with language. To undergo *an experience* with something — be it a thing, a person, or a god — means that this something befalls us, strikes us, comes over us, overwhelms and transforms us... the experience is not of our making; to undergo here means that we endure it, suffer it, receive it as it strikes us and submit to it...To undergo an experience with language, then, means to let ourselves be concerned by the claim of language by entering into it and submitting to it."³⁸⁰ The way to language therefore also involves *foregoing* any attempt to seize control of it via assertions and statements. Instead of "explaining language in terms of one thing or another, and thus running away from it, the way to language intends to let language be experienced as language. In the nature of language, to be sure, language itself is conceptually grasped – but grasped in the grasp of something other than itself. If we attend to language exclusively as language, however, then language requires us to put forward everything that belongs to language as language."³⁸¹ Although Heidegger's questioning received its directives from the circle of understanding, the question remains: where was it directed? Specifically, what was its 'object' (the goal understood to be reachable and/or approachable in some way)? While the difference between Being and beings might have been "the central thought of Heideggerian philosophy",³⁸² determining its "intentional horizon"³⁸³ remains an area of concern.³⁸⁴

³⁷⁷ Ibid, p.384.

³⁷⁸ Wrathall, Mark. *Heidegger and Unconcealment: Truth, Language and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.4.

³⁷⁹ Heidegger, Martin. "The Nature Of Language" in *On The Way To Language* trans. Peter Hertz, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.94.

³⁸⁰ Ibid, p.57.

³⁸¹ Heidegger, Martin. "The Way To Language" in *On The Way To Language* trans. Peter Hertz, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.119-120.

³⁸² Haugeland, John. "Truth and Finitude: Heidegger's Transcendental Existentialism" in Wrathall, Mark and Malpas, Jeff (eds.) *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus, Vol 1*, (Cambridge: MIT Press 2000), p.47

³⁸³ Okrent, Mark. *Heidegger's Pragmatism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p.286.

³⁸⁴ Sheehan, Thomas. *Making Sense of Heidegger* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014). Witness the way Sheehan attempts to make sense of Heidegger's overall approach. Sheehan readily acknowledges the "considerable confusion at the heart of the Heideggerian enterprise, and it may not be the fault of Heidegger scholars. Heidegger himself said that "it remains unclear what we are supposed to think under the name 'being" (p.5). Sheehan goes on to clarify Heidegger's meaning by attempting to make the question of Being "answerable" (p.237) for itself by way of coherence and consistency. While Sheehan's no-nonsense approach is certainly commendable, clearing (interpreting) away Heidegger's "silliness" (ibid) and "hyperbole" (ibid) results in a questionable 'corrective' (or countermovement towards intelligibility and understatement). Sheehan is especially concerned by Heidegger's tendency to hypostatize and personalize Being and argues that "the obscurity and incomprehension that still haunts his philosophy" (p.xix) invariably "turns...into a parody of itself" (p.11). Sheehan laments Heidegger's free *fall* into a world of his own making and even compares Heidegger to Humpty Dumpty (p.20). Sheehan also despairs that the house of Being

Heidegger's central thought needs to be understood as being directed at, or about, the 'object' in question and so related to (moving within) a given intentional horizon. Witness the widespread difficulty in trying to determine the direction of Heidegger's movements. It has been argued, for example, that Heidegger was (primarily) a phenomenologist,³⁸⁵ a transcendentalist,³⁸⁶ a pragmatist,³⁸⁷ a hermeneutic thinker,³⁸⁸ a linguistic idealist³⁸⁹ and a mystic.³⁹⁰ It has also been suggested that interpretations can be generally divided into two competing tendencies – as either "bald aestheticism"³⁹¹ or "hermeneutic narrativism."³⁹²

The difficulty in securing the intentional horizon of Heidegger's thinking has not prevented other thinkers from moving towards a given understanding. Appropriations of Heidegger can be found across distinct philosophical circles or movements – including Sartre's existentialism,³⁹³ Gadamer's hermeneutics,³⁹⁴ Rorty's pragmatism³⁹⁵ and Derrida's deconstructionism.³⁹⁶ Part of the difficulty is that Heidegger appears to oscillate between conflicting movements towards 'beings'. On the one hand, Heidegger insists on the "phenomenological conception of phenomenon"³⁹⁷ or as "that which shows itself"³⁹⁸ in the world of experience. Such a conception

would ideally bear the sign 'abandon all hope ye who enter here' (p.20). In Sheehan, Thomas, "What, After All, Was Heidegger About"? *Continental Philosophy Review*, Vo.47, No. 2, 2014, Sheehan goes so far as to encourage even the most sympathetic of interpreters to follow Virgil's advice to a distressed Dante when guiding him through the circles of hell in *The Divine Comedy*: by not speaking about the beings in question – to just look and move on (p.270).

³⁸⁵ Sheehan, Thomas. "What, After All, Was Heidegger About"? *Continental Philosophy Review*, Vol. 47, No. 2, 2014, p. 249.

³⁸⁶ Dahlstrom, Daniel. "Heidegger's Transcendentalism" *Research in Phenomenology* Vol.35, No.1, 2005, pp.29-54.

³⁸⁷ Rorty, Richard. "Heidegger, Contingency, and Pragmatism" in *Essays On Heidegger And Others* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.27-49.

³⁸⁸ Zaborowski, Holger. "Heidegger's Hermeneutics: Towards A New Practice of Understanding" in Dahlstrom, Daniel (ed.) *Interpreting Heidegger: Critical Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.15.

³⁸⁹ Lafont, Cristina. *Heidegger, Language, and World-Disclosure* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.xvii.

³⁹⁰ Magnus, Bernd. *Heidegger's Metahistory of Philosophy* (Berlin: Springer, 1970), p. 141.

³⁹¹ Crowell, Steven. "Facticity and Transcendental Philosophy" in Malpas, Jeff (ed.) *From Kant to Davidson* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.101.

³⁹² *ibid.*

³⁹³ Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (Pocket Books, 1978).

³⁹⁴ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996).

³⁹⁵ Rorty, Richard. "Heidegger, Kundera and Dickens" in *Essays On Heidegger And Others* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³⁹⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Implications" in *Positions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), p.9. Derrida readily acknowledges that "what I have attempted to do would not have been possible without the opening of Heidegger's questions."

³⁹⁷ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 60.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

directs itself "to the things themselves"³⁹⁹ and is "opposed to all free floating constructions and accidental findings."⁴⁰⁰ The concept of phenomenon therefore needs to be "understood from the beginning as that which shows itself in itself",⁴⁰¹ and asks how "time itself manifests itself as the horizon of Being?"⁴⁰² Heidegger initially purports to understand 'phenomenon' *without presuppositions* and thereby attempts to question the conditions of possibility for objects of experience via the distinction between Being and beings. Specifically, where 'beings' involves a *self-showing or letting things be* by way of (the question of) Being. The Being of entities occurs *prior to* the beings in question and distinguished from any given interpretation of them. Heidegger's *presuppositionless* approach questions 'beings' in their "ontological constitution"⁴⁰³, or the way beings are constituted *throughout* time. On the other hand, Heidegger insists that being-in-the-world is a thrown "projection"⁴⁰⁴ and that human beings always experience the world "as something interpreted."⁴⁰⁵ Consequently, whatever is understood there is "disclosed as possible significance"⁴⁰⁶ and so "throws before itself the possibility as possibility, and lets it be as such."⁴⁰⁷ Heidegger's recourse to the "perfect tense *a priori*"⁴⁰⁸ of an always already meaningful world attempts to bridge the divide between the *transcendent* – what occurs prior to experience – and the *immanent* (what occurs within it). An always already world is possible because it "characterizes the kind of Being belonging to Dasein itself."⁴⁰⁹ Factual existence and temporal occurrences (the ontical), however, are only possible because of the ontological difference insofar as Being is "no class or genus of entities, yet it pertains to every entity. Its 'universality' is to be sought higher up... Being and the structure of Being lie beyond every entity and every possible character which an entity may possess. Being is the transcendent pure and simple."⁴¹⁰ As their condition of possibility, "Being can never be explained by entities but is already that which is 'transcendental' for every entity."⁴¹¹ Given this approach, an "aporia"⁴¹²

³⁹⁹ *ibid*, p.50.

⁴⁰⁰ *ibid*,

⁴⁰¹ *ibid*. p.54.

⁴⁰² *ibid*, p.488.

⁴⁰³ *ibid*, p.79.

⁴⁰⁴ *ibid*, p.185.

⁴⁰⁵ *ibid*, p.192.

⁴⁰⁶ *ibid*, p.184.

⁴⁰⁷ *ibid*, p.185.

⁴⁰⁸ *ibid*, p.117.

⁴⁰⁹ *ibid*.

⁴¹⁰ *ibid*, p.62.

⁴¹¹ *ibid*, 251.

⁴¹² Blatner, William. "Ontology, the A Priori, and the Primacy of Practice: An Aporia in Heidegger's Early Philosophy" in Crowell, Steven and Malpas, Jeff (eds.) *Transcendental Heidegger* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 23.

remains within Heidegger's "transcendental hermeneutics"⁴¹³ – namely, via an insistence on the "primacy of practice"⁴¹⁴ when Heidegger's "ontologization of the ontical"⁴¹⁵ attempts to "acquire *a priori* knowledge of being."⁴¹⁶ Heidegger's transcendental hermeneutics pulls him in two different directions simultaneously – towards the absolute (limitless, unconditioned) and the contingent (limited, conditioned). Heidegger appears to have set out to secularise theological terms such as *calling*⁴¹⁷ and *falling*⁴¹⁸ and ended up moving towards the language of negative theology.⁴¹⁹ There is also the critical question of whether Heidegger attempted to square the circle of understanding when answering the call of Nazism.⁴²⁰ While Heidegger's 'destructive' questioning and 'risky' (ontological) commitment to the "inner truth and greatness of this movement"⁴²¹ might merely be a "contingent"⁴²² event, the question remains: contingent upon

⁴¹³ Bubner, Rudiger. "Is Transcendental Hermeneutics Possible?" in Manninen, Juha and Tuomela, Raimo (eds.) *Essays on Explanation and Understanding* (Dordrecht: D.Reidel Publishing, 1976,), p.69.

⁴¹⁴ Blatner, William. "Ontology, the A Priori, and the Primacy of Practice: An Aporia in Heidegger's Early Philosophy", in Crowell, Steven, and Malpas, Jeff (eds.) *Transcendental Heidegger* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p.10.

⁴¹⁵ Adorno, Theodor. *Negative Dialectics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 2004), p.119.

⁴¹⁶ Blatner, William. "Ontology, the A Priori, and the Primacy of Practice: An Aporia in Heidegger's Early Philosophy", in Crowell, Steven and Malpas, Jeff (eds.) *Transcendental Heidegger* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p.10.

⁴¹⁷ Motyer, Stephen. "Call, Calling" in Elwell, Walter (ed.) *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2001). As Motyer observes, "this prominent biblical term is used with particular theological significance in three ways: in connection with worship, with election, and with vocation", p.199. Motyer goes on to count its many instances throughout scripture, and specifies the many ways calling is used there. pp. 199-200.

⁴¹⁸ Genesis 3: 1-8. The book of Genesis details, of course, the Fall of humanity, and inaugurates humankind's move away from God via an original sin. The falling away occurs when Adam and Eve partake of the tree of knowledge, and they find themselves falling into a world of sin and decay.

⁴¹⁹ Löwith, Karl. *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth Century Thought* trans. David Green (New York: Doubleday, 1967). According to Löwith, Heidegger's questioning "is in its very essence a theology without God", p.207.

⁴²⁰ Heidegger, Martin. *An Introduction To Metaphysics* trans. Ralph Manheim, (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p.199. Heidegger sums up his questionable relationship to Nazism in the following way. "The works that are being peddled about nowadays as the philosophy of National Socialism have nothing to do with the inner truth and greatness of this movement." Note that Heidegger is accusing other avowed Nazis of misinterpreting what he understands to be the *inner truth and greatness of this movement*. Works that bear that name have apparently 'erred' along the way: they are to be understood as inauthentic since they have been led astray. Given his own understanding, however, errancy is part of the way-making movement (inner truth and/or history) of Being and belongs to the essence of truth itself: the revelation of Being as a whole. Heidegger, Martin, "On The Essence Of Truth", Krell, David (ed.) *Basic Writings* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p.129-30. Indeed, "errancy is the open site for and ground of error. Error is not just an isolated mistake but rather the realm (the domain) of the history of those entanglements in which all kinds of erring get interwoven", p.133.

⁴²¹ *ibid.*

⁴²² Rorty, Richard. *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity: Essays on Heidegger and Others* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.111

what?⁴²³ The only possible answer is that it was contingent upon his being-in-the-world⁴²⁴ and modes of address (way of speaking, place of dwelling).⁴²⁵ Heidegger's relationship to the "primordial"⁴²⁶ sign swastika⁴²⁷ remains significant in that it is the "original wheel of time"⁴²⁸ and simultaneously "depicts time forward and time backward."⁴²⁹ And as Heidegger directs us, "a sign to mark something indicates what one is 'at' at any time. Signs always indicate primarily "wherein one lives, where one's concern dwells, what sort of involvement there is with something."⁴³⁰ Prior to the Nazi "appropriation of the swastika,"⁴³¹ its "migration"⁴³² throughout

⁴²³ Habermas, Jürgen. "Work and Weltanschauung: The Heidegger. Controversy from a German Perspective" in *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historian's Debate* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1989), p.145. Although Habermas denies that there is an "internal connection" between Heidegger's questioning and his relationship to Nazism, he nonetheless concedes that external historical forces appropriated his thinking. We adopt a roundabout approach: the question of being-in-the-world does not permit a distinction between internal and external connections and emphasizes the relationship between word and world.

⁴²⁴ Rorty, Richard. "On Heidegger's Nazism" in *Philosophy and Social Hope* (London: Penguin Books, 1999). In this essay, Rorty seems to concede the point in reverse – by invoking a possible worlds scenario. In this possible being in the world, there are different contingencies or "chance events", (p.190) that might have shaped Heidegger's relationship to Nazism (such as actively opposing Nazism and being persecuted for his beliefs). Nonetheless, it is a moot point – Heidegger aligned his mode of being with Nazism in this world.

⁴²⁵ Heidegger, Martin. "The Self Assertion of the German University" in Wolin, Richard (ed.) *The Heidegger Controversy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), p.38. Within the dual role of professor of philosophy and rector of Freiburg University, Heidegger's 'rector address' called on other Germans to "fulfil its historical mission" by following the law of history brought into being *through* Hitler. According to Heidegger, the "Führer himself and alone is today and in the future German reality and its law."

⁴²⁶ Mees, Bernard. *Science of the Swastika* (New York: CEU Press, 2008), p.3. Images of the swastika have presented themselves in Eastern and Western parts of the world throughout time, ranging from Hindu to Celtic cultures. It can be found amongst indigenous Americans and within ancient Greece. It is a sign common to both Buddhists and Christians, and its presence can be discerned across a range of apparently disparate cultures (Egypt, Iceland, India, China, Europe, etc.).

⁴²⁷ Löwith, Karl. "My Last Meeting With Heidegger in Rome, 1936" in Wolin, Richard (ed.) *The Heidegger Controversy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998). According to Löwith, Heidegger could be seen wearing "the swastika" or Nazi "party insignia" when visiting him in Rome, and that Heidegger appeared to signify (announce) his involvement with the Nazis without question. Specifically, "Heidegger did not remove the Party insignia from his lapel. He wore it during his entire stay in Rome, and it had obviously not occurred to him that the swastika was out of place while he was spending the day with me", p.141. Jonathan Glover elaborates further in *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), p.370. According to Glover, Heidegger was lecturing on 'Hölderlin and the Essential Nature of Poetry' in Rome and "Löwith, in a card to Karl Jaspers, wondered 'what the essential nature of this poetry has to do with the swastika'."

⁴²⁸ Charron, Ram Swami. *The Book of Yantras* (Raleigh: Lulu Press, 2012), p.105.

⁴²⁹ *ibid.*

⁴³⁰ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.111. It is also worth noting that Heidegger also treats signs as "a symptom or warning signal", p.110.

⁴³¹ Quinn, Malcolm. *The Swastika: Constructing A Symbol* (London, Routledge, 1994), p.2

⁴³² Wilson, Thomas. *The Swastika: The Earliest Known Symbol and Its Migrations* (Smithsonian Institution Report, Washington, 1894), p. 952.

time called for a philosophical question regarding its origin, meaning and movements.⁴³³ Furthermore, there was an attempt to *appropriate history* via the "fourfold movement of the swastika,"⁴³⁴ and such an attempt coincided with the question of its proximity to an original culture or language.⁴³⁵ The swastika was directed towards the question of its turning (possibility) and turns towards life and death simultaneously.⁴³⁶ Specifically, the swastika signifies the back and forth movement of time itself and has two modes of being: by moving clockwise or anti-clockwise⁴³⁷ it discloses the relationship between "being/non-being."⁴³⁸ Particularly significant is that the swastika's *etymology* indicates that it was always already related to the question of being and time. Swastika is derived from the Sanskrit *svastika*⁴³⁹: it is primarily composed of 'su' (good) and asti (being) and signifies *the way* the world turns. The swastika's signifying structure has traditionally called on "being for itself"⁴⁴⁰ via "the revolution of the wheel of life."⁴⁴¹ In being "associated with well-being"⁴⁴² its invocation turns on being's movements *in* time and so re-turns to a transcendent yet immanent ground.⁴⁴³ Either way, Heidegger's search for an

⁴³³ Wilson was puzzled by the near universality of this sign, and tended to assume a common point of origin in order to account for its presumed migratory status. He explicitly says that its presence around the world becomes a question for "philosophers", *ibid*, p. 778.

⁴³⁴ Stevens, Anthony. *Ariadne's Clue: A Guide to the Symbols of Humankind* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), p.185. As Steven notes, the "fourfold movement of the swastika suggests the circling of the square and the squaring of the circle."

⁴³⁵ Schliemann, Heinrich. *Troy and Its Remains: A Narrative of Researches and Discoveries Made on the Site of Ilium and in the Trojan Plain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Perhaps the most famous example is Schliemann's excavation of Troy. Specifically, the discovery of the ancient and/or 'migratory' swastika was appropriated as confirmation of Germany's relationship to its own language and/or history. Indeed, the uncovering of swastikas on pottery at Troy and Germany was identified as a sign pointing to the origin and migration of Western civilization itself. We "must draw attention to the fact" that images of the swastika can be traced back to Troy and "the primitive Trojans, therefore, belonged to the Aryan race", p.157.

⁴³⁶ The Nazi's appropriation of the swastika has, of course, come to signify mass murder in that it paved the way to the Final Solution. In the East, however, this ancient and near universal sign remains a sign of auspiciousness and is called on to affirm life (being) in the world.

⁴³⁷ ManWoman. *Gentle Swastika: Reclaiming The Innocence* (London: Flyfoot Press, 2000). People calling themselves the Friends of the Swastika have attempted to 'turn' back the hands of time by 'turning' the sign around in order to re-call its originary meaning.

⁴³⁸ Balsys, Bodo. *The Self or Non-Self in Buddhism* (Sydney: Universal Dharma Publications, 2016), p.196.

⁴³⁹ Wilson, Thomas. *The Swastika: The Earliest Known Symbol and Its Migrations* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Report, 1894), pp. 768-769. If we recall, Heidegger cited Sanskrit (and Greek) as a way of determining the original meaning of 'call'. According to his re-call, 'call' originally meant to get something on the way by providing a way in which to be situated and directed.

⁴⁴⁰ Quinn, Malcolm. *The Swastika: Constructing A Symbol* (London, Routledge, 1994), p.140.

⁴⁴¹ Cooper, J.C. *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols* (London, Thames and London, 1978), p.165.

⁴⁴² Williams, Monier. *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1899), p.1283.

⁴⁴³ Hahn, Robert. "A Note On Plato's Divided Line", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 1983, p.235. The Platonic dividing line is an attempt to relate *levels of being* to *depths of understanding*, and these levels are similarly divided into a "fourfold" topology across Plato's dialogues. The most famous example, of course, is in *The Republic* (509d–511e), where Plato divides levels of being into distinct stages of knowledge: Understanding, Thought, Belief, and Imagination. See also *The Philebus* (23b–32b) where Plato introduces a "division of everything that

absolute beginning – groundless ground⁴⁴⁴ – in time culminates in an eschatology, or salvation narrative calling for the end of times: in the beginning was the wor(l)d⁴⁴⁵ and only a god can save us now.⁴⁴⁶ Adorno approaches the logical impasse – "or a warning signal"⁴⁴⁷ – best when he observes that Heidegger's "transcendence is an absolutized immanence, obdurate against its own immanent character."⁴⁴⁸ Specifically, human beings are *called on* to "conceive Being as the absolute"⁴⁴⁹ because they "cannot conceive it"⁴⁵⁰ as an entity. Heidegger follows Plato's lead

actually exists" into four different kinds of being that are in reality "one and many". The fourfold's *cosmology* is reflective in the same way that microcosm and macrocosm reflect each other – i.e., as *above* (gods, sky), so *below* (mortals, earth). Not insignificantly, Heidegger's attempt to historicize the Platonic dividing line by calling on a fourfold is mirrored in the Platonic recollection of Being as an ordered ("lawful") whole in the *Gorgias* (504d), where four parts collectively call forth a new "world order" (508a). The cosmos is said to be composed of "heaven and earth, gods and men" (ibid), and the fourfold turns on the question of the world's *well-being* (507e, 504b-c) or "what's appropriate with respect to human beings" (507b). The movement of the fourfold therefore turns on the "type of care" (521a) to be *called for* (526e-527e) or back into question and/or Being. Or as Heidegger would go on to argue in *Being and Time*, from "the ontological point of view, we must as a general principle leave the primary discovery of the world to bare mood" (p.177) and *the way* 'mood' lays itself bare – discovers the world – is through "the meaning of care" (p.370). Indeed, mood – a particular disposition or affectedness – lays bare the ground of meaningful disclosure: it frames a "disclosive submission to the world, out of which we can encounter something that matters to us" (ibid), and determines our being-in-the-world (in feeling our sense of place we may find our way in the circle of beings). In *Building Dwelling Thinking*, Heidegger goes on to argue that "the basic character of dwelling is to spare, to preserve...dwelling itself is always a staying with things. Dwelling, as preserving, keeps the fourfold in that with which mortals stay: in things" (pp.150-51).

⁴⁴⁴ Heidegger, Martin. *The Principle of Reason* trans. Reginald Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p.51.

⁴⁴⁵ According to the latter Heidegger, the relation between word and world is grounded in the ontological difference and determines the way the world remains open to the possibility of an understanding. Language calls out to human beings by showing them "the way (of) appropriating" (Heidegger, Martin, "The Way To Language" in *On The Way To Language* trans. Peter Hertz, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.129) and it appropriates beings by calling them "into the word" (Heidegger, Martin, "Language" in *Poetry, Language, Thought* trans. Albert Hofstadter, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p.198). Only "where the word for the thing has been found is the thing a thing. Only thus *is* it...The word alone gives being to a thing...to bring a thing into being." (Heidegger, Martin, "The Nature Of Language" in *On The Way To Language* trans. Peter Hertz, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.62). Language therefore *presents* a wor(l)d which would not have otherwise been called into being and/or question. By calling beings into (its) presence, the being of language makes itself conspicuous by its absence by withdrawing there. Language nonetheless offers a "vow" (ibid, p.90) to include human beings within its own discourse with itself, granting those that remain "needful" (ibid) the "promise" (ibid) of continuing to be part of a greater whole.

⁴⁴⁶ Heidegger, Martin. "Only A God Can Save Us Now" in Wolin, Richard (ed.) *The Heidegger Controversy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), p.107. Specifically, the "sole possibility that is left for us is to prepare a sort of readiness, through thinking and poetizing, for the appearance of the god or the absence of the god in the time of foundering; for in the face of the god who is absent, we founder." In a posthumously published interview, Heidegger calls on the gods – or God – to take care of us now, and so moves the question of Being towards the possibility of divine intervention and/or an eschatological event.

⁴⁴⁷ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.110.

⁴⁴⁸ Adorno, Theodor, *Negative Dialectics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 2004), p. 106.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid, p.104.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

by attempting to "heal the concept of 'Being' of the wound of its conceptuality, of the split between thoughts and their contents."⁴⁵¹ Heidegger's conception of the question of Being thereby asks temporal beings to fall into the Platonic trap of attempting to "conceive Being without entity."⁴⁵² The conceptual "sleight of hand"⁴⁵³ is said to occur via Heidegger's 'ontologization of the ontical', or throwing the being of entities into question via the temporal divide between Being and beings. Heidegger's goal is to arguably bring forth a "cult of Being"⁴⁵⁴ by questioning the authenticity of cultural experience – and so retreat into the "old Platonic austerity"⁴⁵⁵ of the "one pure thought"⁴⁵⁶ in order to recall Being's "evaporating aura"⁴⁵⁷ within history. The logical impasse (and historical warning) results from Heidegger's attempt to move *beyond* every entity and every possible determination an entity may possess *through* interpretations (determinations) of the entities themselves. The question is whether it is possible to pursue a transcendental ontology through historical vagaries and/or contingencies. Specifically, if disclosedness as unconcealment is taken as a condition of possibility for the occurrence of truth, what can the projection of meaning refer to (uncover) other than its own capacity for disclosure (possibility for meaning)? Put another way: how can we bypass our knowledge of the world of experience when it necessarily occurs within the context of interpretations that remain historically determined and/or potentially arbitrary (questionable)?⁴⁵⁸

Following Heidegger, we must thereby approach the question of Being in a roundabout way – via 'the problem of the formal structure of the question of being', and the corresponding 'priority

⁴⁵¹ *ibid*, p.70.

⁴⁵² *ibid*, p.p.116.

⁴⁵³ *ibid*, p.121.

⁴⁵⁴ *ibid*, p. 98.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p.121.

⁴⁵⁶ *ibid*, p. 87.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.99.

⁴⁵⁸ Perhaps the question is not so much methodological but adopting a questionable approach in the first place – i.e., one determined by obliqueness or misdirection. It is arguable whether Heidegger was ever really interested in being a rational philosopher, and concealed his true objectives within the question of Being. Specifically, Heidegger's philosophical questioning has its origins in "theological-speculative thinking" ("A Dialogue On Language", p.10) and "without this theological background I would never have come upon the path of thinking" (*ibid*). Further, Heidegger subsequently conceded that a "confrontation with Christianity reticently accompanied my entire path" insofar as "the most inwards experiences and decisions remain foundational" and would ideally "remain outside the domain of publicness." Despite Heidegger's attempt to cover his tracks, "subterranean quakes have been at work in the pathway of my inquiry" and his way-making movements have all circled "around the sole question: whether god is fleeing from us or not, and whether we...still experience this flight genuinely", Heidegger, Martin, "My Pathway Hitherto" in *Mindfulness* trans. Parvis Emad and Thomas Kalary, (London: Continuum, 2008), p.368-9. Theological speculation was also Heidegger's introduction to hermeneutic inquiry in that it originally brought forth the question of the relation between (the) word and world. Heidegger was acutely aware, however, that approaching theology thorough philosophy was an "absolute square circle", Heidegger, Martin, "Phenomenology and Theology" in *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.53. Nonetheless, Heidegger re-calls a historical presupposition to bring

(possibility, necessity) of such questioning.⁴⁵⁹ As Lawlor observes, "the question of being is the being of the question"⁴⁶⁰, and is made possible by the way human beings are always already moving within a given understanding. Unlike other beings – such as chairs and tables – human beings are ontologically distinct entities in that they can ask meaningful questions within a *prior* understanding (such as 'what is the time'? or 'what is the meaning of being'?). Questioning thereby becomes an inquiry into the conditions of its possibility and/or necessity. Heidegger, then, directs rational inquiry towards the circle that enables back and forth movement. Furthermore, any questioning finds itself "constantly moving in a circle"⁴⁶¹, and every "attempt to argue away such circularity in philosophy leads it away from philosophy itself."⁴⁶² It is not possible to "ask a question in a philosophical way"⁴⁶³ without "having entered the circle in the first place"⁴⁶⁴ and it is "the circular movement"⁴⁶⁵ of a given understanding that makes questioning both possible and necessary. Consequently, "what is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to get into it in the right way...The circle of understanding is not an orbit in which any kind of random kind of knowledge may move...It is not to be reduced to the level of a vicious circle, or even of a circle which is merely tolerated. In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing."⁴⁶⁶ In order to understand the way the circle directs our

forth the question of the truth of Being: concealed truth as kerygma. In *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity* trans. van Buren, John, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), it is possible to observe a through line between the 'early' and the 'latter' Heidegger by way of the "traditional concept of hermeneutics", p.6. As early as 1923, Heidegger notes that 'hermeneutics' initially referred to the process of making present or intelligible what was previously absent or unintelligible – namely, a cryptic message sent from one kind of being (the gods) to another (human beings) through poets. Heidegger provides a description of Plato's characterization of poets as the "herald of the gods" (p.6). Specifically, hermeneutics refers to "the announcement and making known of the being of a being in its being in relation to...me" (ibid, p. 7). Thirty-six years later, Heidegger goes on to ask the question of Being via the (kerygmatic) experience of the poet – a kerygma which may be 'received' through language. In "A Dialogue On Language" Heidegger returns to the traditional concept of hermeneutics, and re-calls that "Hermes is the divine messenger. He brings the message of destiny" (p.29) Further, "the relation of message and message-bearer (still) prevails." (ibid). The "message-bearer must come from the message. But he must also have gone toward it" (ibid, p.51). Heidegger's attempt to uncover the concealed truth of Being is therefore a return to the idea that "hermeneutics means not just the interpretation, but even before it, the bearing of message and tidings" (ibid, 29), Heidegger, Martin, "A Dialogue On Language" in *On The Way To Language* trans. Peter Hertz, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982).

⁴⁵⁹ ibid, pp. 24-28.

⁴⁶⁰ Lawlor, Leonard. *Thinking Through French Philosophy: The Being of the Question* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), p.1. Lawlor succinctly puts it this way by observing that "when Heidegger re-opens the question of being, he defines being itself as a question: the question of being is the being of the question."

⁴⁶¹ Heidegger, Martin. *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker, (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995) p. 180.

⁴⁶² ibid.

⁴⁶³ ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ ibid.

⁴⁶⁶ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 195.

movements, we must therefore inquire into the being of the entity that finds itself meaningfully directed upon (moving within, relating to) the objects thrown (back) *into question*. Questioning *opens a way* to an understanding of being, and the requirement is to find our place *within the question*. Heidegger's conception of the circle thereby directs thought towards the following enabling presuppositions: by finding our place within the question, we can lay bare the grounds of questioning and inquire into our own mode of being-there.⁴⁶⁷ Questioning our mode of being becomes *the question* insofar as our "being-in-the-world"⁴⁶⁸ remains an integral part of the question of our "being-there."⁴⁶⁹ Presupposing the *truth-value* of the question in this way – and trying to determine the meaningfulness of the presuppositions thrown (back) into question – points the way back and forth since it "is 'truth' that makes it all possible ontologically for us to be able to *be* such that we 'presuppose' anything at all. Truth is what first *makes possible* anything like presupposing"⁴⁷⁰ and questioning. Heidegger directs thought towards the way interpretation becomes possible and/or questionable *in language* and thinking will invariably find itself entangled within a "web of relations"⁴⁷¹ when *moving through* the circle in question. The circle of understanding "is meaningful because the direction and manner of the circular motion is determined by language itself, by a movement within language."⁴⁷² The being of the question does not so much direct thought into "circular reasoning"⁴⁷³ but moves towards a "remarkable relatedness backward or forward"⁴⁷⁴ and "only the way back will lead us forward."⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁶⁷ Malpas, Jeff. *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2012), p.46. Malpas characterises Heidegger's ontological standard in the following way. "To be is *to be* in place and to be a phenomenon, in appearing, is to similarly be placed, or as one might say, to take place." Consequently, if we are to place the question of Being we must find our place within the circle of beings and such a topos takes "the form of returning to place, a refinding of oneself, a reorientation (even, perhaps, a repositioning)" that directs thought towards a "homecoming, although a coming-home from which we never really departed", p.111.

⁴⁶⁸ *ibid*, p.90.

⁴⁶⁹ *ibid*, p.169.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 270.

⁴⁷¹ Heidegger, Martin. "The Way To Language" in *On The Way To Language* trans. Peter Hertz, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.113

⁴⁷² *ibid*.

⁴⁷³ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 28.

⁴⁷⁴ *ibid*,

⁴⁷⁵ Heidegger, Martin. "A Dialogue on Language" in *On The Way To Language* trans. Peter Hertz, (San Francisco, Harper Collins, 1982), p.12.

Chapter 2: Gadamer and the Historicity of Understanding

Aims and Objectives: The aim of this chapter is to return to the *concept* of the hermeneutical circle. We follow Gadamer's lead by turning towards his conception of the relation between part and whole. The main objective is to follow the pathways opened up by Gadamer's move towards language as a necessary precondition for critical thinking. While we follow Gadamer's lead, we invariably argue for the necessity to *overturn* Gadamer's conception of critical reason. Furthermore, it is only by critically engaging with Gadamer's idea of critical reasoning that we can find our way to language via the critical theories in question. Gadamer's questioning is significant in that he directs us back towards Plato and Heidegger in distinct ways. Specifically, we shall observe Gadamer approach Heidegger's 'later' movement – the way *to* language – via an earlier movement – the way *of* understanding. Given this return, we shall find ourselves on the way back to the historicity understanding, and enclosed within a linguistically determined intentional horizon. Gadamer moves beyond Heidegger, however, by also returning us to Plato's dialectic of question and answer. The question of Being is approached through a dialectical conception of questioning that emphasizes the linguistic structure and/or events of understanding. The beings *in* question turn on the way the being of the question is itself directed (moves) *through* language. Gadamer thereby proceeds from the following ontological standard: *to be is to be understood (differently) within a universal horizon of Being*. To make sense of Gadamer's ontological commitments, we turn towards the concepts structuring the event(s) of his understanding. Gadamer takes it as given that questions emerge within the context of presuppositions, and calls these presuppositions our prejudices. The question, then, is the rational status (legitimacy) of the given prejudices: in what way can they be overturned (questioned)? The historicity of understanding remains pivotal and requires us to circle around concepts directing the presuppositions of his questioning. We shall observe Gadamer attempting to distinguish between true and false prejudices via an elusive concept of truth. The main difficulties are that Gadamer cannot meaningfully determine the truth-value of the prejudices constituting our being-there or legitimate the being of his own questioning in a truth-evaluative way. Given the untenability of Gadamer's approach, the question of the normativity of our being-there is brought forth via the dialectic between knowledge and power within the language game of argumentation. We introduce the distinction between motivating and justifying reasons to bring the idea of a critical theory full circle, or rather, to enable movement within the circle calling itself back into question.

Understanding Gadamer's Relation to Plato and Heidegger.

We begin by acknowledging Gadamer's relationship to Plato and Heidegger. Although Gadamer primarily understood himself to be following Heidegger, the question of their relationship remains open to interpretation. Gadamer urges that his appropriation of the "term hermeneutics"⁴⁷⁶ follows the early Heidegger in order to bring forth the question of "the historicity of understanding."⁴⁷⁷ The overarching aim is to "blaze a trail to the latter Heidegger"⁴⁷⁸ so as to make the hermeneutical question "accessible in a new way."⁴⁷⁹ Gadamer renews Heidegger's conception of the circle of understanding by way of the philosophical discourse of antiquity. Although Heidegger's "existential grounding of the hermeneutical circle"⁴⁸⁰ is said to "constitute a decisive turning point,"⁴⁸¹ Gadamer approaches Plato's questioning in a different way. Rather than attempting to critically dismantle traditional thought or practice, Gadamer's re-turn seeks out a more critical (truthful) reason via the question of our being-there. Specifically, the "philosophical stimuli I received from Heidegger led me more and more into the realm of dialectic"⁴⁸² but "in the background was the continuous challenge posed for me by the path Heidegger's own thought took, and especially by his interpretation of Plato as the decisive step towards metaphysical thought's obliviousness to being."⁴⁸³ Gadamer concedes that the being of his own questioning may involve a "falling back into the dimensions of thought"⁴⁸⁴ that Heidegger sought to circumvent. Gadamer does "not deny that – among all the elements of understanding – I have emphasized the assimilation of what is past and of tradition"⁴⁸⁵ and that Heidegger "would probably feel a lack of radicality in the conclusions I draw."⁴⁸⁶ Nonetheless, Gadamer's overall aim is to argue that all "understanding is a process in the history of influence, and that it could be proven that it is in the linguistically belonging to all understanding that the

⁴⁷⁶ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.xxx.

⁴⁷⁷ *ibid*, p. 265.

⁴⁷⁸ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Reflections On My Philosophical Journey" in Hahn, Edwin Lewis, (ed.) *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, (Chicago: Open Court, 1997), p.46.

⁴⁷⁹ *ibid*, p.47.

⁴⁸⁰ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.293.

⁴⁸¹ *ibid*.

⁴⁸² Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy* trans. Christopher P. Smith, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p.5.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid*. Further, "my elaboration and projection of a philosophical hermeneutics in *Truth and Method* bear witness to my efforts to withstand this challenge theoretically."

⁴⁸⁴ *ibid*.

⁴⁸⁵ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.xxxvii.

⁴⁸⁶ *ibid*.

hermeneutical event makes its path."⁴⁸⁷ Following Heidegger, Gadamer insists that "language is the fundamental mode of operation of our being-in-the-world and the all-embracing form of the constitution of the world."⁴⁸⁸ Following Plato, Gadamer argues that the world is meaningfully constituted through the directed "openness"⁴⁸⁹ of questioning, or the way language "opens up the whole of our world orientation."⁴⁹⁰ Given Plato's and Heidegger's influence on Gadamer's own understanding, Gadamer sets out to prove that the dialectic of question and answer provides a "critical principle in relation to tradition"⁴⁹¹ in that the "undeniable task of critical reason (is) to overcome"⁴⁹² falling back into our "historical consciousness"⁴⁹³ without question. Consequently, we shall find ourselves directed towards two related questions: "how far does the province of understanding itself and its linguisticity reach?"⁴⁹⁴ and in what way can a historical consciousness move beyond its own limits *through* questioning? Caputo provides one answer by arguing that Gadamer's approach to the circle of understanding is a "reactionary gesture, an attempt to block off the radicalization of hermeneutics and turn it back to the fold of metaphysics."⁴⁹⁵ Such a re-turn allegedly occurred the moment "Plato took it upon himself to answer all of Socrates' questions, whereas the hermeneutic point was to keep them open, to let them waver and tremble a bit...making things difficult"⁴⁹⁶ for temporal beings. Consequently, the requirement is to restore our being-in-the-world towards its "original difficulty"⁴⁹⁷ of being *in* time. Davey counters, however, that while Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics might not be its "own best advocate"⁴⁹⁸, it is nonetheless "more radical than is often supposed"⁴⁹⁹ and its "subversive character"⁵⁰⁰ makes it increasingly difficult to bridge the (ontological) divide. Gadamer's concept of the historicity of understanding is said to restore Plato's original difficulty – namely, how to question the conditions of possibility of questioning itself. Consequently, philosophical hermeneutics is not a reactionary gesture but an act of subversion insofar as it

⁴⁸⁷ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "On the Circle of Understanding" in Connolly, John and Keutner, Thomas, (eds.) *Hermeneutics Versus Science?* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), p.78.

⁴⁸⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer. "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem" in *Philosophical Hermeneutics* trans. David E. Linge, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p.3.

⁴⁸⁹ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.362.

⁴⁹⁰ *ibid*, p.449.

⁴⁹¹ *ibid*, p.xxxviii

⁴⁹² *ibid*, p.277.

⁴⁹³ *ibid*, p.299.

⁴⁹⁴ *ibid*, p.xxxiv.

⁴⁹⁵ Caputo, John. *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p.5.

⁴⁹⁶ *ibid*, p.6.

⁴⁹⁷ *ibid*, p.1.

⁴⁹⁸ Davey, Nicholas. *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Albany: State University of New York, 2006), p.xi.

⁴⁹⁹ *ibid*, p.xii

⁵⁰⁰ *ibid*.

"reinterprets transcendence"⁵⁰¹ within the immanent context of the hermeneutical circle. Philosophical hermeneutics may be seen as a radical gesture: determining the "quasi-transcendental condition of possibility"⁵⁰² of questioning is only possible (intelligible) within the historicity of understanding enabling such back and forth movements in the first place.⁵⁰³ Part of Gadamer's avowed aim is to restore "the relation between language and world in order to attain the horizon adequate...to (having) an orientation towards the world."⁵⁰⁴ More appropriately, where the question of being-in-the-world *can* be linguistically "expressed in the understanding of historical tradition."⁵⁰⁵ Gadamer locates Heidegger's ways of thinking within a tradition he seeks to preserve and extend, namely an understanding corresponding to "the rise of historical consciousness"⁵⁰⁶ through questioning. Gadamer would deny from the outset, then, Caputo's interpretation of Plato as an attempt to enclose human beings within a given understanding. "There's no such thing any more as a metaphysics that believes it has a truth that withstands everything — none of us has this kind of truth. We have to say that none of us knows anything, but we have (mistakenly) learned to believe otherwise."⁵⁰⁷ Plato's dialectical approach, however, can teach us how to question our being-in-the-world again. The question of "human existence"⁵⁰⁸ and the "intelligibility of Dasein"⁵⁰⁹ are "not in themselves treated as objects to be defined and held in safekeeping"⁵¹⁰ but remain open to questioning. Plato's "philosophy is a dialectic not only because in conceiving and comprehending it keeps itself on the way to the concept, but also because as a philosophy that conceives and comprehends in that way, it knows man as a creature that is thus 'on the way' and 'between'."⁵¹¹ Following Heidegger, Gadamer locates the "historicity of existence"⁵¹² within questioning's way-making movement, and argues that "understanding is *not suitably conceived at all* as the

⁵⁰¹ *ibid*, p.xii.

⁵⁰² Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Hermeneutics Tracking The Trace (On Derrida)" in Palmer, Richard (ed.) *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of Later Writings* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), p.384.

⁵⁰³ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996). Significantly, Gadamer himself interprets the earlier Heidegger as failing to understand "the problem of life" (p.263) and the turn towards the later Heidegger is intended as a corrective in the form of a linguistic restoration without resorting to a "utopian or eschatological consciousness." (p.xxxviii).

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p.443.

⁵⁰⁵ *ibid*, p.264.

⁵⁰⁶ *ibid*, p.173.

⁵⁰⁷ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Metaphysics and Transcendence" in *A Century of Philosophy: Gadamer In Conversation with Riccardo Dottori* (New York: Continuum, 2006), p.76.

⁵⁰⁸ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Plato's Dialectical Ethics: Phenomenological Interpretations Relating to the Philebus* trans. Robert M. Wallace (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p.3

⁵⁰⁹ *ibid*.

⁵¹⁰ *ibid*.

⁵¹¹ *ibid*, p.4.

⁵¹² Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "The Philosophical Foundations of the Twentieth Century" in *Philosophical Hermeneutics* trans. David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 125.

consciousness of something"⁵¹³ but as constantly moving between conceiving and objectification. While human beings must continue to determine their place within the question, the question is "not simply that a nonobjectifying consciousness always accompanies the process of understanding, but rather...the whole process of understanding itself enters into an event, is brought about by it, and is permeated by it."⁵¹⁴ Gadamer's questioning may be similarly seen as a historical effect that should be questioned in turn.⁵¹⁵ The question, then, re-turns: what does it mean to understand historically when the event of understanding always involves a "return to (the) being"⁵¹⁶ in question and raises the problem of "transcending"⁵¹⁷ the limits of such questioning? We can "never know what being is. It always seems to be a *topos*, an unattainable place that never becomes (completely) accessible"⁵¹⁸ via the being of the question and so is "basically ungraspable, indeterminable."⁵¹⁹ The historicity of understanding, however, will invariably call being (back) into question since history "already constitutes the horizon of the question of being and even appears as the meaning of being itself."⁵²⁰ The event of understanding can therefore never be completed because "being is precisely transcendence"⁵²¹ – i.e., the constitution of the very meaningful horizon *in* question. Not insignificantly, Gadamer's own questioning is traditionally understood as inaugurating the "turn"⁵²² towards hermeneutics in contemporary historical thought. The status of current hermeneutic theory is itself thought to be "almost entirely due to Gadamer's influence."⁵²³ While Heidegger paved the way for Gadamer's interpretive approach, it is the event of Gadamer's understanding that has placed hermeneutics at the intersection of contemporary theory. In this historical sense, Gadamer may be understood as a revolutionary thinker, since he helped transform the "epistemic"⁵²⁴ landscape on which contemporary thought moves.⁵²⁵ Although Gadamer's influence occurs

⁵¹³ Ibid.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

⁵¹⁵ Veith, Jerome. *Gadamer and the Transmission of History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), p.8. As Veith observes, Gadamer "not only formulates conceptually what it means to understand historically, but places this formulation in concrete contexts, and thereby also enacts the very consciousness of historical effect that he describes."

⁵¹⁶ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Metaphysics and Transcendence" in *A Century of Philosophy : Gadamer In Conversation with Riccardo Dottori* (New York: Continuum, 2006), p.77.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid, p.76-77.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid, p.77.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² Dostal, Robert (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.6.

⁵²³ Malpas, Jeff, Arnsward, Ulrich and Kertscher, Jens (eds.) *Gadamer's Century: Essays in Honour of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, (Massachusetts, : MIT Press, 2002), p.ix.

⁵²⁴ Rorty, Richard. "On Gadamer and the Philosophical Conversation" *The London Review of Books* 22 2000, p.24.

⁵²⁵ Figal, Gunter. *Objectivity: The Hermeneutical and Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), p.1. Figal perhaps best sums Gadamer's relationship to history when he observes

across many circles of understanding – within the natural⁵²⁶, human⁵²⁷ and/or social⁵²⁸ sciences – he was careful to delimit his own area of concern.⁵²⁹ *Truth and Method* might have laid the foundations for philosophical hermeneutics, but Gadamer (ironically) does not primarily identify as a traditional philosopher. Specifically, "my field is the humanities: the classics, art and literature"⁵³⁰ and "it is only by studying poetry, the visual arts, architecture, and music I came to understand what Heidegger means by nearness of being."⁵³¹ *Truth and Method* is Gadamer's way of enabling the study of the "being-there of the work of art"⁵³², or the way art "sets up a world of its own"⁵³³, and so throws our own experience of the world back into question.⁵³⁴ Gadamer is therefore critical of Meno's line of questioning on hermeneutic grounds. By refusing to "place himself in question"⁵³⁵ Meno resists *opening up* his being-in-the-world to further questioning. Given art's "own possibilities of being,"⁵³⁶ the dialectic of question and answer does not require "a fixed criterion"⁵³⁷ for determining our place within the question anyway.

that Gadamer is internationally understood "today as the most significant German philosopher of the second half of the twentieth century" and has already become "a classical figure of philosophy."

⁵²⁶ Crease, P. Robert (ed.) *Hermeneutics and the Natural Sciences* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishing, 2012).

⁵²⁷ Maanen, van Hans. *How to Study Art Worlds: On the Societal Functioning of Aesthetic Values* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).

⁵²⁸ Harrington, Austin. *Hermeneutic Dialogue and Social Science* (London: Routledge, 2013).

⁵²⁹ We don't mean to imply that these circles are as distinct as they're traditionally understood – the concept of beauty, for example, occurs in both the theory of art and theoretical physics. Indeed, many physicists appear to believe that the truth of mathematical concepts derives from aesthetic principles. See, for example, Domskey, Mary, and Michael Dickson (eds.) *Discourse on a New Method: Reinvigorating the Marriage of History and the Philosophy of Science* (Illinois: Open Court Publishing, 2010). Einstein arguably provides the most famous quote discussed in the "Unreasonable Effectiveness" section – namely, "the only physical theories that we are willing to accept are the beautiful ones", *ibid*, p.415-416. It should be stressed that the concept of 'effectiveness' does not derive from Gadamer – it refers to physics uncanny ability to make sense of (control, predict) the natural world. The irony is that the main chapter heading follows the lead of the humanities here – 'Beauty Doth of Itself Persuade' is titled after a Shakespeare's quote from the narrative poem *The Rape of Lucrece* about uncontrollable human nature.

⁵³⁰ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Gadamer in Conversation" in Palmer, E. Richard (ed.) *Gadamer in Conversation: Reflections and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p.31.

⁵³¹ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Aesthetics" in Palmer, E. Richard (ed.) *Gadamer in Conversation: Reflections and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p.114. Gadamer might turn to Plato to ground his conception of the dialectic of question and answer, but he also moves far away from Plato when arguing that the arts should return from their exile.

⁵³² Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "On Phenomenology" in Palmer, E. Richard (ed.) *Gadamer in Conversation: Reflections and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p.71.

⁵³³ *ibid*.

⁵³⁴ Amongst many other things. Specifically, while it is true that Gadamer's primary concern is to direct us towards a concept of (more) truthful experience through the being-there of the work of art, he gets us there through many other questions and concepts.

⁵³⁵ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy* trans. Christopher P. Smith, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p.52.

⁵³⁶ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.118.

⁵³⁷ *ibid*, p.119.

Gadamer's Way To Language

Perhaps the best way to approach Gadamer is via the understanding he is constantly *moving with or speaking through* other philosophers. In locating Gadamer's questioning, we thereby risk taking him out of the context of the very presuppositions *in* question. The challenge is that many of Gadamer's concepts are "developed as a dialogical form of thought"⁵³⁸ and it is easy to mistake him for a "philosophical ventriloquist, one who articulates his thoughts through the prominent figures of the tradition"⁵³⁹ in question "rather than attempting to develop a system of his own."⁵⁴⁰ Nonetheless, by *appearing* to throw his voice as if it were coming from somewhere else, Gadamer performs the act of *thrown projection*, or projects himself onto the possibilities that lie before him and/or remain hidden in the circle of understanding. By moving through this complex whole, Gadamer purports to offer a "criterion of correct understanding"⁵⁴¹, since the task is to "expand the unity of the understood meaning centrifugally."⁵⁴² Gadamer follows Heidegger by *not* developing a "procedure of understanding, but to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place."⁵⁴³ Note the way Gadamer runs distinct concepts together. On the one hand, Gadamer wants to insist that there *is* a correct criterion for understanding and calls this rational standard the "principle of history of effect."⁵⁴⁴ Gadamer is acutely aware that "the problem of the criterion"⁵⁴⁵ emerges with the circle of understanding insofar as it is the circle's movements that throw our presuppositions back into question. Nonetheless, Gadamer also wants to argue that the problem can be resolved centrifugally – through the circle's own directives and movements. On the other hand, Gadamer wants to claim that the circle doesn't so much reintroduce or displace the problem of the criterion but directs it towards a self-corrective – by expanding upon the unity of the meaning understood through "effective history"⁵⁴⁶ (the event of an understanding). In this way, Gadamer attempts to 'elevate the historicity of understanding to the status of a universal (or quasi-transcendental) hermeneutic

⁵³⁸ Thaning, Morten. *The Problem of Objectivity in Gadamer's Hermeneutics in Light of McDowell's Empiricism* (Dordrecht: Springer Publishing, 2015), p.1.

⁵³⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁴⁰ *ibid.* Thaning is needlessly harsh here – Gadamer is no wooden dummy, and Gadamer's goal is to ultimately disavow any given system of thought or theoretical practice. Nonetheless, we are sympathetic to the idea that Gadamer seems to adapt or change his voice as if it came from elsewhere – it is consistent with his overall approach.

⁵⁴¹ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.291.

⁵⁴² *ibid.*

⁵⁴³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.300.

⁵⁴⁵ Grondin, Jean. *The Philosophy of Gadamer* (Chesham: Acumen Publishing, 2003), p.90.

⁵⁴⁶ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.301.

principle'.⁵⁴⁷ Given Gadamer's approach, the hermeneutic phenomenon is "not a problem of method"⁵⁴⁸ and "is not concerned with a method of understanding."⁵⁴⁹ Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics "does not seek to elaborate a system of rules to decide, let alone direct, the methodical procedure."⁵⁵⁰ Gadamer's approach becomes quasi-transcendental insofar as it is "concerned to seek the experience of truth that transcends the domain of scientific method wherever that experience is to be found, and to inquire into its legitimacy."⁵⁵¹ The real concern is "philosophic – not what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing."⁵⁵² Gadamer, then, distinguishes between truth and method to clarify the conditions in which understanding occurs, and he seeks to legitimate the way in which experiences of truth may be brought forward and/or held back within a given understanding. The question, however, is: to what extent is Gadamer's approach a legitimate method of inquiry? Specifically, in what way is it legitimate to displace the problem of the criterion onto the historicity of understanding? Gadamer's positive conception of prejudice becomes integral here. According to Gadamer, it is possible to determine the truth-value (questionability) of our prejudices by *moving between* thought and language. Being intentionally related is to already find ourselves enclosed within a world of meaning, and to "have a world means to have an orientation toward it"⁵⁵³ insofar as any "experience of the world is bound to language."⁵⁵⁴ Although Gadamer's concept of the circle tends to talk around the phenomenon of intentionality, he nonetheless makes the "essential connection"⁵⁵⁵ between the directedness of thought and the direction of language. Specifically, where the "hermeneutical phenomenon proves to be a special case of the general relationship between thinking and speaking, whose enigmatic intimacy conceals the role of language in thought."⁵⁵⁶ Being intentionally related to an object of experience is therefore specified via the way thought remains directed back towards itself within language. Consequently, it is the "intimate unity"⁵⁵⁷ between thought and language which bounds and encircles our being-in-the-world – by directing the way backward and/or forwards towards "understanding."⁵⁵⁸ Gadamer calls this directive the "dialectic of experience"⁵⁵⁹, where an "experiencing consciousness has reversed its direction—i.e., it has turned back on itself"⁵⁶⁰,

⁵⁴⁷ *ibid*, p.265.

⁵⁴⁸ *ibid*, xvi.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid*.

⁵⁵⁰ *ibid*, xxviii

⁵⁵¹ *ibid*, p.xxii

⁵⁵² *ibid*, *ibid*.

⁵⁵³ *ibid*, p.443.

⁵⁵⁴ *ibid*, p.448.

⁵⁵⁵ *ibid*, p.401.

⁵⁵⁶ *ibid*, p.389.

⁵⁵⁷ *ibid*, p.402.

⁵⁵⁸ *ibid*, p.401.

⁵⁵⁹ *ibid*, p.355

⁵⁶⁰ *ibid*, p. 354

and enables another way forward. It is via this "inner reversal of intentionality"⁵⁶¹ that an experienced consciousness may reorient itself. While the question of being-in-the-world remains directed by the *historicity of existence*,⁵⁶² our understanding is "not suitably conceived as a consciousness of something, since the whole process of understanding itself enters into an event, is brought about by it, and is permeated by it."⁵⁶³ Given the *event* of a contradictory experience, the circle of understanding may thereby acquire the "structure of reflexivity."⁵⁶⁴ The hermeneutical question, then, is trying to understand *the way* experience is first directed (moves forward) in order to bring forth the way/s it may 'turn' back (identify and reflect) upon itself.

Gadamer's conception of the hermeneutical circle: the happening of tradition.

Gadamer follows the early Heidegger by urging that the "existential grounding of the hermeneutical circle"⁵⁶⁵ constitutes a "decisive turning point"⁵⁶⁶ in making sense of our "being-in-the-world."⁵⁶⁷ Consequently, Gadamer wants to argue that "understanding is never a subjective relation to a given 'object', but to the history of its effect; in other words, understanding belongs to the being of that which is understood."⁵⁶⁸ Gadamer moves beyond Heidegger, however, by insisting that questioning our being-in-the-world "lets itself be *addressed*"⁵⁶⁹ by the "effect of a living tradition"⁵⁷⁰ and so "must constitute a unity of effect, the analysis of which would reveal only a texture of reciprocal effects."⁵⁷¹ Being *in* the world continues to be understood as the "original form of the realization of our existence,"⁵⁷² but Gadamer wishes to direct the historicity of understanding back towards "the horizon intentionality which constitutes the unity of the flow of experience."⁵⁷³ Gadamer calls this intentional flow "tradition"⁵⁷⁴, and

⁵⁶¹ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection" in *Philosophical Hermeneutics* trans. David E. Linge, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p.35.

⁵⁶² Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.9.

⁵⁶³ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "The Philosophical Foundations of the Twentieth Century" in *Philosophical Hermeneutics* trans. David E. Linge, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976), p.125.

⁵⁶⁴ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.341.

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p.293.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid*.

⁵⁶⁷ *ibid*, p.443.

⁵⁶⁸ *ibid*, p. xxxi.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.282.

⁵⁷⁰ *ibid*.

⁵⁷¹ *ibid*.

⁵⁷² *ibid*, p. 259.

⁵⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 245.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.293.

argues that when "the whole unified tradition"⁵⁷⁵ calls itself back into question the "ontological structure of understanding"⁵⁷⁶ becomes "the true hermeneutical object."⁵⁷⁷ The problem of "the unity of its meaning"⁵⁷⁸ thereby turns into "literary criticism writ large"⁵⁷⁹ in that it raises the problem of the *existential* relation between part and whole. The hermeneutical question is how to "determine anew the significance of what is examined. But the significance exists at the beginning of any such research as well as at the end."⁵⁸⁰ We merely gain a "new problematic"⁵⁸¹ when the historicity of understanding is thrown back into question. Specifically, questioning the existential grounding of the hermeneutical circle can never become "formal in nature. It is neither subjective or objective, but describes understanding as the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter"⁵⁸² moving back towards the question of the unity of meaning. Our "relation to tradition...is not a permanent precondition; rather, we produce it ourselves inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves. Thus the circle of understanding is not a methodological circle, but describes an element of the ontological structure of understanding."⁵⁸³ The event of understanding turns on the axis of its movements, and the "true locus of hermeneutics"⁵⁸⁴ remains caught "in between"⁵⁸⁵ the structuring (reciprocal effects) of its own events.

Gadamer's concept of tradition operates on two levels simultaneously – as enabling the possibility of a meaningful understanding, and as questioning what can be possibly understood (or meant) there. The question is to what extent – or in what way – these two levels of understanding intersect. We'll need to distinguish the history of effect(s), or the way the historicity of understanding is itself effected through tradition. On the one hand, tradition is the meaningful world we are all *thrown into* and is *taken as given* within cultural experience. Tradition transmits an understanding that occurs without question: against the background of shared practices and beliefs that enables us to move forward in history. On the other hand, traditional thought or practice can be taken aback. The historicity of understanding can be problematized when certain presuppositions move into the foreground and call themselves into (a) question when encountering an object of particular 'significance'. Gadamer maintains that

⁵⁷⁵ *ibid*, 339.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p.293.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p.339

⁵⁷⁸ *ibid*.

⁵⁷⁹ *ibid*

⁵⁸⁰ *ibid*, p.282.

⁵⁸¹ *ibid*.

⁵⁸² *ibid*, p.293.

⁵⁸³ *ibid*.

⁵⁸⁴ *ibid*, p.295

⁵⁸⁵ *ibid*.

"history does not belong to us, we belong to it"⁵⁸⁶ and that consciousness of ourselves as individuals is a "distorting mirror"⁵⁸⁷ and merely a reflection of the "closed circuits of historical life."⁵⁸⁸ Gadamer's concept of a *historically effected consciousness* describe *the way* in which tradition encloses us within a given understanding and yet is also able to keep itself open to reversals in direction. Given that understanding remains caught within the reciprocal effects of history, "understanding is at once the consciousness effected in the course of history and determined by history, and the very consciousness of being thus effected and determined."⁵⁸⁹ Note again that there are two distinct claims being made here and that they need to be distinguished. While Gadamer claims that the effects of history determine our consciousness, this does not mean that we are necessarily conscious of the role history plays in our understanding. The task of hermeneutics is to bring these effects to consciousness – to become conscious of the role tradition plays in the historicity of understanding. Although Gadamer invokes the concept of consciousness here, conscious intentional states are not the historical source of meaning and truth. While the experience of consciousness is integral to understanding Gadamer's account of history, Gadamer does not want us to understand the intentionality of such thoughts with respect to individual desires or beliefs. Nor does he want to objectify (methodize) the way we think about – move within – history. Gadamer is directing us to the question of what happens *through* one another's consciousness – effective history as our collective mode of being-there. A historically effected consciousness is built up and held in being *within* shared experiences and/or may break down and be thrown into question *across* experiences. Consequently, "understanding is to be thought less of as a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated."⁵⁹⁰

According to Gadamer, human consciousness is effective within history by virtue of being laid down and transmitted there. Correspondingly, history is simultaneously the place where human consciousness may be laid over or cut off from itself: it is also where human beings might not be conscious of themselves as having a consciousness effected by history. Tradition transmits human consciousness through the process of acculturation (by way of the "self-evident"⁵⁹¹ experience of family, society, state, etc.). The closed circuits of historical life provide pathways for movement within a given understanding, and help conceal the fact that the "prejudices of

⁵⁸⁶ *ibid*, p.276.

⁵⁸⁷ *ibid*.

⁵⁸⁸ *ibid*.

⁵⁸⁹ *ibid*, p. xxxiv.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p.290.

⁵⁹¹ *ibid*, p.276.

the individual...constitute the historical reality of his being."⁵⁹² If we are to question the role effective history plays in the constitution of our being-in-the-world, we need to understand that "all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice",⁵⁹³ and it is these "prejudices that constitute our being"⁵⁹⁴ there. Specifically, the "historicity of our existence entail that prejudices...constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience"⁵⁹⁵ a meaningful world. Our prejudices are therefore conditions of possibility in that they do not close us off from the world – or potentiality for being – but are "biases of our openness"⁵⁹⁶ to it in the first place. Prejudices are primarily the "conditions whereby we (can) experience something – whereby what we encounter says something to us"⁵⁹⁷ meaningfully and/or truthfully. Consciousness of being effected by history is said to be "consciousness of the hermeneutical *situation*"⁵⁹⁸ and the requirement is to question the "prejudice against prejudice"⁵⁹⁹ that emerged within a given historical movement.⁶⁰⁰ The Enlightenment's prejudice to overturn all prejudices thereby needs to be turned around again, and "removing it opens the way to an appropriate understanding of the finitude which not only dominates our humanity, but also our historical consciousness."⁶⁰¹

Gadamer's appeal to the concept of prejudice is an attempt to approach the "epistemological problem...in a fundamentally different way."⁶⁰² Given this approach, we can "formulate the fundamental epistemological question"⁶⁰³ by questioning the "ground of the legitimacy of prejudices"⁶⁰⁴ and ask "what distinguishes legitimate prejudices from countless others which is the undeniable task of critical reason to overcome?"⁶⁰⁵ Note the way Gadamer does this – by following Heidegger in two related ways. On the one hand, he calls on the etymological significance of the Latin term *praejudicium*, and notes the way it is connected to words such as *prejudice* in English and *prejuge* in French.⁶⁰⁶ Gadamer does this in order to remind us that all claims to knowledge involve the "value of the provisional decision as a prejudgment, like that of

⁵⁹² *ibid*, p.276.

⁵⁹³ *ibid*, p.270.

⁵⁹⁴ Gadamer, Hans- Georg. "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem" in *Philosophical Hermeneutics* trans. David E. Linge, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p.9

⁵⁹⁵ *ibid*.

⁵⁹⁶ *ibid*.

⁵⁹⁷ *ibid*.

⁵⁹⁸ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.301.

⁵⁹⁹ *ibid*, p. 270.

⁶⁰⁰ Gadamer attributes the 'prejudice against prejudice' to the Age of Enlightenment, the famed intellectual movement occurring during the 17th and 18th century on the European continent.

⁶⁰¹ *ibid*, p. 276.

⁶⁰² *Ibid*.

⁶⁰³ *ibid*, p.277.

⁶⁰⁴ *ibid*.

⁶⁰⁵ *ibid*.

⁶⁰⁶ *ibid*, p.270.

any precedent."⁶⁰⁷ Specifically, prejudices occur within the context of tacit presuppositions or unquestioned beliefs – and the problem is determining the way they can be legitimately questioned (distinguished and/or evaluated) with respect to each other.⁶⁰⁸ On the other hand, Gadamer attempts to make prejudices an integral part of the fore-structure of understanding and he attempts to determine the way they may be thrown (back) into question there. Our knowledge of the world of experience presupposes the constitutive role of 'presuppositions' (prejudgments), or the way we already relate to (move within) the historicity of our existence. The initial directedness of our ability to experience the world as meaningful and/or questionable therefore directs Gadamer's movements within the very tradition in question. Gadamer's appeal to the concept of prejudice, then, is his way of enacting and delimiting the circle of understanding. More appropriately, our prejudices reveal the ways in which understanding is enacted and delimited by their own "horizon."⁶⁰⁹ Understanding is determined by what we have in advance – "prejudices that we bring"⁶¹⁰ to those situations we find ourselves in. If we are to question the way we think, we must first try to understand the situations that give rise to such prejudices. According to Gadamer, prejudices may be thought *authoritative* in that they can be rational, and their *reason for being* – rationality – is to be found within history. Since prejudices are the conditions in which we experience our being-in-the-world, their mode of being remain "closely connected"⁶¹¹ to *the way they acquire their "authority"*⁶¹² within tradition. The basis of historical experience remains "grounded on reasons"⁶¹³ that lie beyond the rationality of any given individual's purported reason giving and what Gadamer calls tradition is effectively the "ground of their validity."⁶¹⁴ The question of our being-*in*-prejudice is itself "in need of hermeneutical rehabilitation."⁶¹⁵ The task, then, is to try and determine whether our reasons for *being-there* are valid in order to ask "what is the ground of the legitimacy of prejudices?"⁶¹⁶ Tradition is prejudiced insofar as it predisposes historical beings to think and act in given ways: by situating and orientating their thinking *across* situations. Our prejudices direct the way we experience the world meaningfully, and determine the historicity of our understanding in accordance with their directives and movements. Specifically, being prejudiced does not

⁶⁰⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁰⁸ Gadamer appears to be *indirectly* following Heidegger's lead by developing the etymological connection between criterion and critique.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.302.

⁶¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.306.

⁶¹¹ *ibid.*

⁶¹² *ibid.*

⁶¹³ *ibid.*, p. 280.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

⁶¹⁵ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem" in *Philosophical Hermeneutics* trans. David E. Linge, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p.9.

⁶¹⁶ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p. 277.

hermetically seal human beings off from their own knowledge of the world of experience. Rather, our prejudices effectively open us up to the possibility of what can be understood (experienced, known) in the first place. The enclosure of a given understanding is how we find our way into a world that remains open to interpretation and/or discloses the way we can become conscious of ourselves as prejudiced.

We can now turn to the question of *critical reason*, or the way our prejudices may acquire an "appropriate historical tradition."⁶¹⁷ According to Gadamer, "temporal distance"⁶¹⁸ can typically "solve the question of critique."⁶¹⁹ The relation between past and future makes it possible to "distinguish the true prejudices by which we understand from the false ones, by which we misunderstand."⁶²⁰ The question, of course, is how can temporal distance effectively do this? The answer is said to come by way of the being of the question since the "essence of the question is to open up possibilities and keep them open. If a prejudice becomes questionable"⁶²¹ it may help us question the "efficacy of history within understanding itself."⁶²² A historically effected consciousness can therefore only be(come) truly effectual when "finding the right questions to ask."⁶²³ The relation between question and answer is a circular "intentional relation"⁶²⁴ since we cannot find our way within the world without "asking questions"⁶²⁵ already thought to be relevant or adequate. Being directed *towards* the world of experience is only possible within a "horizon intentionality"⁶²⁶, and experiencing the world can only be intelligible "within its own historical horizon."⁶²⁷ Being directed *upon* a given object is to invariably find ourselves within situations directing the movement of our own questioning. This sense of being directed reveals the very nature of an intentional horizon. Specifically, "the essence of the question is to have sense. Now sense involves a sense of direction. Hence the sense of the question is the only direction from which the answer can be given if it is to make sense. A question places what is questioned in a particular perspective. When a question arises, it breaks open the being of the object...(and) this opened-up being is an answer. Its sense lies in the sense of the question."⁶²⁸ Although Gadamer is careful to distinguish hermeneutics from methodology he nonetheless insists that understanding is itself directed by the "logical structure

⁶¹⁷ Ibid, p.303.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid, p.288.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

⁶²⁰ Ibid, p.288-289.

⁶²¹ Ibid, p.300

⁶²² Ibid.

⁶²³ Ibid, p.301.

⁶²⁴ Ibid, p.66.

⁶²⁵ Ibid, p.362.

⁶²⁶ Ibid, p.245.

⁶²⁷ Ibid, p. 302-3.

⁶²⁸ Ibid, p.362.

of a question."⁶²⁹ Following Heidegger, Gadamer understands the (presupposition of) the world to be structured around human concerns and/or potential meaning – via the way it formally addresses beings *in* that world. Questions exhibit a logical structure by opening up and trans/forming a given "horizon."⁶³⁰ The concept of a horizon is integral here – it is Gadamer's way of conceptualizing the historicity of understanding as both situated and moving. A horizon indicates the directedness of experience and delimits what can be meaningfully brought forth in a given understanding. Anyone who has "a horizon knows the relative significance of everything within the horizon"⁶³¹ and "working out the hermeneutical situation means acquiring the right horizon of the inquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition."⁶³² Consequently, historical understanding involves acquiring "an appropriate historical horizon, so that what we are trying to understand what can be seen in its true dimensions."⁶³³ This obviously begs the questions: how do beings acquire the most appropriate horizon, and from what perspective/s can the truth be seen on the horizontal plane of experience? The answers obviously depend on the logical structure of understanding itself, since history remains the site of *appropriation* (the bringing together of distinct boundaries and movements). Since the horizon is "something into which move and that moves with us"⁶³⁴, seeing an appropriate horizon involves moving "beyond"⁶³⁵ horizontal knowledge. Such situations present themselves when an encountered object defies understanding and "our historical consciousness"⁶³⁶ invariably "transposes itself"⁶³⁷ into another "historical situation"⁶³⁸ so as to try and see "better, within a larger whole and a truer proportion."⁶³⁹ Gadamer calls this movement a "fusion of horizons"⁶⁴⁰, and it involves relating distinct historical parts to a greater whole – (our consciousness of) history itself. A historical consciousness may come to understand the "otherness of the other"⁶⁴¹, and so, realize that its own 'effectiveness' is merely one understanding among many others. The fusion of horizons effectively structures the event/s of understanding, since it fuses distinct parts and movements into a relational whole. The dialectic of experience thereby becomes transformative: it opens up the possibility of other horizons, making it possible to approach the beings in question in different ways.

⁶²⁹ *ibid*, p.299.

⁶³⁰ *ibid*, p.302.

⁶³¹ *ibid*.

⁶³² *ibid*.

⁶³³ *ibid*, p.303.

⁶³⁴ *ibid*, p.304.

⁶³⁵ *ibid*.

⁶³⁶ *ibid*, p.304

⁶³⁷ *ibid*, p.305.

⁶³⁸ *ibid*.

⁶³⁹ *ibid*, p.306.

⁶⁴⁰ *ibid*.

⁶⁴¹ *ibid*, p.360.

Language as Universal Horizon – Being that can be understood is language.

Gadamer's conception of language as *the way* of being within an understanding has already been moving in the background and provided his own questioning with a given intentional horizon. Such an "all embracing world horizon"⁶⁴² is said to be "constituted by a fundamentally anonymous intentionality –i.e., not achieved by anyone by name."⁶⁴³ Nonetheless, Gadamer intentionally moves his concept of language into the foreground, if only to bring forth the question of the linguistically of understanding. Gadamer's goal is to delimit "language as the (universal) horizon of a hermeneutic ontology"⁶⁴⁴ since "language is a medium where I and world meet, or rather, manifest their original belonging together."⁶⁴⁵ Within language "the structure of being is simply not reflected, rather, in language the order and structure of our experience itself is originally formed and constantly changed."⁶⁴⁶ Consequently, the "event of language corresponds to the finitude of man"⁶⁴⁷ and effectively becomes the record for the "finitude of our historical experience"⁶⁴⁸...it is from language as medium that our whole experience of the world, and especially hermeneutical experience, unfolds."⁶⁴⁹ Given this universal approach to the beings in question, Gadamer goes on to make the quasi-transcendental claim that "the coming into language of meaning points to a universal ontological structure, namely to the basic nature of everything toward which understanding can be directed. *Being that can be understood is language. The hermeneutical phenomenon here projects its own universality back onto the ontological constitution* of what is understood, determining it in a universal sense as *language* and determining its own relation to beings as interpretation."⁶⁵⁰ The question we re-turn to, then, is: how is such questioning possible within language?

Gadamer recalls the problem of One over many to bring forth the ontological structure of understanding. Language is conceived as a "speculative unity"⁶⁵¹ that continually calls itself into question, and the problem is the way language mediates (unites and divides) the totality of meaningful beings called into (a) question. The problem of the one and the many relates to the "being of beings...gathering within itself the being of all beings."⁶⁵² Gadamer asks us to recall Plato's *dialogical conception* of the dialectic between question and answer since the "critical

⁶⁴² *ibid*, p.246.

⁶⁴³ *ibid*.

⁶⁴⁴ p.438

⁶⁴⁵ *ibid*, p.474.

⁶⁴⁶ *ibid*, 457.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid*.

⁶⁴⁸ *ibid*.

⁶⁴⁹ *ibid*.

⁶⁵⁰ *ibid*, p.474-5.

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid*, *ibid*, p.475.

⁶⁵² *ibid*, p. 456-7.

distinction between authentic and inauthentic dialogue"⁶⁵³ is said to dwell within our experience of language's way-making movements. The question of a discourse's *authenticity* is understood to be *critical* because it directs the "dialectical puzzle of the one and the many,"⁶⁵⁴ and reminds us that the "one is necessarily many and the many one."⁶⁵⁵ The dialectic remains integral because it indicates the way question and answer necessarily relate to each other within language and directs thought (back) towards questioning the limits of its own understanding. The "path of all knowledge leads through the question"⁶⁵⁶, and the pathway is made available and/or questionable within our experience of language. The question of a discourse's authenticity thereby becomes possible because it attempts to authenticate its own pathways through the linguisticity of questioning. Consequently, language is where "the structure of our experience"⁶⁵⁷ is trans/formed into a meaningful horizon "that moves with one and invites one to advance further."⁶⁵⁸ The "reciprocal relationship"⁶⁵⁹ between question and answer determines the way we approach the beings in question and may transform the horizon of its own questionability (potentiality for meaning). Plato's dialogues thereby recognize the "priority of the question in all knowledge"⁶⁶⁰ and knowledge of the world of experience remains limited by the "horizon of the question."⁶⁶¹ Following Plato, "the significance of questioning consists in revealing the questionability of what is questioned"⁶⁶² and any resulting understanding would ideally be brought into a constant "state of indeterminacy."⁶⁶³ While beings remain in "a circle closed by the dialectic of question and answer"⁶⁶⁴ the possibility of trans/formation itself presupposes "an orientation toward an area of openness."⁶⁶⁵ Asking questions "implies the explicit establishing of presuppositions, in terms of which can be seen what still remains open."⁶⁶⁶ Gadamer claims that the objective of experience is not so much objects or "events but their significance."⁶⁶⁷ Reversals in direction are said to occur by way of a fore-conception guiding all our questions – namely, the "prejudice of completeness."⁶⁶⁸ This prejudicial movement – the

⁶⁵³ *ibid*, p.363.

⁶⁵⁴ *ibid*, p.457.

⁶⁵⁵ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Plato's Dialectical Ethics: Phenomenological Interpretations Relating to the Philebus* trans. Robert M. Wallace (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p.96.

⁶⁵⁶ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.363.

⁶⁵⁷ *ibid*, p.456.

⁶⁵⁸ *ibid*, p.245.

⁶⁵⁹ *ibid*, p.377.

⁶⁶⁰ *ibid*, p.363

⁶⁶¹ *ibid*.

⁶⁶² *ibid*.

⁶⁶³ *ibid*.

⁶⁶⁴ *ibid*, p.389.

⁶⁶⁵ *ibid*, p.366.

⁶⁶⁶ *ibid*, p.363.

⁶⁶⁷ *ibid*, p.328.

⁶⁶⁸ *ibid*, p. 295.

attempt to close a circle that effectively remains open – effects the understanding that a given being "completely expresses its meaning" and that "what it says be the complete truth."⁶⁶⁹ The relation between meaning and truth forms a complex whole, where the relationship between part (meaning) and whole (truth) cannot itself be completed (directed) in an effected historical consciousness. The circle of understanding will nonetheless try to complete (close) itself in another way, and invariably open itself up to the possibility of further questioning (reversals in direction). The attempt to stabilize the circle's directives and movements addresses our "moral being"⁶⁷⁰ insofar as thought remains "wholly bound"⁶⁷¹ by the being/s in question. Conscious beings will find themselves obliged to determine the boundaries of their own directives by "aiming"⁶⁷² their questions accordingly. Such a determination involves throwing into question the "application of knowledge"⁶⁷³ across meaningfully directed experiences. Specifically, we apply our knowledge of the world of experience by directing ourselves towards – or being directed by – the being in question. The dialectic of experience seeks to determine the way we should move and/or the role our prejudices effectively play in directing our questioning. The question, then, is "not about knowledge in general but its concretion at a particular moment"⁶⁷⁴ – i.e., requires determining the relevance or adequacy of the criteria in question. Understanding can only be truly effective when it is brought about (effected) through an interpretation, and such interpretations are only possible when applying (effecting) a given understanding. Consequently, distinguishing between "cognitive, normative and reproductive interpretation has no fundamental validity, but all three constitute one unitary phenomenon."⁶⁷⁵ Such a unity returns us to the problem of the one and the many, or the "relationship between the universal and the particular"⁶⁷⁶ within the language continually calling itself back into question. Understanding is "a special case of applying something universal to a particular situation"⁶⁷⁷ since it involves determining the uniformity of our question's movements. The dialectic between question and answer becomes particularly applicable because language remains a speculative unity concerned with understanding its own directives. Gadamer urges that "we understand in a different way, if we understand at all"⁶⁷⁸ since "experience stands in an ineluctable opposition to knowledge."⁶⁷⁹ The dialectic of experience provides the true answer to our questions in that it remains answerable for our reasons for thinking and acting. A given "experience, worthy of

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid, p.294.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid, p.321

⁶⁷¹ Ibid, p.332.

⁶⁷² Ibid.

⁶⁷³ Ibid, p.315.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid, p.323.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid, p.310.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid, p.312.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid, p.297.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid, p.355.

the name, thwarts an expectation"⁶⁸⁰ and so becomes questionable in turn when being called to answer for itself. Once an understanding unexpectedly reverses its direction and becomes conscious of its own thinking, the "experiencer has become aware of his experience; he is experienced. He has acquired a new horizon within which something can become an experience for him."⁶⁸¹ The potentiality for meaning reveals the truth of all experience – namely, the finitude of experience. Consequently, the "dialectic of experience has its proper fulfilment not in definite knowledge but in the openness to experience that is made possible by experience itself."⁶⁸² The relation of question to answer indicates the "primacy of dialogue"⁶⁸³ insofar as beings belong to an effected consciousness that speaks *to* and *through* them.

The circle closed by the dialectic of question of answer is "always already enclosed within the world horizon of language."⁶⁸⁴ The dialectical relationship itself derives from the way "language and thinking" remain "bound together"⁶⁸⁵ in a world horizon open to experience. Historical beings "fall"⁶⁸⁶ into a world of meaning, and being in the world involves being related to it thus meaningfully. Language therefore not only "presupposes a common world"⁶⁸⁷, it makes our presuppositions – or "worldview"⁶⁸⁸ – possible. The world presupposed is "world only insofar as it comes into language, but language, too, has its real being only in the fact that the world is presented in it...being-in-the-world is primordially linguistic."⁶⁸⁹ Understanding is determined by our relation to language – by being *in* it – and our being-in-the-world constitutes the way we invariably find ourselves thrown there (projected towards a possible future and the potentiality for meaning). The horizon encountered, then, is effectively trans/formed by our relation to – and movement within – language. The beings that can be understood are brought forward (into being or effected) by language's own mode of being. Gadamer urges that language's sense of direction is "universal"⁶⁹⁰: it speaks across worlds in that each horizon similarly communicates the "language of reason itself"⁶⁹¹ when questioning the "rational grounding"⁶⁹² of the reasons language asks of itself. While every understanding falls back upon and arises out of the particularities of a given situation, whatever can be understood is universally bound by

⁶⁸⁰ *ibid*, p.356

⁶⁸¹ *ibid*, p. 354.

⁶⁸² *ibid*.

⁶⁸³ *ibid*, p.369.

⁶⁸⁴ *ibid*, p.450.

⁶⁸⁵ *ibid*, p.417.

⁶⁸⁶ *ibid*, p.383.

⁶⁸⁷ *ibid*, p.406.

⁶⁸⁸ *ibid*, p.442.

⁶⁸⁹ *ibid*, p.443.

⁶⁹⁰ *ibid*, p.475.

⁶⁹¹ *ibid*, p.401.

⁶⁹² *ibid*, p.281.

language's own "responding and summoning"⁶⁹³ into being. The relation between the one (unity of being) and the many (division and multiplicity of beings) therefore calls back into question language's own horizon intentionality. The "speculative structure of language"⁶⁹⁴ is determined by the being of the question insofar as "being that can be understood is language."⁶⁹⁵ Nonetheless, to "come into language does not mean that a second being is acquired. Rather, what something presents itself as belongs to its own being. Thus, everything that is language has a speculative unity: it contains a distinction, that between its being and its presentations of itself, but this is a distinction that is not really a distinction at all."⁶⁹⁶ The closed circle determines our knowledge of "truth"⁶⁹⁷ by permitting an open dialogue to "emerge"⁶⁹⁸ within the historicity of understanding. In this way, questioning beings may come to a "mutual agreement"⁶⁹⁹ about the objects in question through the language "continually underway to change itself."⁷⁰⁰ Put another way: being *in* understanding entails being *in* agreement as "language constitutes itself in the with-one-another."⁷⁰¹ Gadamer's conception of meaningful interpretation claims that "agreement in understanding is more primordial than misunderstanding"⁷⁰² and the possibility of an "understanding leads us back into a reconstruction of agreement in understanding."⁷⁰³ The possibility of reaching an understanding through agreement "legitimizes the universal character of understanding."⁷⁰⁴ The historicity of understanding is legitimated in such a way because "language is what is constantly building up and bearing within itself this commonality of world orientation"⁷⁰⁵ and so "involves the shared interpretation of the world which makes moral and social solidarity possible."⁷⁰⁶ In order to be meaningfully orientated towards an interpreted world, understanding necessarily "unfolds in speaking and in speaking with"⁷⁰⁷ others invariably placed in question. The critical question, then, is the way questioning can meaningfully determine our mutual orientation or being-with. According to Gadamer, tradition is primarily "deposited in the

⁶⁹³ *ibid.*, p.458.

⁶⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p.475.

⁶⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p.474.

⁶⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p.475.

⁶⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p.384.

⁶⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹⁹ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "The Boundaries of Language" in Schmidt, Lawrence (ed.) *Language and Linguisticality in Gadamer's Hermeneutics* (New York: Lexington Books, 2000), p.12.

⁷⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p.15.

⁷⁰¹ *ibid.*, 12.

⁷⁰² Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Language and Understanding" in Palmer, Richard (ed.) *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of Later Writings* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), p. 96.

⁷⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁵ *ibid.*

⁷⁰⁶ *ibid.*

⁷⁰⁷ *ibid.*

written record"⁷⁰⁸, and what can be uncovered emerges in the "public sphere of meaning."⁷⁰⁹ An interpretation brought forth thereby moves towards another horizon by entering "into the content of what is understood."⁷¹⁰ Language determines a historically effected consciousness by preserving and extending the truth of what can be meaningfully understood and/or questioned. Given that "being is language – i.e., self-presentation – as revealed to us by the hermeneutical experience of being,"⁷¹¹ a "genuine experience"⁷¹² reveals itself to be an "encounter with something that asserts itself as truth."⁷¹³ The relation between the one and the many is therefore continuously caught up within – and transformed by – the dialectical movement between part and whole. The question of the finitude of human existence is invariably thrown (back) into question by the infinity of potential meaning. The *interplay* between meaningful part and whole helps explain Gadamer's conception of truth. The event of truth is articulated via the related notions of *play* and *language games*⁷¹⁴ and it is the "knower's own being"⁷¹⁵ that "comes into play"⁷¹⁶ within language's way-making movements (rulings). Specifically, the "things we encounter in understanding plays itself out in a linguistic event, a play of words playing around and about what is meant. *Language games* exist where we as learners – and when do we cease to be that? – rise to the understanding of the world"⁷¹⁷ and we merely participate "in the play of language itself, which addresses us, proposes and withdraws, asks and fulfils itself in the answer."⁷¹⁸

Critical Discussion

Aims and Objectives: The aim of this section is to critically discuss Gadamer's conception of the circle of understanding. We shall do this by questioning the rationality of Gadamer's approach and its relation to critical reason. The goal is to bridge the divide between truth and

⁷⁰⁸ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.392.

⁷⁰⁹ *ibid.*

⁷¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.398.

⁷¹¹ *ibid.*, p.487.

⁷¹² *ibid.*, p.489

⁷¹³ *ibid.*

⁷¹⁴ The concept of language game, of course, derives from Wittgenstein. Unfortunately, Gadamer appropriates the term without formally acknowledging his debt to Wittgenstein here. He merely acknowledges in the foreword to the second edition that "Wittgenstein's concept of language games seemed quite natural to me when I came across it", xxxvi. Presumably, this is because "my analyses of play and of language are purely intended in the phenomenological sense", *ibid.* In the Afterword, however, Gadamer readily acknowledges that he appropriates the aesthetic "concept of play" from Schiller's "play impulse", *ibid.*, p.557. So while Gadamer talks about the concepts of play and language games together, they appear to have distinct lineages and meanings.

⁷¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.491.

⁷¹⁶ *ibid.*

⁷¹⁷ *ibid.*

⁷¹⁸ *ibid.*

method, and enable the possibility of movement between them. The main problem is that the ground on which reason moves cannot direct rational criticisms in a truth-evaluative way, and permits competing claims to be equally true (or false) without contradiction. The objective is two-fold – to render Gadamer's questioning more rational (truthful, valid), and to direct the circle back towards the problem of the criterion via the question of the rationality of reason. We shall argue that Gadamer cannot circumvent the problem of validating his approach, and the requirement is to turn (back) towards the circle in a different way. Gadamer's use of Wittgenstein's term *language game* will prove to be instrumental here. Specifically, we invoke the concept of the *language game of argumentation* to make better sense of Gadamer's overall movements. Such an invocation will permit us to arbitrate – move between, judge – conflicting interpretations within the circle of understanding. We proceed in interdependent ways, and each part forms a complex whole. In the first part, we direct ourselves to the question of the rationality of Gadamer's questioning and provide an overview of conflicting interpretations to orientate ourselves. In the second part, we question Gadamer's elusive concept of 'truth', and argue that philosophical hermeneutics presupposes Heidegger's distinction between ready-to-hand and present-to hand to meaningfully distinguish between true and false prejudices. In the third part, we argue that the dialectic of question and answer is not only thus intelligible but questionable in re-turn. In the final part, we introduce the distinction between motivating and justifying reasons to direct the question of the rationality of reason, permitting us to distinguish and/or move between (overturn) the prejudices in question.

The Rationality of Gadamer's Questioning: We begin by questioning the rational status of Gadamer's approach to the circle of understanding. Such questioning will direct us back towards the circle in question, and so returns us to the nature of the relation between 'truth' and 'method'. Our re-turn is an effect of Gadamer's emphasis upon the historicity of understanding, and endeavours to move within the horizon of his questioning. Given that the historicity of understanding invariably throws our being-there into question, the question is: to what extent can Gadamer's approach to the circle of understanding be understood as 'true'? If historicity *is* a condition of understanding, the question of truth and/or method emerges as a problem in that Gadamer's effected consciousness raises the related questions: how far can the linguistic event of Gadamer's understanding reach, and in what way can Gadamer's effected consciousness transcend its questioning? Gadamer's claims regarding the *universality of understanding* and effective history as the *criterion of correct understanding* remain integral. We need to distinguish two interdependent issues here. The first problem concerns the 'effectiveness' – truth-value – of Gadamer's questioning. Gadamer appears to *move against* his own principle of the history of effect in order to direct his approach towards the historicity of understanding. Such a manoeuvre – or overreach – threatens to falsify the truth claim that effective history has universal validity

(truthfulness) insofar as the claim to universal validity can only itself be the effect of a given understanding. The second problem concerns the 'effectiveness' – validity – of the criterion of correct understanding. Since Gadamer cannot provide a criterion for truth – other than understanding as a self-corrective and/or directive by way of coherence between part and whole – he remains incapable of directing and/or correcting conflicting interpretations within the circle of understanding. The question of the legitimacy of our prejudices, therefore, turns on the way the circle of understanding directs and/or corrects its interpretations *throughout* time: effective history can only be thus effective (truly historical) via the relation between past and future. The problem of the legitimacy of our prejudices is displaced back onto history taken as a complex whole: the truth-value of competing interpretations can only be meaningfully determined within a unity constituted by a historically situated reason. The question, however, is whether it is legitimate to interpret the historicity of understanding as a unitary phenomenon in the first place: does Gadamer's concept of effective history interpret away the truth of history itself when maintaining that temporal distance is the historical source of normativity and/or legitimacy? Either way, understanding is supposed to be a *historically effected event* and so remains *relative to* (conditional upon, moves within) the *history of its effects*. The problem of the criterion, then, returns in a contradictory way – the claim to universality inadvertently raises the spectre of relativism. If the event of understanding moves within a fusion of horizons, by what criteria can we stabilize (know, determine) the truth-value of Gadamer's own questioning?

According to Gadamer, the truth or falsity of our prejudices remains context-bound and/or determined. Questioning their legitimacy is therefore only intelligible within the contexts *giving rise to them* or *bringing them into question*. If the question of their legitimacy is relative to the horizon in which they move, we need to ask two related questions: how can we legitimate Gadamer's questioning and/or legitimately question Gadamer's prejudices across intentional horizons? We would need to *confuse* horizons to make sense of Gadamer's quasi-transcendental approach – i.e., move beyond what can be meaningfully understood or truthfully determined. Gadamer's concept of effective history appears caught within a vicious circle: it effectively falsifies its criterion for truth when making a claim to its own universality. On the one hand, there is the problem of interpreting (bringing forth) Gadamer's quasi-transcendental approach within the historicity of understanding. Although Gadamer insists that understanding can only be truthful (truly possible) if and when we understand *differently*, philosophical hermeneutics nonetheless offers itself as *the* corrective to previous understandings. The event of Gadamer's understanding thereby exhibits a teleological structure antithetical to his avowed approach. Gadamer's questioning is directed towards *the end* of the *most truthful* understanding of our place within effective history. Witness the way Gadamer turns towards Plato and Heidegger to move beyond them. Gadamer effectively works his way through a history of

philosophy by re-turning towards the development of our effective historical consciousness. Gadamer's questioning comes full circle and thereby contradictorily understands itself to be a relatively 'final' understanding: as being the true culmination of the very historically effected consciousness in question. Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is the end of a goal-directed process insofar as it directs itself towards *the truth* of understanding. Such an approach purports to expand upon the historicity of understanding by acting as the corrective and/or directive to its overall movements. On the other hand, there is the problem of determining the legitimacy of the conflicting interpretations of Gadamer's approach within the circle of understanding. Interpretations of Gadamer remain in irreconcilable conflict, and the conflict of interpretations directs the event of understanding along distinct pathways. Specifically, Gadamer's hermeneutics has been interpreted as being either relativist,⁷¹⁹ universalist,⁷²⁰ traditionalist,⁷²¹

⁷¹⁹ Betti, Emilio. "Hermeneutics as a General Methodology of the Geisteswissenschaften" in Bleicher, Josef (ed.) *Hermeneutics as Philosophy, Method and Critique* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980). Betti objects to Gadamer's emphasis upon the historicity of understanding from a methodological point of view, and interprets philosophical hermeneutics as being "destructive" of "objectivity." Specifically, Gadamer's failure to provide a criterion for interpretation plunges understanding "into a standardless morass of relativity", p.79. Betti is by no means alone in levelling the charge of relativism against Gadamer via methodological considerations. See, for example Apel, Karl-Otto. *Towards a Transformation of Philosophy*, trans. Glyn Adey and Davis Frisby, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980). Apel complains that Gadamer surrenders "normative hermeneutics to a relative historicism", p.124.

⁷²⁰ Pannenberg, Wolfhart. "Hermeneutics and Universal History" in *History and Hermeneutic* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968). Pannenberg urges the connection between the historicity of understanding and the understanding of history. According to Pannenberg, distinct events can only be connected in an understanding if and when what can be understood is projected (back) into the structure of universal history. Specifically, "only within the context of universal history" can understanding be thought conditional or conditioned as such. The historicity of understanding – and differences in understanding – can only be preserved within a projection that con/fuses them within the event of an understanding. Indeed, only "the unity of the totality of tradition provides the horizon" in which understanding effectively occurs and can be questioned accordingly, pp.148 and 150 respectively.

⁷²¹ Wolin, Richard. *The Seduction of Unreason: The Intellectual Romance With Fascism from Nietzsche to Postmodernism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004). According to Wolin, Gadamer's "stress on the happening of tradition" exhibits a "traditionalist orientation" in hermeneutics' approach to the historicity of understanding. As such, the "chief defect" of Gadamer's hermeneutics is its "uncritical veneration of the power of tradition", pp.18 and 104 respectively. Elsewhere, Wolin is particularly critical of Gadamer's alleged veneration. Specifically, Gadamer "was an inveterate traditionalist. He believed that one of the great failings of the modern age was that it had lost touch with the classical sources of wisdom and authority. Only by re-establishing contact with the traditional repositories of knowledge—the 'great texts' of Western literature and philosophy—could humanity save itself from a fate of permanent disorientation and soullessness." Richard Wolin, "Socratic Apology: A Wonderful, Horrible Life of Hans-Georg Gadamer" *Book Forum*, Vol. 10, 2003, No. 2, p.4.

postmodern,⁷²² essentialist,⁷²³ nominalist⁷²⁴ and as either metaphysical⁷²⁵ or anti-metaphysical.⁷²⁶ Correspondingly, it has been understood as either an apology⁷²⁷ for historical knowledge or as being unapologetically sceptical⁷²⁸ about the possibility of knowing anything

⁷²² Zuckert, Catherine. *Postmodern Platos: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Gadamer, Strauss, Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Unlike Wolin, Zuckert interprets Gadamer's thinking as postmodern by virtue of the way he questions assumptions that can be traced back to the philosophical discourse of antiquity. Specifically, while Gadamer's "understanding of Plato" might remain central to his way of thinking, he is really "inquiring into the roots" of traditional modes of thought. By looking "back to the origins of philosophy from an explicitly post-modern position" Gadamer is effectively asking "what the character of philosophy was at its origins explicitly on the basis of a conviction that modern rationalism has exhausted its promises and possibilities", p.1.

⁷²³ Margolis, Joseph. *Pragmatism Without Foundations* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986). According to Margolis, Gadamer is a historicist "motivated by the wish to avoid relativism – or the appearance of relativism." As a consequence, he embraces a "form of universalism...incompatible" with his own historicism, p. 46/47. Margolis therefore goes on to identify Gadamer as a "closet essentialist", and locates this essentialism within his "traditionalism." Gadamer is understood to be a *closet* essentialist because his emphasis upon history invariably conceals the essential role of historical invariance. While Gadamer appears to be defending a thesis grounded in historical change, he "effectively fixes" history's direction from "one distinct phase of that process to another." Indeed, it is as if the authority of tradition remains fixed or determinate "through change", effectively transmitting its historical essence via historically distinct processes, p.76.

⁷²⁴ Rorty, Richard. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009). Rorty interprets Gadamer's hermeneutics as offering a view of knowledge without "an essence" or "privileged set of descriptions", pp.390 and 377 respectively. Rorty goes on to clarify what Gadamer's view of knowledge effectively involves in "Being That Can Be Understood Is Language" in Krajewski, Bruce (ed.) *Gadamer's Repercussions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). Unlike Margolis, Rorty identifies Gadamer as a "nominalist", and defines such a historical position as "the claim that all essences are nominal" within the way making movement of language. That is to say, "no description of an object is more true to the nature of that object than any other" and that "to understand the nature of that object is simply to be able to understand the history of the concept of the object. That history, in turn, is simply the history of the various words used to describe the object", pp. 22 and 24 respectively.

⁷²⁵ Caputo, John. *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987). Caputo argues that "Gadamer's hermeneutics is traditionalism and the philosophy of eternal truths pushed to its historical limits", p.107. Specifically, his interpretation of interpretation "turns on an *implicit acceptance* of the metaphysical distinction between a more or less stable and *objective* meaning and its ceaseless changing expression", p.111.

⁷²⁶ Davey, Nicholas. *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Albany: State University of New York, 2006), p.xiii. Davey argues that "philosophical hermeneutics is an anti-metaphysical philosophy" because Gadamer pushes the concept of truth to its historical limits when placing the question of being at the limit of understanding.

⁷²⁷ Vattimo, Gianni. *The End of Modernity. Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991). According to Vattimo, Gadamer is an apologist for "what already exists", p.102.

⁷²⁸ Hirsch, E.D., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967). Hirsch accuses Gadamer of offering a radical historicism that threatens to culminate in "hermeneutic nihilism." p.251. Nonetheless, Hirsch goes so far as to suggest that the notion of a fusion of horizons is incompatible with Gadamer's emphasis upon the historicity of understanding. Specifically, the possibility of interpretation requires us to believe in the historical determinacy of meaning. Indeed, "the fundamental question, which Gadamer has not managed to answer, is simply this: how can it be affirmed that the original sense of a text is beyond our reach and, at the same time, that valid interpretation is possible? If he were true to his assumption of radical historicity, that which he calls a fusion of historical perspectives could not be affirmed at all. If the interpreter is bound by his own

within history. While philosophical hermeneutics is arguably a thoroughgoing "humanism"⁷²⁹ it is also argued that it remains "deeply hostile"⁷³⁰ to half of the human race because of its "profoundly anti-feminist" viewpoint.⁷³¹ The way interpreters understand the relationship between truth and method also affects the way the historicity of understanding is understood.⁷³² Gadamer has been interpreted as committing the is-ought fallacy⁷³³ (mistaking description for prescription) and for failing to derive historically prescriptive statements from his own description of history.⁷³⁴ Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is also said to be the effect of a complete

historicity, he cannot break out of it into some halfway house where past and present are merged. For once it is admitted that the interpreter can adopt a fused perspective different from his own contemporary one, then it is admitted in principle that he can break out of his own perspective. If that is possible, the primary assumption of the theory is shattered", p.254.

⁷²⁹ Grondin, Jean. "Gadamer on Humanism" in Hahn, Lewis (ed.) *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer* (Chicago: Open Court, 1997), p.167.

⁷³⁰ Fleming, Marie. "Gadamer's Conversation: Does the Other Have a Say?" in Code, Lorraine (ed.) *Feminist Interpretations of Hans-Georg Gadamer* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), p.111. The recurring theme in these 'interpretations' is that Gadamer is only half a humanist because he fails to address questions of gender and power, or the way tradition effectively reproduces patriarchal values at the expense of women.

⁷³¹ Jantzen, Grace. "Gadamer, Heidegger, and the Limits of Existence" in Code, Lorraine (ed.) *Feminist Interpretations of Hans-Georg Gadamer* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), p.286.

⁷³² Misgeld, Dieter. "On Gadamer's Hermeneutics" *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 9, No.2, 1979. Misgeld notes (correctly) that Gadamer "never analyses scientific method in terms of a plurality of methods or the relation between theories and methods." While he takes our understanding of method as a historical given, he effectively provides an ahistorical view of methodology insofar as Gadamer "challenges beliefs hardly anyone since the early days of logical positivism would still entertain", pp. 236 and 223 respectively.

⁷³³ McCarthy, Thomas and Hoy, David. *Critical Theory* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1994). According to McCarthy, Gadamer is guilty of a "type of fallacious reasoning that has been enormously influential: the fallacy of treating ontological conditions as normative principles." McCarthy argues that Gadamer's prejudice "in favour of traditionalism" attempts to "draw normative conclusions" from historically determined prejudices. While the historicity of understanding might be a given, it does not follow that historical beings should orient themselves towards the authority of tradition. Tradition might happen of its own accord, but its claim to 'authority' might point in different directions and effectively be contradictory or conflicting. Such a happening "does not tell us which we are to be or with respect to what we are to be either." Gadamer's prejudice towards a tradition that may or may not question itself "is not a prescription for belief or action" especially since traditional practice remains prejudiced towards preserving and extending its own prescriptions. p.41.

⁷³⁴ Hinman, Lawrence. "Quid Facti or Quid Juris? The Fundamental Ambiguity of Gadamer's Understanding of Hermeneutics" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. XL, No. 4, 1980. According to Hinman, Gadamer's hermeneutics "consigns itself to an odd kind of irrelevance." While Gadamer places the emphasis upon the event of 'truth' in history, he effectively falsifies its role by refusing to address the question of the tenability of human belief or action there. If we belong to history – as opposed to history belonging to us – then the only understanding that Gadamer can effectively provide is knowledge of the happening of tradition. Irrespective of what happens – or whether we know what is happening – tradition will effect itself of its own accord. Human beings will merely happen to belong to the history of its effects.

"misunderstanding"⁷³⁵ – and may be interpreted as insufficiently philosophical⁷³⁶ as a result. This conflict of interpretations goes to the heart of his account of interpretation, and to the indeterminacy of the relation between truth and method within any given understanding.

Part of the difficulty is determining which way to turn. We have immediately found ourselves *caught between* conflicting movements, and remain directed towards the problem of directing our own understanding. Following Gadamer, we shall try to locate ourselves within the problem of such an *in between*. Our understanding will, therefore, turn on an answer to the question of the appropriateness of the corresponding directive. While it is true that Gadamer does not develop the notions of 'truth' or 'method', a methodological concept nonetheless directs his questioning – the dialectic between question and answer. Specifically, our questions specify the nature of their intentional relationship and/or the way language may be directed (back) upon itself. If understanding is to be interpreted by the way thought may question its direction, then the problem remains the movement of the hermeneutical circle. The question of prejudice goes to the heart of the problem of understanding – it reveals the limits of our "ontological commitments."⁷³⁷ Although Gadamer appeals to tradition to legitimate the circle of understanding, the conflict of interpretations throws into question the very intelligibility of its presupposed authority and unity. Gadamer's principle of the history of effect either remains divided against itself or effective history cannot resolve the conflict in accordance with its directives. The questionable relation between part and whole remains integral here – it effectively throws into question the nature of the 'truth' directing and/or correcting the circle's overall movements. We therefore need to turn to Gadamer's conception of 'truth' if we are to determine its role in the historicity of understanding. While it's true, of course, that "the

⁷³⁵ MacIntyre, Alasdair. "Contexts of Interpretation: Reflections on Hans George Gadamer's Truth and Method" *Boston University Journal*, Vol. 26, 1980, p.177. MacIntyre follows Betti by urging that Gadamer fails to answer the calling of methodology implicit within Gadamer's emphasis upon the question of the historicity of understanding. Indeed, he interprets Gadamer's hermeneutics as a heuristic that calls forth a "comparative" mode of inquiry relative to "the history of ideas" itself. Hermeneutics should be understood as "the outcome of the history of thought", and so understanding must provide a guideline for "reappropriating that history", *ibid*.

⁷³⁶ Figal, Gunter. *Objectivity: The Hermeneutical and Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010). Figal argues that we need to move from "philosophical hermeneutics to hermeneutical philosophy", p.5. In moving this way, it should be possible "to *maintain distance* from what has shaped and shapes one, and to give account of what happens to us" in an objective manner, p.15. Figal goes on to claim that the possibility of objective thinking will become available to us if we distance ourselves from the presuppositions in question. Specifically, hermeneutical philosophy can "really only be what it is in the presuppositionless clarity of its activity", p. 119.

⁷³⁷ Risser, James. *Hermeneutics And The Voice Of The Other* (New York: State University of New York, 1997), p.122.

methodological craving for certainty and assurance"⁷³⁸ contradicts the historical presuppositions of Gadamer's questioning, the question remains: in what way can it be so certain about – and assure us – of its truth-claims? All said and done, philosophical hermeneutics remains ontologically committed "to what truth means for finite beings"⁷³⁹ and is therefore "sceptical about any methodological claim to definitive truth and the very idea of methodological foundations."⁷⁴⁰ Nonetheless, Gadamer purports to direct us to a "concept of knowledge and truth which corresponds to the whole of hermeneutic experience"⁷⁴¹, and his attempt to locate thought within an *in between* invariably circles around its two corresponding parts: the relation between hermeneutical truth and philosophical method.

Gadamer's questionable concept of truth. The concern, then, is that we cannot arbitrate – move between, adjudicate – the question of the legitimacy of conflicting interpretations via Gadamer's approach to the historicity of understanding. We cannot assign a truth-value to Gadamer's questioning without presupposing the beings in question or projecting the problem of its rational status back onto the historically effected consciousness brought into question. Part of the problem is Gadamer's prejudice towards *aesthetic consciousness* within his questioning. Gadamer is primarily interested in legitimating the way a "work of art truly takes hold of us"⁷⁴² as "an event that 'appropriates us' to itself."⁷⁴³ Gadamer privileges art because of the way it can transform our knowledge of the world of experience. It "is in the sheer being-there (*Dasein*) of the work of art that our understanding experiences the depths and the unfathomability of its meaning."⁷⁴⁴ As Gjesdal argues, Gadamer's 'prejudicial' approach attempts to "transform the very notion of truth in understanding into a notion of authenticity."⁷⁴⁵ Gadamer directs us towards the possibility of a "deeper, more existential engagement"⁷⁴⁶ within the circle of understanding – one directed towards "a more authentic existence"⁷⁴⁷ than being (completely) rational. Warnke observes that Gadamer's ontological commitment to tradition

⁷³⁸ Grondin, Jean. "Hermeneutical Truth and its Historical Presuppositions: A Possible Bridge between Analysis and Hermeneutics" in Simpson, Evan (ed.) *Anti-Foundationalism and Practical Reasoning* (Edmonton: Academic Printing and Publishing, 1987), p.54.

⁷³⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁷⁴¹ Wachterhauser, R, Brice. "Must we Mean What We Say? Gadamer On Truth In The Human Sciences" in Wachterhauser, Brice (ed.) *Hermeneutics and Modern Philosophy* (Albany: Suny Press, 1986), p.219.

⁷⁴² Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Gadamer in Conversation" in Palmer, E. Richard (ed.) *Gadamer in Conversation: Reflections and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p.31.

⁷⁴³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁴⁵ Gjesdal, Kristin. *Gadamer and the Legacy of German Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.121.

⁷⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p.151.

⁷⁴⁷ *ibid.*

thereby exhibits a "peculiar oscillation"⁷⁴⁸ around the "normative authority"⁷⁴⁹ of the beings in question – and such an oscillating movement problematizes the very being (normativity) of the question itself. Gadamer's back and forth movements may be characterised by a tension in the question of which way to turn *within* understanding: towards 'truth' or 'meaning'. The problem is that if the latter (meaningfulness) invariably turns into the former (truthfulness) we still require an ontologically prior concept of 'truth' to understand the depths and the unfathomability of an object's potential meaning. Gadamer's movements appear to turn on a "dilemma"⁷⁵⁰ when caught between the content and referent of questioning. On the one hand, Gadamer points "to the need to anticipate the truth or completeness of the object in question."⁷⁵¹ Gadamer insists on the ontological primacy of the referential in order to move thought towards questioning the truth-value of a given intentional horizon. On the other hand, Gadamer's refusal to "provide any criteria for"⁷⁵² distinguishing between the legitimacy of our prejudices emphasizes the multiplicity and/or division of beings across intentional horizons. Gadamer effectively introduces a divide between truth and meaning, and the circle of understanding acts a bridge between them. On one side, Gadamer's hermeneutics moves the problematic of understanding towards the transmission and maintenance of traditional beliefs and practices: it is an ontology of conservation without any need for (further) justification. On the other side, Gadamer directs hermeneutic movement towards potentially arbitrary interpretations – it turns into an "ontology of the possible"⁷⁵³ insofar as interpretations can go either way and become their own justification. The dialectic between question and answer is, of course, supposed to stabilize the relation between meaning and truth. It bridges the divide by *bringing* content and referent together while continuing to *hold* beings apart. The dialectical movement thereby permits questions to cross from one side (back) to the other in understanding. Specifically, once thought finds itself caught between meaning and truth, the "process of integration and appropriation"⁷⁵⁴ can move questioning back and forth accordingly.

Consequently, the only truth criterion that seems to be available to interpreters is that of *course correction* – i.e., being put back on the correct course (path, trajectory) of effective history. Given that the authority of tradition is what is being brought into (a) question, the criterion of correct

⁷⁴⁸ Warnke, Georgia. *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p.99.

⁷⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁷⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁷⁵² *ibid.*

⁷⁵³ Risser, James. *Hermeneutics And The Voice Of The Other* (New York: State University of New York, 1997), p.122

⁷⁵⁴ Warnke, Georgia. *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p.101.

understanding merely presupposes the very direction and/or unity of the effects of the history in question. Specifically, conflicting interpretations can only be understood to be 'true' "if they stand their ground in the course of the history of effect. If effective success is the only criterion, radical relativism"⁷⁵⁵ appears to be effective history's true standard bearer. Gadamer is certainly aware of the "inner contradictions"⁷⁵⁶ of arguments questioning the limits of a given understanding. Gadamer takes such a contradictory movement as a given: the finitude of our being is interpreted dialectically from the outset and internalized with respect to the circle's own *performativity*. While it has been claimed that Gadamer is caught in a *performative contradiction*⁷⁵⁷ – i.e., where the *act of stating* contradicts the rational content of its own statements⁷⁵⁸ – we need to be more mindful. Gadamer *moves within* the question of the performativity of understanding, and specifically asks: to what extent does language perform thought?⁷⁵⁹ The answer, of course, is that language and thought necessarily move within the circle in question, and so are directed (back) towards each other. Specifically, "if anything does characterize human thought, it is this infinite dialogue with ourselves which never leads anywhere definitively."⁷⁶⁰ Consequently, the question is not whether Gadamer is caught in a performative contradiction – it is *the way* in which the circle of understanding itself performs the contradictory nature of our questioning. Any attempt to question the "truth-value"⁷⁶¹ of effective history in a relatively logical (or straightforward) way will therefore get us nowhere and prove ineffective.⁷⁶² In what way, however, can the claim to universality be unconditionally true when the very concept of truth is what is in question here? Put another way: what can 'truth' mean (be) when the concept of 'truth' remains relative to (or conditional upon) the history of its effects?

⁷⁵⁵ Mul, de Jos. "Structuralist and Hermeneutic Approaches to Development" in Haaften van Wouter and Wren, Thomas (eds.) *Philosophy of Development: Reconstructing the Foundations of Human Development and Education* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), p.238.

⁷⁵⁶ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.344

⁷⁵⁷ Apel, Karl-Otto. "Regulative Ideas or Truth Happening" in *From a Transcendental Semiotic Point of View* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p.200.

⁷⁵⁸ As we anticipated in Chapter 1, we will repeatedly return to the notion of performative contradiction – and merely reintroduce the concept to allow for Gadamer's conception of the performativity of language in accordance with our questioning.

⁷⁵⁹ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Supplement II: To What Extent Does Language Perform Thought?" in *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.542.

⁷⁶⁰ *ibid*, p.543.

⁷⁶¹ *ibid*.

⁷⁶² *ibid*. Specifically, "the thesis of scepticism or relativism refutes itself to the extent that it claims to be true is an irrefutable argument. But what does it achieve? The reflective argument that proves successful here rebounds against the arguer, for it renders the truth-value of reflection suspect. It is not the reality of scepticism or of truth-dissolving relativism but the truth claim of all formal argument that is affected." Nonetheless, Gadamer goes on to question whether "the two propositions—"all knowledge is historically conditioned" and "this piece of knowledge is true unconditionally"—are on the same level, so that they could contradict each other. For the thesis is not that this proposition will always be considered true, any more than that it has always been so considered", p.534.

According to Gadamer's line of questioning, historically effected beings would ideally distinguish between truth and (scientific) method. Such a distinction is said to be ideal because only the "discipline of questioning and inquiry...guarantees truth."⁷⁶³ Gadamer effectively ends *Truth and Method* with a valorisation of the very concept in question, and prioritizes one mode of inquiry (understanding) over another (explanation). The human sciences are therefore to be distinguished from the natural sciences and their modes of inquiry approached in different ways.⁷⁶⁴ Gadamer moves towards this knowledge claim from a given direction – he *argues* that only the interpretive sciences can 'guarantee truth' because of the way they actively bring "the knowers own being...into play"⁷⁶⁵ and question. The questions, however, are: what is 'truth' and how do interpreters 'know' when the claim of truth comes into play and/or question?⁷⁶⁶ As Bernstein notes, Gadamer asks us to presuppose the very concept in question. While such a presupposition might remain "elusive"⁷⁶⁷ and "never becomes fully thematic"⁷⁶⁸ or "explicit"⁷⁶⁹, the requirement is to determine the "meaning of truth"⁷⁷⁰ within Gadamer's questioning. According to Bernstein, Gadamer implicitly appeals to a concept of truth that "can be argumentatively validated by the community of interpreters who open themselves to what tradition says to us."⁷⁷¹ Interpreters are capable of doing this by *constructing arguments through*

⁷⁶³ *ibid*, p.491.

⁷⁶⁴ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Autobiographical Reflections" in Palmer, Richard, (ed.) *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of Later Writings* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), p. 24. It is worth noting that Gadamer invariably conceded that the problem of interpretation and self-knowledge was also present in scientific inquiry. The traditional distinction between explanation and understanding might not be as straightforward as originally conceived. Specifically, "There is something like a hermeneutical problematic in the natural sciences, too. Their path is also not simply that of methodical, step-by-step progress. This has been persuasively shown by Thomas Kuhn and was earlier implied by Heidegger's essay "The Age of the World Picture" as well as in his interpretation of the Aristotelian view of nature in *Physics* B 1. Both make clear that the reigning "paradigm" is decisive both for the questions that research raises and for the data that it examines, and these are apparently not just the result of methodical research. Galileo had already said, "Mente concipio" (I conceive in my mind, or project a natural object mathematically), p.24. Gadamer nonetheless maintains that (unlike scientific method) it is the "fundamental linguisticity of human beings" that determines the question of their being-there.

⁷⁶⁵ *ibid*.

⁷⁶⁶ Ballnat, Silvana. "Experience and Truth in Gadamer" in Jorgensen, Dorthe, Chiurazzi, Gaetano and Tinning, Sorren (eds.) *Truth and Experience: Between Phenomenology and Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), p.219. Ballnat reminds us that the title of *Truth of Method* was originally *Understanding and Event*, and intimates that the title was an afterthought brought forth by Gadamer's publisher. Nonetheless, Ballnat tries to have it both ways when he argues that Gadamer's concept of truth is all encompassing in that it presupposes *all* traditional "criteria of truth" (such as the coherence, correspondence, consensus and pragmatic conceptions of truth) and places them in question via his elusive – and allusive – approach to the problem of the criterion.

⁷⁶⁷ Bernstein, Richard. *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics and Praxis* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), p. 152.

⁷⁶⁸ *Ibid*.

⁷⁶⁹ *ibid*.

⁷⁷⁰ *ibid*, p.153.

⁷⁷¹ *ibid*.

language. We may therefore "judge and evaluate such claims by the standards and practices that have been hammered out in the course of history." ⁷⁷²

There are a couple of things to note here. While Gadamer's concept of truth remains *open ended*, it may nonetheless be brought forth within the circle of understanding: it presupposes the possibility of opening ourselves up to what can be meaningfully understood or called (back) into question. Gadamer's emphasis on *mutual understanding through agreement*, however, appears to be *makeshift* and/or *argumentative*. The claim of truth occurs with respect to the way it is *done* or *made* – via the way our standards and practices are brought into question through back and forth movements. Consequently, Gadamer's concept of truth exhibits a Janus face. On the one side, Gadamer claims that mutual understanding is only possible through agreements shaped and handed down within tradition. On the other side, Gadamer claims that the claim of truth is only possible when a meaningful encounter actively brings about disagreements with the tradition in question. Given that the circle of understanding turns on the back and forth movements within language, we need to determine the way 'truth' may be brought forward or held back. Bernstein's use of the term *hammer* is particularly forceful here. We can only determine the truth-value of competing claims to knowledge within the context of the standards and practices 'hammering' them out in the first place.

Gadamer would resist, of course, any attempt to philosophize – hit upon the 'truth' – with a hammer.⁷⁷³ Effective history conceived as the act of pounding – of repeatedly delivering heavy blows upon our understanding – is directed the wrong way. Following Heidegger, the reverse is *arguably* 'truer': it is the subtle back and forth movements of the "linguistic construction"⁷⁷⁴ of art that is said to be particularly effective (truthful) since "language is more than just a tool or just a sign system for the purpose of communication... The possibilities which language allows us humans, the possibilities of language which we all use, surpass the possibilities of a tool and the use of tools. Language signifies memory."⁷⁷⁵ If we recall, however, Heidegger originally appealed to a specific tool – a hammer – to distinguish the ways we meaningfully relate to the

⁷⁷² *ibid.*

⁷⁷³ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Twilight of the Idols, Or How to Philosophize With a Hammer* trans. Duncan Large (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.118. Nietzsche, of course, coined this famous turn of phrase. In the "Foreword", he claims that we need to "sound out (false) idols" and must "ask questions with a hammer and, perhaps, to hear in response that famous hollow sound which speaks of swollen innards."

⁷⁷⁴ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "The Verse and the Whole" in Misgeld, Dieter, and Nicholson, Graeme (eds.) *Gadamer on Education, Poetry and History: Applied Hermeneutics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), p.91.

⁷⁷⁵ *ibid.*

world.⁷⁷⁶ According to early Heidegger, a hammer can be approached in two main ways. We can pick it up and apply it without thinking or we can bring it into conscious thought. Heidegger is obviously not talking about temporal distance or language here – he is distinguishing the ways in which a hammer can be understood within the immediate circle of beings. We would only (typically) question a hammer's mode of being when it might not be up to the task at hand and there is a literal breakdown in understanding. Specifically, when the ready-to-hand disagrees with our background knowledge (prior experiences) and moves into the foreground as an object of reflection. Although Gadamer would argue that the distinction between ready-to-hand and present-to-hand plays no role in his elusive concept of 'truth', it seems to presuppose it in *some way*. Witness the way Gadamer consciously uses Wittgenstein's term *language game* to *linguistically construct* his own argument and argues that "the goal of all communication and all understanding is agreement in the matter at hand."⁷⁷⁷ Such a possibility (metaphorically speaking) requires us to presuppose movement from *one mode of being* (back) to another in order to bring about a difference in understanding.⁷⁷⁸ Following the later Heidegger, however, language can only be truly understood via the way it brings our being into question and/or play. Language therefore needs to be approached the *other way* around. Unlike the proverbial hammer, language takes hold of us and may transform our being-there in distinct ways. Nonetheless, Gadamer's use of Wittgenstein remains significant. Wittgenstein's inquiry into language begins with a description of two builders literally "building"⁷⁷⁹ an understanding through mutual agreement about the function of their words. Wittgenstein constructs the term *language game* "to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life."⁷⁸⁰ Language is therefore said to form a complex whole in which the use of words play an integral part, and Wittgenstein calls "the whole, *consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven*, the 'language-game'."⁷⁸¹ Wittgenstein's aim, however, is not so much to treat language as a construction site – it is to argue that language can only be truly

⁷⁷⁶ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 11e, p.6. It is worth noting that Wittgenstein begins his approach to language by asking asks us to "think of the tools in the tool box: there is a hammer, pliers a saw, a screw driver, a ruler, a glue pot, nails and screw." (11e, p.6).

⁷⁷⁷ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "On the Circle of Understanding" in Connolly, John and Keutner, Thomas (eds.) *Hermeneutics Versus Science* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), p.99.

⁷⁷⁸ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.403. Gadamer explicitly makes the knowledge claim that any "instrumentalist theory" is "incorrect" –i.e., not true. The "interpreter does not use words and concepts like a craftsman who picks up his tools and then puts them away. Rather, we must recognize that all understanding is interwoven with concepts and reject any theory that does not accept the intimate unity of word and subject matter."

⁷⁷⁹ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), No.2, p.3.

⁷⁸⁰ *ibid*, No.23, p.11.

⁷⁸¹ *ibid*, No.7, p.5.

understood via its "use"⁷⁸² or "application."⁷⁸³ Consequently, language games must be identified and distinguished via their own criteria of relevance or adequacy. The paradox is that the criteria for rule-following occur without rhyme or reason anyway: rules could conceivably go *either way*.

This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule. The answer was: if everything can be made out to accord with the rule, then it can also be made out to conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict here.⁷⁸⁴

The Dialectic between Knowledge and Power.

The paradox – which recurs in Gadamer's inquiry⁷⁸⁵ – is whether questioning can truly answer for itself: do questions refer to anything other than their being-there (rulings, practices, etc.)? Approached another way: what is the rule for following rules? Suppose, for example, that religious practice is a language game and the texts speak for themselves.⁷⁸⁶ Gadamer calls this *way of speaking* myth⁷⁸⁷, and specifically aligns the poetic with the mythical "in the sense that myth requires no confirmation from anything beyond itself... therein lies its unique (truth) value."⁷⁸⁸ Gadamer goes so far as to question whether religion and art speak different dialects of the same language⁷⁸⁹ – and argues that the dialectic of experience ideally occurs by way of *related* modes of being.⁷⁹⁰ As Cesare observes, Gadamer "explicitly insists on the proximity between art and religion – indeed, even on the *religious dimensions of art* (and) this religious dimension can be traced back to myth."⁷⁹¹ The mythical moves towards the beyond via its

⁷⁸² *ibid*, No.2, p.1.

⁷⁸³ *ibid*, No.11, p.6.

⁷⁸⁴ *ibid*, (No.201, p.81). Wittgenstein argues that the "meaning of a word is its use in a language" (No.43, p.20) and that "it is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life" (No.241, p.88).

⁷⁸⁵ We shall also see the paradox of rule-following recur in Lyotard and Habermas in different ways.

⁷⁸⁶ Phillips, Dewi Zephaniah. *Wittgenstein and Religion* (London: Macmillan Palgrave, 1993). Phillips applies Wittgenstein's approach to language games to the philosophy of religion.

⁷⁸⁷ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Religious and Poetical Speaking" in Olson, Alan (ed.) *Myth, Symbol and Reality* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980).

⁷⁸⁸ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Composition and Interpretation" in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays* trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.71.

⁷⁸⁹ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Aesthetic and Religious Experience" in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays* trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.140.

⁷⁹⁰ Wittgenstein would identify the relationship between poetry and religion as involving a *family resemblance* – an *identity by relation* we shall return to when discussing Lyotard's concept of language games.

⁷⁹¹ Cesare, Donatella. *Gadamer: A Philosophical Portrait* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), p. 63

attempt to "bridge the chasm between the ideal and the real."⁷⁹² Suppose now that there are competing religions questioning the truth-value of given religious experiences. Does it matter whether God truly exists or if worshippers might be existentially related (praying to, following) either a non-existent or false God? Within the context of religious practice, these appear to be meaningless questions: the practice becomes its own justification. If "religious language games do not require further justification"⁷⁹³ they effectively become "invulnerable to external critique."⁷⁹⁴ It therefore becomes irrelevant if we can't even ask whether religious – and by extension, aesthetic – experience is "disguised nonsense that believers are unable to recognize"⁷⁹⁵ or whether religious – and aesthetic – disputes can be meaningfully resolved or questioned.⁷⁹⁶ The only justification they'll ever need is their relationship to the relevant texts. Gadamer urges that "the technical term for the form in which religious texts speak is myth. The word *mythologeîn*, indeed, has to do with the act of speaking. Myth means a tale to be conveyed and to be verified by nothing else than the act of telling it. Thus the only good definition of myth is that *myth neither requires nor includes any possible verification of itself*."⁷⁹⁷ While Gadamer's use of the term language game might move beyond Wittgenstein, it nonetheless returns us to the problem of the criterion. Specifically, is the rationality of reason a myth brought forth in the very act of its telling (questioning itself)? The "myth of reason"⁷⁹⁸ may be questioned by its own

⁷⁹² Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "The Relevance of the Beautiful" in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays* trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.15. When discussing Plato's concept of beauty as "true being as the original image and the world of appearance as the reflected image, of this exemplary original", Gadamer argues that there "is something convincing about this as far as art is concerned... In order to understand our experience of art, we are tempted to search the depths of mystical language for daring new words", *ibid*, p.17.

⁷⁹³ Addis, Mark. "Fideism in Wittgenstein's Mirror" in Addis, Mark and Arrington, Robert (eds.) *Wittgenstein and the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p.93.

⁷⁹⁴ *ibid*.

⁷⁹⁵ *ibid*.

⁷⁹⁶ Lopes, Dominic. "Disputes in Taste" in Young, James (ed.) *Semantics of Aesthetic Judgments* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p.72. Lopes notes the "occurrence of faultless aesthetic disagreements," and questions whether it is possible to resolve disputes in taste without presupposing the very standards in question. Gadamer's concept of beauty, for example, becomes relevant and/or questionable via given criteria of relevance or adequacy...and the question is: how can we decide what is really (truly) beautiful? Or alternatively, why is there irresolvable disagreement in aesthetic judgment and/or why do we fault one another when disagreeing? See Bender, John, "Realism, Supervenience, and Irresolvable Aesthetic Disputes" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 54, No. 4, 1996, pp.371-381 for an attempt to make sense of 1) the "relational analytics of aesthetic properties, 2) the supervenience of aesthetic properties upon purely descriptive non aesthetic properties and 3) the existence of irresolvable disputes, even among experts, concerning the aesthetic features of artworks", p.371.

⁷⁹⁷ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Religious and Poetical Speaking" in Olson, Alan (ed.) *Myth, Symbol and Reality* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), p.92.

⁷⁹⁸ Stables, Andrew. *Be(com)ing Human: Semiosis and the Myth of Reason* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2012).

history, namely whether an "advancement of thought"⁷⁹⁹ permits us to distinguish – or move between – myth and rationality in the first place.⁸⁰⁰

Although Gadamer approves of Wittgenstein's attempt to lead "all speaking back to the context of life praxis"⁸⁰¹, historical practice is contextualized within the "linguistic constitution of our being-in-the-world."⁸⁰² Our knowledge of the world of experience remains answerable *through* the circle calling our being-there into question. Gadamer agrees with Wittgenstein that "conceptual thinking always has unsharp edges"⁸⁰³ but questions the way language can be meaningfully used.

Thinking in concepts is not fundamentally different from thinking as it happens in the ordinary use of language. Indeed, nobody can simply introduce a usage into language. Rather, the language usage introduces itself; it takes shape in the life-process of language, until finally it has won for itself a firm standing.⁸⁰⁴

Note the way Gadamer uses the term *won* when discussing the *matter in hand*. The question before us is the same as the one behind us: how do we move from one horizon to another without trying to win an argument that remains open to questioning and/or is potentially self-defeating in turn? While it might be true that no one can simply introduce a usage into language, language nonetheless introduces itself through its usage – i.e., through questioning that transforms the nature of mutual understanding and agreement. If reasons are advanced for or against the truth of a given position, there can be no back and forth movement without moving – *making the transition* between – practical (ready-to-hand) and theoretical (present-to-hand) thinking. Hall provides a useful summation of this back and forth movement when he observes the way the language game of argumentation has traditionally been played.

⁷⁹⁹ Adorno, Theodor and Horkheimer, Max. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (London: Allen Lane, 1973), p.1.

⁸⁰⁰ *ibid.* Adorno and Horkheimer question the distinction between myth and enlightenment, and argue that the distinction stems from reason's false belief in its own capacity to liberate itself from mythology. Specifically, "*myth is already enlightenment, and enlightenment reverts to mythology*", p.xviii. They make this claim because "enlightenment, understood in the widest sense as the advance of thought, has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters. Yet the wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity. Enlightenment's program was the disenchantment of the world. It wanted to dispel myths, to overthrow fantasy with knowledge", p.1. Instead of dispelling myths, it fell victim to the biggest myth of all – that reason could liberate us from the tyranny of thought or save us from ourselves.

⁸⁰¹ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Autobiographical Reflections" in Palmer, Richard (ed.) *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of Later Writings* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), p. 385.

⁸⁰² *ibid.*

⁸⁰³ *ibid.*

⁸⁰⁴ *ibid.*

In serious critical intellectual work, there are no absolute beginnings and few unbroken continuities...old lines of thought are (merely) disrupted, older constellations displaced, and elements old and new, are regrouped around a different set of premises and themes. Changes in a problematic do significantly transform the nature of the questions asked, the forms in which they are proposed and the manner in which they can be adequately answered. Such shifts in perspective reflect, not only the results of an internal intellectual labour, but the manner in which real historical developments and transformations are appropriated in thought, and provide Thought, not with its guarantee of 'correctness', but with its fundamental orientations, its conditions of existence....this complex articulation between thinking and historical reality, reflected in the social categories of thought...(embody)...the continuous dialectic between knowledge and power...⁸⁰⁵

Gadamer's emphasis upon mutual understanding through agreement *downplays* a critical feature of the gaming analogy he takes from Wittgenstein – competitive (language) games typically involve power plays. Power differentials are built into the language game of argumentation: we play them to win via our *intellectual labours*. Competitive games might have many different stakes and objectives – but a recurring feature is that they are directed towards the *holding onto* or *transfer* of power. The question, however, is whether anyone ever truly wins or loses a given argument – the dialectic between knowledge and power effectively remains in play indefinitely. The play of language ensures that any attempt to hold onto or transfer power through argumentation is self-defeating: the "linguistic game of giving and asking for reasons"⁸⁰⁶ brings the dialectic (back) into play by continually re-enacting it throughout effective history and so remains a "fundamentally paradoxical undertaking."⁸⁰⁷ If a game's intrinsic features turn on their reason for being-there, we must question the way they are *traditionally played* and we can only do this by questioning the dialectic between knowledge and power within the *language game* in question. Following Gadamer, the requirement is to follow the lead of the dialectic of question and answer in effective history, and question history's 'effectiveness' at reaching the 'truth'. If the goal of truth remains open-ended or elusive, the question is: why pursue it in the first place? In other words, to what end (other than to bring the dialectic between knowledge and power into question or play)? Moving the goal posts – or discovering that the posts move of their own accord – invariably returns us to the problem of the criterion. Specifically, if "truth is

⁸⁰⁵ Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms" *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 2, 1980, p.57.

⁸⁰⁶ Brandom, B Robert. *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing and Discursive Commitment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), p.xxi.

⁸⁰⁷ Suits, Bernard. *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2005), p.276.

the goal"⁸⁰⁸ of rational inquiry, how is "hitting the target"⁸⁰⁹ possible when the criteria for truth threatens to change as the language game of argumentation *remains in progress*. The very rules of the language game throw its rationality (back) into question: the giving and taking of reasons have reason moving in circles and involves the chasing of its own tail (or tale). Specifically, *moving on the grounds of rationality* presupposes being directed towards questioning and/or argumentation to be meaningfully effective. While the giving and taking of reasons might be pursued for its own end (for the sake of argument), the practice of arguing simultaneously occurs for related reasons (enabling the dialectic between knowledge and power that remains conditional upon the historicity of understanding). The concept of 'power' might seem pejorative within the context of the language game of argumentation – it suggests the possibility of illicitly establishing social dominance through the misuse of language. By 'power', however, we *provisionally* mean controlling influence or rational authority – as in the *power of reason* or the *force of an argument*. The critical question, then, is trying to legitimate social influence through competing knowledge claims: in what way do we hold onto or transfer 'power' in such a language game? The power of reason is effectively brought into play and/or question *within* the language game of argumentation itself. Specifically, via the way people try to manoeuvre around each other to score⁸¹⁰ an equally elusive or mobile goal. While we might already believe that the truth or falsity of a given position is self-evident, the requirement is to *convince others* with linguistically constructed arguments. We attempt to do this by either establishing or blocking *the way* for the reasons put forth. Arguments are thereby directed towards the question of establishing the legitimacy of their moves through the very *act of making them*.

As the dialectic of question and answer indicates, however, there is the problem of making such a contradictory move in the first place. If the legitimacy of our questioning remains determined via the way we argue – and our arguments remain open to questioning and/or reversals in direction (rulings) – the problem is justifying the language game of argumentation. Specifically, if the rules place restrictions on the way we move or what can be brought into view, the problem of the criterion throws into question the legitimacy of any given directive or movement. While it might be true that arguments appear to be 'won' at a specific time, the question remains: why play a game that limits our moves in a potentially self-defeating way? To some extent, the answer should be self-evident: for the sake of argument. Arguing provides the grounds for rational criticism: it determines the rationality of our reasons for believing and acting. Our belief

⁸⁰⁸ Blackburn, Simon. *Truth: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Penguin, 2006), p.32.

⁸⁰⁹ *ibid*, p.29.

⁸¹⁰ Lewis, David. "Scorekeeping In A Language Game" in *David Lewis: Philosophical Papers Vol. 1* (New York: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 233.

in "rationality is thus at the heart of argumentation, and...should be understood as being concerned with the ability of arguments to render beliefs rational."⁸¹¹ Arguing for its own sake, however, need not commit us to the truth or evidence, and threatens to turn the question of the rationality of our beliefs into a mere language 'game'. Significantly, the imperative to 'follow the argument where it may lead' has its origins in Plato's conception of the dialectic of question and answer, and offers no guarantee that rational pursuits (or the pursuit of rationality) will lead us to the 'truth' or agreement.⁸¹² Nonetheless, every argument *labours under the assumption* that it is potentially defeasible or can be turned on its head at any given time. As Hall reminds us, arguments aren't so much won but are played out or transform the state of play: it's never game over because the history of thought invariably finds itself directed back towards itself in some way. Consequently, it's not the content of an argument that is thrown into question but the content of our characters. Specifically, we don't just argue *for the sake of an argument*: we also *argue for our own sakes* and direct our questioning accordingly. As Gadamer might argue, the language game of argumentation turns on the question of the "role knowledge...plays in the moral being"⁸¹³ of rational beings. The "practice of argumentation"⁸¹⁴ plays a critical (if paradoxical) role within other social practices when directing us to the question of their normative content and/or truth-value. Johnson sums up the question of normativity by acknowledging the way rationality remains caught within a circle of its own making.

By 'the practice of argumentation,' I understand the sociocultural activity of constructing, presenting, interpreting, criticizing, and revising arguments. This activity cannot be understood as the activity of any individual or group of individuals but rather must be understood within the network of customs, habits, and activities of the broader society that gives birth to it, that continues to maintain it and that the practice serves.⁸¹⁵

⁸¹¹ Biro, John, and Siegel, Harvey. "Normativity, Argumentation And An Epistemic Theory Of Fallacies" in Eemeren van Frans (ed.) *Argumentation illuminated* (Amsterdam: International Centre for the Study of Argumentation, 1992), p. 97.

⁸¹² See, for example, *The Republic*, 394 d ("whatever direction the argument blows us, that's where we must go"), *Euthyphro*, 14 c ("the lover of inquiry must follow his beloved wherever it may lead him"), *Phaedo* 107 b ("If you analyse them adequately, you will, I think, follow the argument as far as a man can and if the conclusion is clear, you will look no further") *Crito* 46 b ("We must therefore examine whether we should act in this way or not, as not only now but at all times, I am the kind of man who only listens to the argument that on reflection seems best to me. I cannot, now that this fate has come upon me, discard the arguments I used").

⁸¹³ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p. 313.

⁸¹⁴ Johnson, Ralph. *Manifest Rationality: A Pragmatic Theory of Argumentation* (London: LEA Publishers, 2000), p.12.

⁸¹⁵ Ibid.

Locating the rationality of argumentation within such a complex whole requires us to make the parallel between epistemology and ethics, or the "normative web"⁸¹⁶ in which the question of the *rational evaluation* of our beliefs and actions is already interwoven and moves. The "parallel between epistemic and ethical normativity"⁸¹⁷ can, of course, be traced back to the philosophical discourse of antiquity⁸¹⁸ and concerns the ethics of belief.⁸¹⁹ If there are matters of fact *by virtue of* which our beliefs are either true or false, the parallel between epistemic and ethical normativity moves reason (back) towards the problem of rationally evaluating competing reasons for thinking and acting. Consequently, we find ourselves returning to our original problem of rationally evaluating the standards for rational evaluation: by what standards can we rationally evaluate the very activities and beliefs in question? Whichever way we turn, the problem returns in the language game of argumentation: how should we follow reason and/or in what way can we open ourselves up to the legitimacy of (a) critical reason? Witness the way Gadamer is ontologically committed to the methodological (linguistic) truth of his own questioning. Specifically, Gadamer's conception of critical reason tacitly appeals to a criterion of relevance or adequacy when directing the question of the rationality of his linguistic interactions in effective history. Gadamer's questioning remains a condition of its own being-there: it is directed towards the presupposition of 'truth' constituting (enabling, directing) the dialectic of question and answer in the first place. Gadamer thereby cannot truly believe that he is merely offering us a difference in understanding or a legitimation of understanding as difference. Philosophical hermeneutics understands itself to be committed to a *truer* understanding – one that speaks to the question of the universality of a reachable unconditional 'truth'. If the *question* of the conditions of possibility for legitimate understanding is itself to be legitimated as unconditionally true, we need to answer (approach) it in a different way. Following

⁸¹⁶ Cuneo, Terence. *The Normative Web: The Moral Argument for Realism* (New York: Oxford, 2007). Cuneo provides a systematic analysis of the parallel between epistemic and ethical language, and attempts to explain the former (epistemic properties such as truth and rationality) via the latter (ethical properties such as *being warranted* or *being justified*), p.2.

⁸¹⁷ Sylvan, Kurt. "Responsibilism Out Of Character" in Alfano, Mark and Fairweather, Abrol, (eds.) *Epistemic Situationism* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2017), p.136. See, also, Olin, Lauren, "Is Every Epistemology A Virtue Epistemology?" in the same volume.

⁸¹⁸ As we've already seen, the parallel emerges within Meno's paradox of knowledge. Socrates sought to move beyond the problem of questioning what we do (not) know by *identifying virtue with knowledge*. It therefore became a moral obligation to pursue the truth through questioning. Nonetheless, Socrates invariably got many people *off side* determining the rationality of social practices, and was also punished on virtuous grounds (for impiety and corrupting the youth).

⁸¹⁹ Zagzebski, Linda. *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Zagzebski is one of many who argue that epistemology and ethics do not so much move parallel to each other, but turn into each other. See, also, Adler, Jonathon, *Beliefs Own Ethics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002) and Brady, Michael and Pritchard, Richard (eds.) *Moral and Epistemic Virtues* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) for an overview of positions.

Apel, we may call such an enabling presupposition the *regulative ideal of truth*,⁸²⁰ and it permits rationality to accommodate itself to the possibility that all questioning – including Gadamer's – seeks to transcend the (immediate) context of its occurrence. As importantly, reason can only perform such a contradictory move by implicitly calling on the "regulative idea of (a) better and deeper understanding."⁸²¹ While it's true that Gadamer remains caught in a performative contradiction, the question is *not* whether Gadamer's linguistic movements invalidate his questioning. The critical question, rather, is *the way* the circle of understanding itself performs (enables, directs) such contradictory movements and calls itself into being and/or question. Put another way: only the circle can truly 'keep score' and/or act as referee within the language game of argumentation – by throwing the rationality of reason (back) into question it determines the ways reason re-turns to itself.

The Distinction between Motivating and Justifying Reasons: We now turn towards Gadamer's concept of tradition as the ground of validity, and argue against the claim that "tradition has a justification that lies beyond rational grounding."⁸²² Unlike Gadamer, we will need to introduce a distinction between motivating and justifying reasons if we are to legitimate a hermeneutic conception of critical reason. We shall call this the problem of questioning (distinguishing, moving between) our reasons for believing and/or acting in effective history. Specifically, if tradition is to be justified, it must be brought within the realm of rational criticism and evaluation. The problem is determining the rationality of the ground on which it moves and may be criticized. The role practical reason plays in the language game of argumentation remains integral. If practical reason involves the capacity to ask questions meaningfully and/or determine norms of conduct, the question is: in what way can we evaluate our reasons for being-there? Or as Gadamer might ask: "what is the ground of the legitimacy of prejudices? What distinguishes legitimate prejudices from the countless others which it is the undeniable task of critical reason to overcome?"⁸²³ If prejudices are the conditions of understanding, two questions invariably turn back towards each other: how can we determine the question of their legitimacy (move between and overturn them) and in what way should such a turning itself be understood to be legitimate? The problem is that Gadamer's conception of the circle of understanding cannot meaningfully delimit the legitimacy – truth-value – of the prejudices in question. Part of the problem is that Gadamer's teleological conception of the historicity of understanding equates conditions of understanding with normative constraints and/or principles. The circle acts as its

⁸²⁰ Apel, Karl-Otto. "Regulative Ideas or Truth Happening" in *From a Transcendental Semiotic Point of View* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p.183.

⁸²¹ *ibid*, p.201.

⁸²² Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.281.

⁸²³ *ibid*, p.277.

own truth-bearer in the teleological form of a corrective and/or directive – by making it possible to question our being-there. The difficulty, however, is questioning the rational status of the historicity of understanding without presupposing the very being in question – namely, the rationality (normative authority, correctness) of effective history. The question of which way to turn – or whether such a turning can legitimate itself – merely returns us to the problem of justifying our reason's for being-there. Witness the way Gadamer's turn towards "traditionalism"⁸²⁴ paves the way back and forth. Such an ontological commitment is not just an effect of history; it is effectively a directive (back) towards a normative conception of our correct place in history. Gadamer's prejudice towards the past is traditionalist in that it "addresses itself to the truth of the tradition and seeks to renew it."⁸²⁵ Gadamer is thereby making a truth claim about the 'natural' order of things: an *inherently*⁸²⁶ meaningful world becomes questionable when it "prescribes a specific comportment that is appropriate to it"⁸²⁷ in the "language of things, which wants to be heard in the way in which things bring themselves to expression in language."⁸²⁸ Gadamer moves to *turn of events* to return to them in *another way* insofar as it is "tradition that opens and delimits our historical horizon."⁸²⁹ While Gadamer might not be guilty of the naturalistic fallacy⁸³⁰ in the traditional sense, his traditionalism nonetheless has an unintended effect: the naturalization (or normalization) of the very contingencies in question. McCarthy observes that Gadamer thereby (ontologically) commits the "fallacy of treating ontological conditions as normative principles"⁸³¹, and so, attempts to derive an *ought* from an

⁸²⁴ *ibid*, p.281.

⁸²⁵ *ibid*.

⁸²⁶ By inherent we mean two things – as being an essential property or condition of something (inhering in things) and as passing on that essential property, obligations and debts (our inheritance).

⁸²⁷ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "The Nature of Things and the Language of Things" in *Philosophical Hermeneutics* trans. David E. Linge, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), p.70. Although Gadamer is exploring the tension between the 'nature of things' and the 'language of things' here, he nonetheless locates that tension within a seemingly natural order (the authority of tradition, or the way it may authoritatively bring the ordering of beings into question 'in order' to express its own nature – mode of being – differently).

⁸²⁸ *ibid*, p.81.

⁸²⁹ *ibid*.

⁸³⁰ Prior, Arthur. *Logic and the Basis of Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949). The naturalist fallacy is where we mistake *natural properties* with *evaluative properties* and so attempt to derive an ought (moral statements) from an is (factual statements). According to Prior, "the assumption that because some quality or combination of qualities invariably and necessarily accompanies the quality of goodness, or is invariably and necessarily accompanied by it, or both, this quality or combination of qualities is identical with goodness. If, for example, it is believed that whatever is pleasant is and must be good, or that whatever is good is and must be pleasant, or both, it is committing the naturalistic fallacy to infer from this that goodness and pleasantness are one and the same quality. The naturalistic fallacy is the assumption that because the words 'good' and, say, 'pleasant' necessarily describe the same objects, they must attribute the same quality to them", p.1. Given the parallel between epistemology and ethics, however, we need to proceed carefully – it would seem that matters of fact and matters of value are not as qualitatively distinct as the naturalistic fallacy would have us believe.

⁸³¹ McCarthy, Thomas, and Hoy, David. *Critical Theory* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1994), p.41.

is. While it might be true that any attempt to move "beyond prejudice, tradition and convention is a false consciousness"⁸³² it does not follow that we should remain ontologically committed to the prejudices and/or conventions in question. If prejudice is a condition of understanding, such an "ontological insight"⁸³³ does not direct us to draw "normative conclusions"⁸³⁴ about the question of our being-there. The circle of understanding merely acts as a "corrective to false consciousness – the sense of being outside of or above history and tradition – and not as a prescription for belief and action."⁸³⁵ We traverse Gadamer's prejudice towards the past via his teleological conception of the hermeneutical circle – the historicity of understanding is effectively reason *writ large* and/or *in action*. It is true, of course, that Gadamer's teleological concept of rationality is predicated upon reversals in direction and is not directed towards the end of completing our understanding. Nonetheless, Gadamer argues as if the circle is motivated and/or directed towards the goal of correcting itself to re-establish its sense of *well-being* (direction). The question of its rational harmony is ideally "experienced as a constant movement between a loss of equilibrium and the search for a new point of stability."⁸³⁶ Specifically, the "chief task of philosophy is to justify this way of reason"⁸³⁷ and it "corrects the peculiar falsehood of modern consciousness, the idolatry of scientific method and the anonymous authority of the sciences."⁸³⁸ Gadamer calls this *corrective* and/or *directive* "decision making, according to one's own responsibility"⁸³⁹ since this way of practical reason "vindicates again the noblest task of the citizen...instead of conceding that task"⁸⁴⁰ to science and/or technology. The difficulty, however, is the way Gadamer attempts to bring two distinct issues together – the question of understanding ourselves as historically effected, and the question of the effectiveness of our understanding in history. Gadamer's approach fails to adequately address the problem of the "equivocal nature of hermeneutical experience"⁸⁴¹, or *the way* in which a situated reason attempts to regain its equilibrium and/or stabilise inherently questionable movements. As Culler notes, the "appeal to consensus and convention – truth as what is validated by our accepted

⁸³² *ibid.*

⁸³³ *ibid.*

⁸³⁴ *ibid.*

⁸³⁵ *ibid.*

⁸³⁶ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *The Enigma of Health: The Art of Healing in the Scientific Age* trans. Jason Gaiger and Nicholas Walker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p.78. Although Gadamer is explicitly talking about bodily health in this context, it is possible to generalize his interpretation to the body politic here. Specifically, Gadamer is applying philosophical hermeneutics to the bodily, and extends such holism to our "existence as human beings" in general.

⁸³⁷ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Hermeneutics and Social Science" *Cultural Hermeneutics*, Vol. 2, 1975, p. 314.

⁸³⁸ *ibid.*

⁸³⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁸⁴¹ Jean Grondin. "Gadamer's Basic Understanding of Understanding" in Dostal, Robert (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.44.

methods of validation – works to treat the norm as foundation"⁸⁴² – and yet it is the normativity of Gadamer's own *treatment* (methodological approach, type of care) that remains in question.

We have observed that reasons are *the way* in which our thought and actions are called 'rational'. We have also observed that the rationality of our reasons may also be called back into question. The distinction between motivating and justifying reasons thereby converges around the problem of *explaining a reason* for thinking or acting⁸⁴³ in a particularly rational way. Specifically, it presupposes two related questions: for what reason does a thought or action *occur* – in what way is it rational – and is that reason *enough* – an adequate reason – to think and act? Conceptions of the distinction occur in the domains of theoretical *and* practical reason, and similarly turn on the problem of justifying ourselves as rational beings in the first place.⁸⁴⁴ While the distinction between motivating and justifying reasons presupposes the possibility of thinking and acting for conflicting reasons, the distinction attempts to resolve the conflict by turning back on itself. If and when someone has a reason to think or act, their *rational motivation* would also ideally become *rationally justified* – i.e., occur for the one and same reason.⁸⁴⁵ To be rationally motivated is to have a reason for thinking and acting insofar as it is "the acceptance of reasons which causes such beliefs and actions."⁸⁴⁶ To be rationally justified "requires believing and acting on the basis of reasons"⁸⁴⁷ which may be thought rationally acceptable.

⁸⁴² Culler, Jonathon. *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 153.

⁸⁴³ The distinction is traditionally attributed to British empiricist Francis Hutcheson, *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections. With Illustrations upon the Moral Sense*, (London, 1728). Immanuel Kant – and neo Kantians – gave the moral sense a more 'rationalist' or legal sensibility. See, for example, Kant's attempt to explain the cause of moral obligation via a determination of practical reasoning in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Ludwig Wittgenstein is also sympathetic to a (variant of) the distinction in *The Blue and Brown Books*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1958), where he distinguishes between reasons and causes. It should be stressed that the literature is rich and varied, and philosophers often talk at cross purposes. Variants of the distinction may be found in attempts to demarcate knowledge from ethics and the attempt reduce knowledge to ethics. See, for example, Paul Moser, *Knowledge and Evidence*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) and Lorraine Code, *Epistemic Responsibility*, (Hanover: Brown University Press, 1987) respectively. Our aim here is not to explore the distinction in its myriad forms – it is merely to follow Gadamer's lead by pursuing the relation between knowledge claims and our moral identities.

⁸⁴⁴ See Hilary Putnam's *Reason, Truth and History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) and *The Many Faces of Realism*, (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court 1987) for an elucidation. Putnam questions whether "fact and value are totally disjoint realms" and sought to undermine the "dichotomous division of our thought into two realms, a realm of 'facts' which can be established beyond controversy, and a realm of 'values' where we are always in hopeless disagreement", p.127 and 71 respectively.

⁸⁴⁵ Heuer, Ulrike. "Reasons For Actions And Desires", *Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 121, 1, 2004, pp.43-63 and Moyer, Dean. *Hegel's Conscience* (Oxford: New York, 2011), p.44 independently call this the identity condition. The distinction between motivating and justifying reasons, then, presupposes the possibility of an identity relation between them.

⁸⁴⁶ Aronovitch, Hilliard. "Rational Motivation" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. 40, No. 2, 1979, p.173.

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid.

Consequently, it is the relationship between motivation and justification that directs us back towards the original question of our rationality. If "to be rational is to respond to reasons"⁸⁴⁸, the question becomes: how should we rationally respond to (evaluate) reasons for thinking and acting? The explanation, then, would be composed of two parts, and form a complex whole. Specifically, reasons must be *causally efficacious* (directly motivate our thoughts and actions) and *normatively constraining or obligating* (justify our thoughts and actions by directing them). We must, therefore, contextualize 'reasons' within the relevant intentional horizon, and specify the way they move (back) towards each other. If reasons *emerge* within the context of intentional states – within beliefs and desires – reasons for thinking or acting *enter* reasoning as the content of a *more rational* (valuable) belief or desire. It's for *this reason* that there is a distinction between motivating and justifying reasons – so we can determine what we *truly value* or *believe is more rational*.

We will need to consider a real-life example if we are to determine the relationship between motivating and justifying reasons in effective history. Suppose, for instance, that a classically trained philosopher was struggling to find employment during the Nazi era. Suppose, further, that university positions became vacant when Jewish academics lost their posts during this unstable period. If the trained philosopher wanted to be gainfully employed in his chosen profession – and survive the gathering storm without a fight – he would have needed to follow orders and tacitly defer to the authority of an increasingly totalitarian state. In "weathering the storm and getting along himself"⁸⁴⁹, this rational person voluntarily entered a Nazi indoctrination program, joined the Nazi teachers' union, opened classes with the Nazi salute, finished letters with the salutation 'Heil Hitler', attended Nazi conferences, and signed a "mandatory loyalty oath"⁸⁵⁰ as a public show of support. The intelligentsia's declaration of faith was subsequently published and circulated around the world to help legitimate "the logic of evil."⁸⁵¹ We are, of course, referring to Gadamer who (unfortunately) found himself in this very hermeneutical situation. Gadamer was forced to make a troubling decision as a responsible citizen: should he occupy the jobs suddenly available to him and/or could he responsibly teach philosophy under such compromising circumstances? Suffice to say, Gadamer rationally accommodated himself by deciding to follow the rule of the Nazis and "obeyed the law of self-preservation."⁸⁵² Instead

⁸⁴⁸ Parfit, Derek. "Reasons and Motivation" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary*, Vol 71, 1997, p.99.

⁸⁴⁹ Grondin, Jean. *Hans-Georg Gadamer: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 179.

⁸⁵⁰ Ibid, p.158.

⁸⁵¹ Brustein, William. *The Logic of Evil: The Social Origins of the Nazi Party* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

⁸⁵² Grondin, Jean. *Hans-Georg Gadamer: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 172.

of offering principled resistance or fleeing the country, Gadamer took on the role of tacit spokesperson. When Germany lost its sense of equilibrium, he was able to find a point of relative stability. It should be stressed that (unlike Heidegger) Gadamer never joined the Nazi party or *explicitly* aligned philosophy with Nazism.⁸⁵³ Gadamer appears to have ventured on an 'inner immigration' or turned a blind eye to escape adverse attention. Consequently, the philosopher inadvertently benefited from the misfortune of others while publicly retreating into the past.⁸⁵⁴ Given the circumstances, however, what else was he supposed to do?⁸⁵⁵ We shall not presume to answer this question⁸⁵⁶, and merely note its corollary: would we have acted any differently in the same circumstances? We would all like to think that the answer is yes but – truth be told – it is temporal distance which (ironically) makes such a response all too ready-to-hand. As the question presupposes, though, there is a distinction between motivating and justifying reasons to consider – and the question is the direction of fit between motivation and justification. Gadamer was clearly motivated to act in his best interests here – following the rule of self-preservation and/or career advancement requires little justification. It is difficult to imagine Socrates, however, making the same decision – he would have been among the first to raise objections or be killed on moral grounds. While it might be true that few could have foreseen the horrors to come, the question remains: how could any rational philosopher justify their relationship to the instrument (or march) of unreason? While Gadamer's involvement with Nazism might justify the hermeneutical claim that we belong to history (rather than history belonging to us), effective history is also the source of our moral disquiet here: it is our collective belonging to history that raises the question of rationally justifying anyone's motivating reason in such circumstances. Wolin argues that Gadamer was complicit with Nazism because

⁸⁵³ See, however, "The Art of Allusion" and "The Protection of Philosophical Form" in Krajewski, Bruce (ed.) *Gadamer's Repercussions: Reconsidering Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004). In "The Art of Allusion", Orozco argues that Gadamer addresses the rise of Nazism via historical allusion. Specifically, it is alleged that "Plato and the Poets" was written to justify Nazi suppression of democratic principles and that "Plato's Educational State" defends an "ideal of an authoritative government" via the concept of an "enlightened monarchy", p.223. In "The Protection of Philosophical Form", Orozco claims that it is possible to view Gadamer's continued alignment with Nazism via an interpretation of the 1941 lecture "Volk and History in Herder's Thought" given to prisoners of war in occupied France. She also notes that the lecture was published many years later with revisions that cast aspersions on Gadamer's motives. Orozco also alleges that Gadamer "held (other) lectures in the service of National Socialist foreign propaganda in countries belonging to or occupied by the Axis powers", p.245.

⁸⁵⁴ See the aforementioned "Plato and the Poets" "Plato's Educational State" and "Volk and History in Herder's Thought."

⁸⁵⁵ Grondin, Jean. *Hans-Georg Gadamer: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 172.

⁸⁵⁶ Cesare, Donatella. *Gadamer: A Philosophical Portrait* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), p.12. Cesare provides a more sympathetic interpretation of Gadamer's inner immigration and goes so far as to criticize Grondin for raising troubling questions in the first place. Such a criticism, however, is anti-hermeneutical – Gadamer would be amongst the first to agree that he needs to answer for himself via the circle in question.

"philosophy's distinctiveness as a vocation"⁸⁵⁷ is that it should "act on principle rather than self-interest or survival."⁸⁵⁸ While Gadamer had reason to be rationally motivated, his actions are *arguably* without (adequate) rational justification because he appears to have acted against reason itself.

Such questioning is only possible, however, within the context of moving towards the horizon of our "practical identities"⁸⁵⁹ in the first place. The distinction between motivating and justifying reasons can only be intelligible – or itself justified – if we are *always already* motivated to have a normative conception of ourselves that can be called into question and/or be made to answer for itself. As Korsgaard observes, if we "had no normative conception of our identity"⁸⁶⁰, we "could have no reasons"⁸⁶¹ for thought or action. We would even have less reason to call such identities into question and/or be answerable for ourselves. To call a practical identity normative is to acknowledge the way reasons "make *claims* on us; they command, oblige, recommend, or guide. Or at least, when we invoke them, we make claims on one another."⁸⁶² It is for this reason that we ask whether our beliefs are true or false and our actions right or wrong – we remain orientated towards (questioning) the normative conception of ourselves. Code elaborates by observing that *the question* of our practical identity remains "a matter of orientation toward the world, toward one's knowledge-seeking self, and toward other such selves as part of the world."⁸⁶³ Such an orientation strives "to do justice to the object"⁸⁶⁴ insofar as it may direct the normative conception of our being-there. This returns us, however, to the problem of the criterion: how do we question the normative conception of our identities without presupposing the very normativity (directive, movement) in question?

Gadamer, of course, attempts to provide an answer to this question by locating a historically situated reason within an in-between. Specifically, where an effected consciousness remains caught "between the identity of the common object and the changing situation in which it must

⁸⁵⁷ Wolin, Richard. "Socratic Apology: A Wonderful, Horrible Life of Hans-Georg Gadamer" *Book Forum* (Summer 2003): http://www.bookforum.com/archive/sum_03/wolin.html

⁸⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁵⁹ Korsgaard, Christine. *The Sources of Normativity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.123.

⁸⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁸⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁸⁶² *Ibid*, p.8.

⁸⁶³ Code, Lorraine. *Epistemic Responsibility* (Hanover: University Press of New England and Brown University Press, 1987), p.20.

⁸⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.59.

be understood."⁸⁶⁵ It is the circle of understanding which *acts upon* rational thinkers, and they *react to* its movements in turn. The question of our practical identity requires us to understand those "justified prejudices productive of knowledge,"⁸⁶⁶ and the requirement is to "distinguish the true prejudices, by which we *understand*, from the *false* ones, by which we *misunderstand*."⁸⁶⁷ The question, however, is why we *should* distinguish between true and false prejudices in the first place – i.e., on what *grounds* should we justify our prejudices concerning their presupposed 'truth' or 'falsity'? Put another way: if effective history can motivate rational thinkers to (potentially) understand that *all* understanding remains questionable, why should they have to justify historical thought or practice any-way? Given that our prejudices *remain questionable*, the way we understand – or stand in relation to them – remains subject to the possibility of change and/or movement. The real question is *not* whether they are 'true' or 'false' – it is whether it is rational to question (approach, distinguish) our prejudices in a truth-evaluative way. If prejudices effectively remain *caught between* 'truth' and 'falsity' in the circle of understanding, the question must therefore be directed towards a paradoxical undertaking: in what way can they be meaningfully legitimated (questioned, distinguished) *anyway*? If our reasons for thinking and acting are to remain rational, we will need to approach the circle of understanding in another way – *through linguistically constructed arguments* that may either *break down* or *rationaly reconstruct* its normative authority. Questioning the rationality of conflicting interpretations – or bringing different reasons into conflict – thereby enables the possibility of meaningfully distinguishing between true and false prejudices, or our reasons for being-there. While the focus of subjectivity might remain a distorting mirror, the distinction between motivating and justifying reasons may nonetheless permit subjects to see one another more clearly (truthfully) on rational grounds. The language game of argumentation may thereby be called the "logical space of reasons"⁸⁶⁸ insofar as it is *where* motivating reasons necessarily stand in a normative or justificatory relation to each other. Specifically, such a traditional practice is *where* our mode of *being-there* can be called into question and questioned in return.

⁸⁶⁵ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.309.

⁸⁶⁶ *ibid*, p.279.

⁸⁶⁷ *ibid*, 298-299.

⁸⁶⁸ Sellars, Wilfrid. *Empiricism and the Philosophy of the Mind* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p.76. Sellars famously introduces the concept of the *space of reasons* into philosophical discourse to counter the myth of the given and is not speaking about tradition. Sellars concern is intentional states per se, and he argues that "the essential point is that in characterizing an episode or state as knowing, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says." We introduce his concept here, however, to make better sense of the distinction between motivating and justifying reasons, and displace the space of reasons back onto the historicity of understanding. We shall return to this concept – or conceptions of it – in our Derrida chapter, who displaces the space of reasons in different ways.

Witness the way two authoritative thinkers (Gadamer and Derrida) spoke at cross-purposes during their famous "non dialogue."⁸⁶⁹ Derrida called their encounter an inquiry into "unfindable objects of thought"⁸⁷⁰ and Gadamer's attempt to find a common ground "did not accomplish their objective."⁸⁷¹ The encounter therefore became an occasion for conflicting interpretations as to how to best *make sense*⁸⁷² of their lack of understanding or the impossibility of mutual agreement.⁸⁷³ The conflicting interpretations moved within their own circles⁸⁷⁴, and circled around one another accordingly. Nonetheless, the distinct circles of thought converged around the question of the *normative status of motivation* in understanding, and answered in accordance with the given intentional horizons. Specifically, the conflict of interpretations was structured around the meaning of the "good will"⁸⁷⁵ to understand, and the resulting "misunderstanding"⁸⁷⁶ generated a corresponding bad will (or conflicting interpretations) that continues to this day.⁸⁷⁷ The encounters may be thought equivocal insofar as the thinkers were motivated by different reasons for thinking about understanding, and sought to justify their

⁸⁶⁹ Michelfelder, Diane and Palmer, Richard (eds) *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), p.5. Gadamer and Derrida are understood to be authoritative here insofar as they are interpreters of Heidegger, and move his thought in distinct directions or ways. Derrida's approach may be characterized by its emphasis upon linguistic ruptures and deferments – our inability to determine the movement or horizon of language – whilst Gadamer seeks to secure language's movements via its purported determinations or fusions of horizon. It goes without saying, of course, that these thinkers acquired 'authority' through their (different) linguistic uses or movements, or the way language connected them to the world through other language users.

⁸⁷⁰ Derrida, Jacques, "Three Questions to Hans-Georg Gadamer", in Michelfelder, Diane and Palmer Richard (eds) *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), p.52

⁸⁷¹ Gadamer, Hans Georg, "Reply to Jacques Derrida", in Michelfelder, Diane and Palmer Richard (eds) *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), p.55.

⁸⁷² Derrida, Jacques, "Rams: Uninterrupted Dialogue – Between Two Infinities, The Poem" in *Sovereignities In Question* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005). Many years later, Derrida claimed that the non "event is still difficult to decipher" and that such a "prohibition" gave rise to an "interior dialogue that would continue in both of us", p.135-136.

⁸⁷³ It should be stressed that we are not interested in exploring the many reasons for this breakdown in understanding. Such an endeavor is beyond the scope of this chapter. We are more interested in acknowledging a theme that emerges – the role motivation plays in (justifying) an understanding. We shall thematically explore rational motivation and/or justification in subsequent chapters. The irony is that Derrida raises an objection that will come back to haunt him in another encounter – Searle's act of bad faith (or willful misunderstanding) of Derrida.

⁸⁷⁴ We mean this in two related ways – as a context of interpretation or horizon of thought and/or amongst groups of interpreters with distinct interests or commitments.

⁸⁷⁵ Derrida, Jacques, "Three Questions to Hans-Georg Gadamer", and Gadamer, Hans Georg, "Reply to Jacques Derrida", in Michelfelder, Diane and Palmer Richard (eds) *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), p.52 and 55 respectively.

⁸⁷⁷ Costache, Adrian, *Gadamer and the Question of Understanding: Between Heidegger and Derrida* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016). Costache argues that Gadamer could not understand Derrida because of Gadamer's presupposition that it is possible and/or desirable to understand another person via consensus and/or convention, pp.93-111.

differences through equivocations (corresponding movements reflecting different presuppositions and reasoning).⁸⁷⁸ Gadamer opened the exchange by talking about text and interpretation⁸⁷⁹, and one of Derrida's texts responded by changing the context of interpretation.⁸⁸⁰ Derrida subsequently urged that in "speaking of dialogue"⁸⁸¹, interpreters use a word that "for a thousand reasons, "good or bad" is "foreign to my lexicon"⁸⁸². This foreignness didn't prevent Derrida from "indirectly"⁸⁸³ speaking to Gadamer – by paying him "the homage"⁸⁸⁴ of asking questions that he did not "understand"⁸⁸⁵. Gadamer's failure to understand Derrida's questions is quite understandable – they do not appear to be directed towards the goal of understanding one another. Derrida's three questions somehow turn into fifteen questions, and multiply without apparent rhyme or reason. Nonetheless, Gadamer attempts to understand the questions directed at him, as "anyone would do who wants another person or be understood by the other."⁸⁸⁶ Significantly, Derrida's questions concern the appropriateness of justifying the attempt to understand in the first place, where a "willing subjectivity"⁸⁸⁷ seeks to appropriate objects of thought into desired and/or intelligible objectives. The desire for intelligibility is thought to correspond to a "will to power as knowledge"⁸⁸⁸ and so remains orientated towards questionable ends ("the determination of the being of beings as will").⁸⁸⁹ In short, Derrida wants to question the motives behind understanding whilst Gadamer

⁸⁷⁸ *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter* is therefore interesting for what other thinkers made of this non-event. Compare, for example, John Caputo's "Gadamer's Closet Essentialism: A Derridean Critique", p. 258. and G.B. Madison's "Gadamer/Derrida: The Hermeneutics of Irony and Power", p. 192.

⁸⁷⁹ Gadamer, Hans-Georg, "Text and Interpretation" in Michelfelder, Diane and Palmer Richard (eds) *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), pp.21-51.

⁸⁸⁰ Derrida, Jacques, "Interpreting Signatures: (Nietzsche/ Heidegger)" in Michelfelder, Diane and Palmer Richard (eds) *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), pp.58-71.

⁸⁸¹ Derrida, Jacques, "Rams: Uninterrupted Dialogue – Between Two Infinities, The Poem" in *Sovereignities In Question* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005). p. 136.

⁸⁸² *ibid.*

⁸⁸³ *ibid.*

⁸⁸⁴ Derrida, Jacques, "Three Questions to Hans-Georg Gadamer", in Michelfelder, Diane and Palmer Richard (eds) *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), p.52

⁸⁸⁵ Gadamer, Hans Georg, "Reply to Jacques Derrida", in Michelfelder, Diane and Palmer Richard (eds) *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), p.55

⁸⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁸⁷ Derrida, Jacques, "Three Questions to Hans – Georg Gadamer", in Michelfelder, Diane and Palmer Richard (eds) *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), p.53.

⁸⁸⁸ Derrida, Jacques, "Interpreting Signatures: (Nietzsche/ Heidegger)" in Michelfelder, Diane and Palmer Richard (eds) *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), p.64

⁸⁸⁹ *ibid.*

is motivated to understand Derrida's seemingly "misplaced and nonsensical"⁸⁹⁰ questioning. Perhaps what is most telling about their exchange is the way Gadamer and Derrida speak at cross-purposes or endeavor to move past each other. Specifically, the misunderstanding between them has its basis in rationally motivated beliefs about the limits of understanding and/or how to meaningfully delimit the circle in question. Gadamer's approach to Derrida presupposes the very thing at issue (the rational status of the good will to understand) and such an enabling "presupposition"⁸⁹¹ becomes the "means of making one's own understanding prevail"⁸⁹² in their resulting encounter. Derrida seems intent on overturning Gadamer's presupposition and directing it back towards his own presuppositions in order to ensure that such a questionable approach prevails. Derrida's questioning appears to be an intentionally subversive act, and so willfully enacts its own moral standing from the higher ground of willful obscurantism.⁸⁹³ Derrida *arguably* reverts to an instance of 'bad' "will to overpower Gadamer through deliberate misunderstanding",⁸⁹⁴ and may be suspected of "willfully undermining and marginalizing Gadamer's (con)texts to ensure a hermeneutic failure."⁸⁹⁵ As a consequence, Gadamer and Derrida end up bringing forth the other's understanding in a roundabout way. Gadamer's failure to understand Derrida indicates a lack of common ground between distinctly motivated thinkers, and throws into question the possibility of mutual understanding through agreement. Derrida appears to prohibit the possibility of an understanding by *confusing* the issue about motivating reasons in order to indicate his disagreement with him – and he does

⁸⁹⁰ Costache, Adrian, *Gadamer and the Question of Understanding: Between Heidegger and Derrida* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016), p.94.

⁸⁹¹ Simon, Josef, "Good Will to Understand and the Will to Power: Some Remarks On an Improbable Debate" in Michelfelder, Diane and Palmer Richard (eds) *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer – Derrida Encounter*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), p.165.

⁸⁹² *ibid.*

⁸⁹³ We don't mean to suggest that Derrida's questions are as meaningless or nonsensical (seemingly irrelevant) as they *initially* appear. We are more suggesting that Derrida refuses to play on Gadamer's own terms or conceptual terrain. See, however, Cilliers, Paul and Swartz, Chantelle, "Dialogue Disrupted: Derrida, Gadamer and the Ethics of Discussion" *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Vol.22 No 1, 2003 for an attempt to make better sense of Derrida's questions to Gadamer via an attempt to bring distinct contexts of interpretation in closer proximity to each other. Bernstein, Richard "The Conversation That Never Happened (Gadamer/Derrida) *The Review of Metaphysics* Vol. 61, No. 3 2008, pp. 577-603 goes further by arguing that Gadamer and Derrida share a constellation of themes and question that may be brought together in some way. As we've already indicated, however, the conflict of interpretations already turns on the question of rational motivation. The real question is justifying the way each turns as such.

⁸⁹⁴ Michelfelder, Diane and Palmer Richard (eds) *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), p.13. The claim is that Derrida is being ironical or trying to teach Gadamer a lesson in understanding. Costache argues, however, that Gadamer is not being ironical but faithful to the problematic of understanding. Specifically, "the expectation for Derrida's questions and comments to make sense from the point of view of philosophical hermeneutics itself presupposes a substantial agreement between Gadamer and Derrida as already given rather than something to be searched for", *ibid*, 96.

⁸⁹⁵ Cilliers, Paul and Swartz, Chantelle, "Dialogue Disrupted: Derrida, Gadamer and the Ethics of Discussion" *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Vol.22 No 1, 2003, p.2.

this by moving back towards a horizon of inquiry that restricts forward movement and/or our range of vision. Either way, the movements remain rationally motivated to call into question the others thought, and justify their approach through their own questioning.

We find ourselves directed back to the distinction between motivating and justifying reasons. Following Gadamer, the requirement is to distinguish between true and false prejudices in order to question our sense of direction: how do we arbitrate between conflicting interpretations and/or prevent our understanding from being arbitrary? Whichever way we turn, the normative conception of our practical identities will return via the circle of understanding. We are therefore obliged to ask in turn: what calls forth or justifies the *relationship* between the structure and event of a given understanding – i.e., the way rational thinkers direct their thoughts to objects through one another's questions and arguments? In emphasizing the priority or *explanatory relevance* of the linguistic whole over its parts, the linguisticity of a 'partial' (incomplete, prejudicial) understanding can only be meaningfully determined via the "universal ontological structure"⁸⁹⁶ speaking *through* historicized beings. Methodologically speaking, Gadamer's argument urges that historical determinants and relations are what is explanatory relevant in describing the determination and effectiveness of ourselves as rationally questioning beings. Intentional contents are therefore conceived holistically, not only in the sense of being relative to the events of their structuring, but as being irreducibly structured through the linguisticity (partiality) of understanding. Ontologically speaking, Gadamer's hermeneutics excludes specification to the subjective level while simultaneously purporting to describe understanding as a linguistic event within intersubjective experience. If historical relations are what is methodologically and ontologically relevant to the specification of a given intentional horizon, history remains *the way* an effected consciousness relates to and/or moves between objects of thought. However, if all prejudices are historically determined, from where can rational beings identify and critically evaluate their normative status? Following Gadamer's conception, it is not possible to come to knowledge independent of the concepts and practices that meaningfully effect our consciousness. We cannot just look over our shoulders and compare one prejudice (or set of prejudices) with another, and claim that one understanding is more true or false than the other. Questioning beings cannot move outside the context of their thoughts and evaluate the rationality of its contents: their reasons remain linguistically determined, bound and mediated. Specifically, rational thinkers cannot compare and evaluate the content of their thoughts and practices with the objects of a world understood by means other than the content of the thoughts and practices *remaining in question*. To some extent, of course, that is the whole

⁸⁹⁶ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.474.

point of Gadamer's hermeneutics: to recognize that we can never really be in a position to completely understand our prejudices or direct the circle of understanding in which reason invariably moves. The *dialectical relation* between the content and referent of our questioning acts as a corrective insofar as it purports to be a criterion of correct understanding – by expanding upon and/or turning back towards what can be understood centrifugally. The difficulty is why rational thinkers should think a hermeneutic consciousness offers a corrective in the form of a truth directive – i.e., can truthfully correct our beliefs or direct our actions via the prejudice towards historical (re)integration. We still need to distinguish between a motivating and justifying reason in that the criteria for thinking and acting must continually be subjected to questioning and rational evaluation. Specifically, if a criterion is an attempt to determine what is relevant or adequate to any given inquiry, we would ideally inquire into the relevance or adequacy of the criterion itself. While all questioning invariably appeals to historical standards or norms, the task is to question those standards attempting to give tradition its putative normative authority or sense of direction. As we've argued, we can only meaningfully do this by bringing rationally motivated reasons into conflict, and attempt to rationally justify these reasons through conflicting interpretations. Our being-in-the-world remains a directive insofar as we still need to question the kind of being for whom its being remains an *area of concern*. Reason may effectively do this by moving within a contested *space of reasons* that remains open to questioning the rationality of its own linguistic constructions and movements.

Chapter 3:

Derrida and the Deconstruction of Understanding

Aims and objectives: The aim of this chapter is to move beyond Gadamer's conception of the hermeneutical circle. The objective is to find our way to language via the question of being and its relation to the problem of the criterion. We inaugurate this movement by turning towards Derrida's conception of the circle of understanding. Such a re-turn finds us indirectly moving through Heidegger again insofar as the ontological difference is approached in a different way – via a *differential ontology* in an irreducible state of flux and displacement. Derrida's questioning ontologically commits itself to *syntactical relations* within contexts of interpretation, and the question is: to what extent is it possible to delimit (follow, approach) the structural relation between signs within any given understanding. The problem of the criterion – and its relation to the question of being – occurs by way of the concept of *undecidability* (the impossibility of deciding and/or moving either way). We shall observe Derrida's moving within the circle via the question of the relation between part and whole, and follow the way(s) such a complex whole motions against (deconstructs) the possibility of its Being-there. Derrida's overall approach thereby proceeds from the following ontological standard: *to be is not to be on a horizontal axis or plane of non-Being*. The following, then, is divided into distinct but interdependent parts forming a complex whole. In the first part, we note the difficulty in understanding Derrida, and situate this problem within the context of Derrida's presuppositions. Derrida follows Heidegger insofar as he attempts to move past the language of metaphysics, and we approach the being of his questioning accordingly. In the second part, we acknowledge the difficulty in following an arguably unapproachable thinker. We follow Derrida's lead, however, by observing that it is the question of language that renders his overall approach questionable (possible and/or impossible). In the final part, we enact this understanding through Derrida's interpretation of an *undecidable* within Plato. Specifically, where Plato attempts to determine the rationality of reason via the *pharmakon* of writing. The *pharmakon* is said to reproduce *undecidability* in that it brings forth a differential ontology incapable of meaningful presentation.

Understanding Derrida: Derrida's Ways (Not Works).

We begin by acknowledging the problem of understanding Derrida, and locate this problematic within the *question of understanding* itself. The problem of "understanding Derrida"⁸⁹⁷ moves us

⁸⁹⁷ Reynolds, Jack and Roffe, Jonathan. (eds.) *Understanding Derrida* (London: The Athlone Press, 2004). This collection is predicated upon recognition of the problem of understanding Derrida. It

in the direction of interpretation, or the ways in which parts can be meaningfully understood within a complex whole. This challenge is particularly acute when we acknowledge that Derrida understands himself to be engaged in interpretations of interpretations⁸⁹⁸ that do not form a "natural totality."⁸⁹⁹ Derrida understands his interpretive approach as "deconstructing"⁹⁰⁰ interpretations that seek to construct (integrate) understanding. Derrida purports to follow Heidegger's lead insofar as the term *deconstruction* is taken from Heidegger's attempted 'destruction' of the circle of understanding. Specifically, Derrida "wished to translate and adopt to my own ends the Heideggerian word *Destruktion*"⁹⁰¹ and the term *deconstruction* signifies a more positive "operation on the structure or traditional architecture of the fundamental concepts of ontology."⁹⁰² Derrida's "endless debate with Heidegger concerns the meaning to be given to deconstruction, the usage of this word. What concept corresponds to this word?"⁹⁰³ Given the 'disintegrative' nature of Derrida's interpretations, Derrida hesitates to say what "deconstruction"⁹⁰⁴ is or might be – especially since deconstruction understands itself to be deconstructing any given 'is' of attribution or identity.⁹⁰⁵ Despite the fact that the term has been "reappropriated and domesticated by academic institutions"⁹⁰⁶, Derrida maintains that "deconstruction is not a method and cannot be transformed into one...(although) it is true that in certain circles...the technical and methodological 'metaphor' that seems necessarily attached to the very word deconstruction has been able to seduce or lead astray."⁹⁰⁷ There are (at

attempts to render Derrida's prolific and notoriously obscure writings intelligible via select themes and influences.

⁸⁹⁸ Derrida, Jacques. "Structure, Sign and Play in the Human Sciences" in *Writing and Difference* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p.292. We reinterpret Derrida's self-understanding here. The actual quote is that there are two kinds of "interpretations of interpretation", and it reflects his belief that all understanding is interpretive, and so subject to reinterpretation.

⁸⁹⁹ Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p.18. Derrida is talking here about "good writing" and the "idea of a book", or the way in which interpretive thought attempts to envelop itself within textual boundaries like a volume or system.

⁹⁰⁰ Derrida, Jacques. "The Time Is Out Of Joint" in Haverkamp, Anselm (ed.) *Deconstruction is/in America* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), p.25.

⁹⁰¹ Derrida, Jacques. "Letter to a Japanese Friend" in Wood, David and Bernasconi, Robert (eds.) *Derrida and Differance* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.1.

⁹⁰² *ibid.*

⁹⁰³ Derrida, Jacques. "Interviews of July 1st and November 22nd " in Janicaud, Dominique (ed.) *Heidegger In France* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), p.348.

⁹⁰⁴ Derrida, Jacques. "The Ends of Man" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.135.

⁹⁰⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "Letter to a Japanese Friend" in Wood, David and Bernasconi, Robert (eds.) *Derrida and Differance* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.4. Derrida claims that "All sentences of the type "deconstruction is X" or "deconstruction is not X" a priori miss the point, which is to say that they are at least false...One of the principal things at stake in what is called in my texts 'deconstruction' is precisely the delimiting of ontology and above all of the third person present indicative: S is P".

⁹⁰⁶ *ibid.*

⁹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

least)⁹⁰⁸ three related reasons for Derrida's reluctance to specify the "procedural significations of the word"⁹⁰⁹ and/or its reason for being-there. The first is that the meaning of deconstruction cannot be *decided in advance* – its approach remains contingent upon the context(s) in question, and moves towards "possibilities that arise at the limits of the authority and power of the principle of reason."⁹¹⁰ Consequently, deconstruction is not "a critique in a general sense" and "the instance of *krinein* or *krisis* (decision, choice, judgment, discernment) is itself...one of the essential themes or 'objects' of deconstruction."⁹¹¹ The second reason is that deconstruction remains directed towards the question of the "undecidability of meaning"⁹¹² and is predicated upon the impossibility of deciding (pursuing, securing) contexts of interpretation. Derrida recognizes that "reason is only one species of thinking"⁹¹³ and he interrogates the very "essence of reason"⁹¹⁴ by bringing "out all the possible consequence of this questioning."⁹¹⁵ The third reason is that deconstructive questioning thereby emphasizes the "dimension of performative interpretation"⁹¹⁶ – language that brings about or incites action – and so directs rational thought towards "an interpretation that transforms the very thing it interprets."⁹¹⁷ The "performativity"⁹¹⁸ of such questioning, however, remains caught in the circle of understanding and moves back towards language's *constative* dimensions, or the way meaningful *statements* claim to truthfully

⁹⁰⁸ We don't want to make the mistake of reducing Derrida's *general* approach – we are merely arguing that we have identified three main reasons across Derrida's texts for the purposes of our questioning. No doubt these reasons could be multiplied indefinitely for the reasons cited, and turns on (or returns to) the question of the rational status of reason.

⁹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

⁹¹⁰ Derrida, Jacques. "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of the Pupil" in *Eyes of the University* trans. Jan Plug (California: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp.146-7.

⁹¹¹ Derrida, Jacques. "Letter to a Japanese Friend" in Wood, David and Bernasconi, Robert (eds.) *Derrida and Difference* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.4.

⁹¹² Derrida, Jacques. "Double Session" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.213. Derrida actually says "undecidability of *its* meaning" within this interpretive context (referring to the way the term *hymen* occurs here). We take out the possessive form of the pronoun because undecidability is said to be the way contexts are themselves meaningfully determined.

⁹¹³ Derrida, Jacques. "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of the Pupil" in *Eyes of the University* trans. Jan Plug (California: Stanford University Press, 2004), p.148.

⁹¹⁴ *ibid.*

⁹¹⁵ *ibid.*

⁹¹⁶ Derrida, Jacques. *Specters Of Marx* trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), p.63.

⁹¹⁷ *ibid.*

⁹¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.36. The term *performative* derives from J.L. Austin's *How to do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962). Austin introduces the term to distinguish between utterances that make descriptive statements about reality – the *constative* – and utterances that bring about a change in the reality – the *performative* – being described. Derrida, of course, is wary of the logic of Austin's distinction and famously interrogates it in "Signature Event Context" in *Limited INC*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), and turns it on its head. Austin, however, becomes increasingly wary of his own distinction and recognizes that a *constative* ('any true or false statement') can also be a *performative* in given situations. Specifically, "once we realize that what we have to study is not the sentence but the issuing of an utterance in a speech situation, there can hardly be any longer a possibility of not seeing that stating is performing an act" p. 139.

describe the very thing being interpreted and/or transformed *through* questioning. The ways the circle acts upon interpreters continues "to play an indispensable role"⁹¹⁹ in Derrida's questioning since the question is "what remains to be done."⁹²⁰ Consequently, "what remains irreducible to the constative, to knowledge...is the coming of an event"⁹²¹ that returns us to the problem of the undecidability of meaning via the route of "textuality"⁹²² (the way the world is represented meaningfully – (de)constructed – across the texts in question). Derrida calls for the "eradication of the hermeneutic principle"⁹²³ that seeks to stabilize and/or decide upon the meaning of given texts and deconstruction attempts to move "beyond the reach of hermeneutic exhaustion"⁹²⁴ or "all interpretative totalization."⁹²⁵

Derrida has nonetheless been led to decisively say that "deconstruction is justice"⁹²⁶ – whatever *that* is or can possibly mean *across* the contexts in question. Indeed, all of Derrida's interpretations are understood to be "attempts to have it out with this formidable question."⁹²⁷ Derrida's concept of justice and/or deconstruction – insofar as either can be meaningfully conceived or questioned – remains directed towards the "sense of a responsibility without limits."⁹²⁸ Furthermore, such a direct response is a "responsibility that regulates the justice and appropriateness of our behaviour, of our theoretical, practical, ethico-political decisions."⁹²⁹ While there *are* recurring themes or questions, Derrida approaches them in different ways and through distinct parts. Such interpretations resist understanding via schematization, and places a constraint upon securing a given intentional horizon. The "difficulty of interpretation"⁹³⁰ occurs

⁹¹⁹ Derrida, Jacques. *Specters Of Marx* trans. Peggy Kamuf, (New York: Routledge, 1994), p.63.

⁹²⁰ Derrida, Jacques. "Marx and Sons" in Sprinker, Michael (ed.) *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Specters of Marx* (London: Verso, 1999), p.257.

⁹²¹ *ibid.*

⁹²² Derrida, Jacques. *Positions* trans. Alan Bass (London: Athlone Press, 1981), p.34.

⁹²³ Derrida, Jacques. "Shibboleth" in *Sovereignities in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), p. 26.

⁹²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹²⁵ *ibid.*

⁹²⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'" in Cornell, Drucilla, Rosenfeld, Michel and Carlson, David (eds.) *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), p.15.

⁹²⁷ Derrida, Jacques. "Letter to a Japanese Friend" in Wood, David and Bernasconi, Robert (eds.) *Derrida and Differance* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.4

⁹²⁸ Derrida, Jacques. "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'" in Cornell, Drucilla, Rosenfeld, Michel and Carlson, David (eds.) *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p.19.

⁹²⁹ *ibid.*, p.20.

⁹³⁰ Smith, Barry, et al. "Letter to London Times" *Cambridge Review*, 113, October 1992, pp.138-139. This famous letter was written by the then editor of *Monist* philosophical journal, and co-signed by eighteen prominent philosophers from the analytic tradition. The letter protests the proposed awarding of an honorary doctorate to Derrida by Cambridge University. While the protest failed in its bid to dishonour Derrida in the Anglo-American tradition, the authors observe that Derrida's stature as a philosopher within the continental tradition is equally contested or resisted. Specifically, where French philosophers (amongst others) can only interpret Derrida's "antics as a "cause for silent

across philosophical traditions or discourses⁹³¹ and raises the problem of delimiting (the event) of understanding. Any "discourse that has called itself philosophy...has always meant to say its limit...assuring itself the mastery of the limit."⁹³² The question remains, however, in what direction or way/s is it possible to 'follow' interpretations that are difficult to 'master' (secure or determine) understanding. The problem becomes one of delimitation insofar as it directs us towards *saying the limit* of understanding. Part of the difficulty in approaching Derrida, then, is attempting "to be all encompassing or definitive"⁹³³ since Derrida simultaneously moves towards "a large number of multiple fronts that are not only complex, but in a state of strategic incompleteness or suspension."⁹³⁴ Given this difficulty, the requirement is trying to delimit Derrida in meaningful ways via select (con)texts. Any attempt to understand Derrida is faced with the problem of *doing justice* to Derrida's thinking insofar as it remains limited and must be justified (thought proper or fitting) in turn. We shall argue that Derrida's writings move us towards such a limit by trying "to write the question: (what is) meaning to say?"⁹³⁵ And the way Derrida

embarrassment", rendering the discipline of philosophy an "object of ridicule" on the European continent. See below where we cite Foucault and Habermas as examples of 'continental' thinkers resisting Derrida.

⁹³¹ Sims, Jeffery. "Revisiting the Derrida Cambridge Affair with Barry Smith" *Sophia* Vol.138, No. 2, 1999, pp. 142-169. During the course of this very illuminating interview with Smith, it becomes increasingly apparent that it is inappropriate to view the 'Derrida affair' through the artificial lens of the analytic/continental divide. Smith organized (and wrote) the letter to the *London Times* from his office at the Internationale Akademie für Philosophie in Liechtenstein and he sought to mobilize philosophers from around the world and across traditions. Smith locates himself within the phenomenological tradition during the interview, and cites Brentano, Husserl, Carnap, Ingarden, Heidegger and Gadamer amongst his research interests. Equally telling – he cites the fall of the Berlin Wall as part of the reason for objecting to Derrida (given the association between universal reason and totalitarian regimes). Smith was therefore concerned that "to reject Communism does not mean to reject the entire edifice of Western reason", p. 150. As Sims remarks afterward, "political and philosophical concerns in Eastern Europe, then, are what prompted Smith to write his letter to *The Times*, as well as a concern for the traditional problems of phenomenology. The association of Western reason and Communism, for example, is to most of us, a questionable one, but one that finds support in the postmodern assumption that where oppressive politics are found, so too will Western rationality (logocentrism) be found beneath it all. Seldom does Derrida critically analyze (deconstruct) his own rhetorical use of words such as totalitarian, mastery, or envelopment. That a totalitarian regime operates with a unifying structure, and feigns authenticity, no one doubts, but that philosophy's comprehensive scope and critical regiment are thus equatable to oppressive rationalizations is quite another assertion. It could be reasonably argued that the history of philosophy, with all of its structure, has been more liberating than oppressive, so long as we do not ignore the interplay between structure and creativity. This distinction seems never to be borne out by deconstructors, now so concerned to become the 'Night Watch' of our philosophical language. Kantian studies, from pragmatic, Continental, and analytic quarters would suggest that we can have (select and argue) our philosophical differences without bowing to the extreme therapy, or totalizing agenda, of deconstructionism. There must still be more left to philosophy than 'improbable debates, counter-questioning, and inquiries into unfindable objects of thought.", pp.164-165.

⁹³² Derrida, Jacques. "Tympan" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press), 1982, p.x

⁹³³ Rapaport, Herman. *Later Derrida: Reading the Recent Work* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p.vii.

⁹³⁴ *ibid.*

⁹³⁵ Derrida, Jacques. *Positions* trans. Alan Bass, (London: Athlone Press, 1981), p.14.

attempts to answer this question meaningfully is through questioning's own directives. Specifically, Derrida's guiding "question is: from what site or non-site can philosophy as such appear to itself as other than itself, so that it can interrogate and reflect upon itself in an original manner?"⁹³⁶ The difficulty in approaching Derrida turns on a reluctance to position or situate his own contexts of interpretation. Although we will frequently encounter Derridean terms of reference at the limit of understanding, they cannot be understood as a "master word or a master concept"⁹³⁷ – merely as something (interpreted or moving) "through a chain of other concepts, other words, other textual configurations."⁹³⁸ Derrida's approach might occur by way 'deconstruction', but an understanding of such interpretations merely occurs in relation to their way-making movements (contexts of occurrence remaining in a constant state of flux). Whichever way we approach Derrida – or however Derrida directs our questioning – the only lasting element in his thinking is *the way*. Given the multiplicity and/or singularity of Derrida's interpretations, it is therefore important to understand that a part/whole problematic occurs across Derrida's way-making movements. While it is neither possible nor desirable to reduce Derrida's thought to a given interpretation or theory, 'deconstruction' nonetheless enables interpreters to understand the problematic relation between part and whole. Consequently, Derrida's "quasi-transcendental"⁹³⁹ questioning is not without rational motivation and/or justification. Specifically, Derrida's interpretations of interpretations raise questions about the "conditions of possibility"⁹⁴⁰ for meaningful understanding *across* contexts of interpretation. In this way, Derrida can "pose the (general) question: what must be the necessary presuppositions about language if language is to make any kind of coherent or intelligible sense?"⁹⁴¹ The problem of the rational status of Derrida's interpretations thereby emerges within the "theoretical matrix"⁹⁴² in question and "indicates certain significant historical moments and proposes certain

⁹³⁶ Kearney, Richard. *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p.109.

⁹³⁷ Derrida, Jacques. *Positions* trans. Alan Bass, (London: Athlone Press, 1981), pp.39-40.

⁹³⁸ Ibid.

⁹³⁹ Derrida, Jacques. *Glas* trans. John Leavey and Richard Round, (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), p.162a. See also Bennington, Geoffrey and Derrida, Jacques. "Derridabase: The Series: (Quasi-) Transcendental Questions" in *Jacques Derrida*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p.278.

⁹⁴⁰ Derrida, Jacques. "As If It Were Possible, Within Such Limits" in *Paper Machine* trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p.88. See also Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.168. Derrida uses the term condition in the singular within this context and claims that difference is "at once the condition of possibility and the condition of impossibility of truth."

⁹⁴¹ Norris, Christopher. "Philosophy As Not Just A Kind Of Writing: Derrida and the Claim of Reason" in Dasenbrock, Reed (ed.) *Redrawing the Lines: Analytic Philosophy, Deconstruction, and Literary Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p.193.

⁹⁴² Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. xxxix.

critical concepts"⁹⁴³ about the general "problem of language."⁹⁴⁴ It is the 'certainty' of these 'critical concepts' that becomes the question: to what extent can we be certain of them (i.e., how can they bring us rational assurance and/or in what way do they inevitably recur)? It is important to stress, then, that the "question of method"⁹⁴⁵ emerges within Derrida's own questioning, and the problem is determining the meaningful limits of deconstruction's 'methodology' (the way it investigates the "undoing, decomposing, and desedimenting of structures").⁹⁴⁶

As Derrida's *relatively decisive* (stable) term presupposes, *deconstruction* primarily directs itself towards the problem of the structure(s) of language, or the way a linguistic construction invariably turns against (deconstructs) the given internal logic. Deconstruction takes the problem of the criterion *as given* within the context(s) in question: by *consistently arguing* that any given criteria of relevancy or adequacy will *prove itself* to be completely inadequate and/or irrelevant in language. Derrida's choice of term is decisive insofar as deconstruction indicates certain movements or determinations in advance of its questioning: it thereby re-turns to a determination about inevitable outcomes concerning the meaningful possibility of "logic in general."⁹⁴⁷ The rationality of reason is questioned via the way language destabilizes the "possibility of every logical proposition"⁹⁴⁸ or "any rule of a logical order."⁹⁴⁹ Derrida is ontologically committed to the "formal or syntactical praxis that composes and decomposes"⁹⁵⁰ meaningful understanding, and insists on the way language "advances according to the irreducible excess of the syntactic over the semantic."⁹⁵¹ By following the lead of language in an "infrastructural sense"⁹⁵² Derrida aims to reproduce the "syntactical resources of

⁹⁴³ *ibid.*

⁹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.6.

⁹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p.157.

⁹⁴⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Letter to a Japanese Friend" in Wood, David and Bernasconi, Robert (eds.) *Derrida and Differance* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.3.

⁹⁴⁷ Derrida, Jacques. *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.92.

⁹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.93.

⁹⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁹⁵⁰ Derrida, Jacques. "Double Session" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.220.

⁹⁵¹ *ibid.*, p.221. Following Derrida's lead via "The Supplement of Origin" in *Speech And Phenomena* trans. David B Allison and Newton Garver (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p.99, let's take the sentence *the circle is square*. While semantically meaningful via the relation between words, the sentence composes and decomposes itself in the same way in language: its syntactical relations exceed (override) its semantic properties, calling into question its very meaningfulness there. Specifically, "this proposition makes sense only because another content, put in this form (S is P), would be able to let us know and see an object. 'The circle is square', an expression that has sense and no possible object, but it makes sense only insofar as its grammatical form tolerates the possibility of a relation with the object" indicating an "initial limitation of sense to knowledge, of logos to objectivity, of language to reason."

⁹⁵² Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p.164.

undecidability"⁹⁵³ already *in play* within a linguistically constructed understanding. In "privileging the syntactical,"⁹⁵⁴ Derrida thereby throws into question the "prelogical conditions of logic, thus reinscribing (that) logic...into a series of linguistic functions of which the logical is only one among others."⁹⁵⁵

Derrida's *general* "principles"⁹⁵⁶ of interpretation *therefore* defer to a "double reading"⁹⁵⁷ within a "determined textual system"⁹⁵⁸ always already in question. Specifically, a deconstructive interpretation purports to faithfully reproduce *the way* meaning is constructed within given linguistic (con)texts, and attempts to "produce"⁹⁵⁹ a "critical reading"⁹⁶⁰ by way of the "signifying structure"⁹⁶¹ making contexts of interpretation possible and/or undecidable (questionable) in return. Furthermore, Derrida's interpretive approach can "sustain itself only by the strength of the question. The opening of the question, the departure from the closure of a self-evidence, the putting into doubt"⁹⁶² of the logic in question is itself understood to signify the way knowledge remains "ordered around its own blind spot."⁹⁶³ In maintaining the openness of the question, we follow the lead of deconstruction and "speak several languages (contexts)"⁹⁶⁴ and produce several texts at once."⁹⁶⁵ Such a questionable approach to language – i.e., as productive as it is problematic in turn – is arguably possible if we "weave and interlace two motifs."⁹⁶⁶ Questioning can "attempt an exit and a deconstruction without changing terrain, by repeating what is implicit in the founding concepts and original problematic"⁹⁶⁷ and/or deconstruction can try "to change the terrain in a discontinuous and irruptive fashion"⁹⁶⁸ and move back towards

⁹⁵³ Derrida, Jacques. "Double Session" in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.213.

⁹⁵⁴ Gashe, Rodolphe. *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (London: Harvard University Press, 1986), p.250

⁹⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁹⁵⁶ Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p.158.

⁹⁵⁷ Derrida, Jacques. "Outwork" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.4.

⁹⁵⁸ Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p.160.

⁹⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p.158.

⁹⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁹⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁹⁶² *ibid.*, p.162.

⁹⁶³ *ibid.*, p.164.

⁹⁶⁴ We add the term *context* in brackets here because that appears to be what Derrida means by 'languages' within this context – i.e., bringing other linguistic contexts to bear on the texts in question.

⁹⁶⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "The Ends Of Man" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.135.

⁹⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁹⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁹⁶⁸ *ibid.*

the problem of the "conception of the concept"⁹⁶⁹ in question. In other words, there is no escaping the circle of understanding – deconstruction can only attempt a "reversal"⁹⁷⁰ in direction and move itself "further"⁹⁷¹ onto new conceptual terrain(s) in equally questionable ways. Deconstruction brings understanding into question and/or play through the circle's constitutive moving parts (possible ways of interpreting), and these interpretations of interpretations invariably form a complex whole (the impossibility of completing or stabilizing an understanding). We may therefore 'follow' (understand) Derrida insofar as he points the way through various paths that run parallel to or move across one another. Derrida's text-based interpretations signify the complexity of this linguistic whole insofar as it is possible to mis/take part for whole, or textually distinct moving parts for the whole (language) in question. Such a meaningful whole is understood to be so complex that Derrida refuses to provide *the* criterion for understanding his movements within it. Deconstruction merely interprets itself to be "inscribed, undertaken and understood in the very element of the language it calls into question"⁹⁷², and so, constantly grants "privilege...to aporetic thought"⁹⁷³ (logical impasses or paradoxes occurring within the question of language). The problem of the criterion, then, occurs within Derrida's questioning in two distinct but related ways. On the one hand, there is the problem of selecting texts relevant and/or adequate to understanding Derrida's way-making movements. Any attempt to understand Derrida rationally necessarily involves a 'selective' reading of representative texts – it is an interpretation determined by deliberate choices or decisions that may be called (back) into question. On the other hand, it is the rational status of contexts of interpretations that becomes – and remains – the question. Derrida's questioning limits itself to interpretations of interpretation in the form of selected texts. Such an approach is itself 'selective' (decisive, questioning) in that it conceives all linguistic *contexts* – the very being in question – as a *text* that cannot be decided (delimited) either way. Specifically, there is "nothing but text, there is nothing but extratext, in sum an unceasing preface that undoes the philosophical representation of the text, the received opposition between the text and what exceeds it."⁹⁷⁴ Contexts of interpretation are therefore "marked by the undecidable syntax of *more*"⁹⁷⁵: contexts cannot be interpreted away via a given linguistic boundary or move towards

⁹⁶⁹ Derrida, Jacques. "Outwork" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.48.

⁹⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p.6.

⁹⁷¹ *ibid.*

⁹⁷² Derrida, Jacques. *Rogues: Two Essays On Reason* trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 174.

⁹⁷³ *ibid.*

⁹⁷⁴ Derrida, Jacques. "Outwork" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.43.

⁹⁷⁵ *ibid.*

an "absolute outside of the text."⁹⁷⁶ Derrida's questioning purports to take place in "the displacement of a question, a certain system somewhere open to the undecidable resource that sets the system in motion."⁹⁷⁷ Furthermore, "if there is nothing outside the text, this implies, with the transformation of the concept of text in general, that the text is no longer the snug airtight inside of an interiority or an identity-to-itself... but rather a different placement of the effects of opening and closing."⁹⁷⁸

A related difficulty in understanding Derrida is that he is typically understood to "employ a written style that defies comprehension", and that the way/s he thinks do not "meet accepted standards of clarity and rigor."⁹⁷⁹ Derrida's "somewhat impenetrable"⁹⁸⁰ interpretations require considerable thought to understand – insofar as they can be understood. Derrida is among the first to agree that he attempts to think a question of "greatest obscurity"⁹⁸¹, one that seeks to interpret the "very enigma"⁹⁸² between thought and language. Following Heidegger⁹⁸³, Derrida's understands this enigmatic relation by way of conceiving an inconceivable. Unlike Heidegger, however, Derrida questions the intelligibility of the ontological difference, or the way difference is "determined, in the language of the West, as the difference between Being and beings."⁹⁸⁴ Nonetheless, Derrida follows Heidegger by asking "the question of the question"⁹⁸⁵, and urges that an interrogation of Heidegger's question is "set forth in all my texts."⁹⁸⁶ Derrida differs from Heidegger in that he does not similarly privilege the "piety of thinking"⁹⁸⁷ and is ontologically

⁹⁷⁶ *ibid*, p.35.

⁹⁷⁷ Derrida, Jacques. *Positions* trans. Alan Bass (London: Athlone Press, 1981), p.3.

⁹⁷⁸ Derrida, Jacques. "Outwork" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), pp.35-36.

⁹⁷⁹ Smith, Barry, et al. "Letter to London Times", *Cambridge Review*, 113, October 1992, pp.138-139.

⁹⁸⁰ Habermas, Jürgen. "Excursus On Levelling the Genre Distinction Between Philosophy and Literature" in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* trans. Lawrence, Frederick, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), p.194.

⁹⁸¹ Derrida, Jacques. "Differance" in *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* trans. David Allison and Newton Garver, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p.150.

⁹⁸² *ibid*.

⁹⁸³ Derrida, Jacques. *Heidegger: The Question of Being and History* trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2016). As these posthumously published seminars indicate, Derrida was following Heidegger from the start of his teaching career. And as the editor's note indicates, Derrida "does not present a commentary... but performs on Heidegger's book an almost surgical reading-operation, guided by the very title of the course", p. xvii. In other words, Heidegger's leading question directs Derrida to the problem of *performing the text* via the route of active interpretation.

⁹⁸⁴ Derrida, Jacques. *Positions* trans. Alan Bass (London: Athlone Press, 1981), pp.9-10.

⁹⁸⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "Heidegger, the Philosopher's Hell" in *Points, Interviews: 1974-1994*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p.182.

⁹⁸⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Interviews of July 1st and November 22nd " in Janicaud, Dominique (ed.) *Heidegger In France* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), p.346.

⁹⁸⁷ *ibid*.

committed to questioning the free "play of difference"⁹⁸⁸ as the "condition of possibility"⁹⁸⁹ for meaning. While "such a question could not arise and be understood without the difference between Being and beings opening up somewhere"⁹⁹⁰, Derrida argues that "difference conceived within the horizon of the question of Being"⁹⁹¹ needs to be approached in a different way – through the "unheard of thought"⁹⁹² of *differance*. The *thought of differance* is so enigmatic and obscure that it can be "neither a word nor a concept"⁹⁹³ and presupposes a conceptual sleight of hand that can

... however, be thought of in the closest proximity to itself only on one condition: that one begins by determining it as the ontico-ontological difference before erasing that determination. The necessity of passing through that erased determination, the necessity of that *trick of writing* is irreducible. An unemphatic and difficult thought that, through much unperceived mediation, must carry the burden of our question.⁹⁹⁴

Such a heavy burden is arguably obscured or reduced *through* the very act of clear and rigidly accurate thinking. Although Derrida concedes that his questioning does not lead to clear-cut or straightforward answers, he denies that his arguments lack the appropriate philosophical rigor. Following Heidegger, it is the issue of logical validity or procedural analysis that is in question, and remaining "actively perplexed"⁹⁹⁵ is the most thoroughgoing approach. We therefore need to approach a question of great obscurity – an enigmatic relation resisting rigid thought or rational penetration – in similarly myriad ways. Specifically, no truly "rigorous philosopher"⁹⁹⁶ should be "able to avoid"⁹⁹⁷ plumbing the depths of Heidegger's questioning in that it remains "multiple... provocative, enigmatic, still to be read."⁹⁹⁸ Consequently, the requirement is to follow Heidegger to try to "understand"⁹⁹⁹ the difference between Being and beings opened up through

⁹⁸⁸ Derrida, Jacques. "Differance" in *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* trans. David Allison and Newton Garver, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p.133.

⁹⁸⁹ *ibid.*

⁹⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p.153.

⁹⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹⁹² *ibid.*

⁹⁹³ *ibid.*, p.130. We shall return to this unheard of thought in language, and merely introduce it by way of preliminary analysis.

⁹⁹⁴ Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp.23-24.

⁹⁹⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "Heidegger, the Philosopher's Hell" in *Points, Interviews: 1974-1994* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p.183.

⁹⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p.182.

⁹⁹⁷ *ibid.*

⁹⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁹⁹⁹ Derrida claims that the difficulty in understanding (following) Heidegger is one of the main tasks of his thinking. Specifically, "I am still trying to understand Heidegger...He is one of the thinkers who

questioning. Despite the imputation of the impenetrability of such thinking, the multiplicity of Derrida's own interpretations have nonetheless been interpreted (understood) as "semi-intelligible attacks on the values of reason, truth and scholarship...(and) when the effort is made to penetrate" them it "becomes clear that, where coherent assertions are being made at all, these are either false or trivial."¹⁰⁰⁰ The intelligibility of Derrida's approach is thereby caught in a vicious circle, one disabled by the movement of understanding itself. Habermas claims that Derrida's interpretations incoherently or falsely argue that "any interpretation is inevitably a false interpretation, and any understanding a misunderstanding."¹⁰⁰¹ Derrida stands accused of wilfully obscuring his movements – by employing a language or style that resists understanding to cover his tracks and leading interpreters into an impenetrable abyss. Searle urges that readers "can hardly misread him, because he is so obscure"¹⁰⁰², and trying to determine the "correct interpretation"¹⁰⁰³ typically results in misunderstandings. The conflict – and conflicting – interpretations is thought to be the consequence of Derrida deploying "the method of *obscurantisme terroriste* (terrorism of obscurantism)."¹⁰⁰⁴ To some extent, the accusation of intellectual terrorism coincides with Derrida's thinking regarding the "delimiting of ontology."¹⁰⁰⁵

I am constantly unable to understand" Kearney, Richard and Dooley, Mark (eds.) "Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility: A Dialogue With Jacques Derrida" in *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.82.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Smith, Barry, et al, "Letter to London Times", *Cambridge Review*, 113, October 1992, pp.138-139.

¹⁰⁰¹ Habermas, Jürgen. "Excursus On Levelling the Genre Distinction Between Philosophy and Literature" in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* trans. Lawrence, Frederick, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), p.198

¹⁰⁰² Feser, Edward and Postrel, Steven. "Reality Principles: An Interview With John Searle" *Reason* 31.9, February, 2000, p.42. The quote is obviously by John Searle.

¹⁰⁰³ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰⁴ *ibid.* Searle claims to be quoting Foucault's characterization here. Specifically, "Foucault said that Derrida practiced the method of *obscurantisme terroriste* (terrorism of obscurantism). We were speaking French. And I said, 'What the hell do you mean by that?' And he said, 'He writes so obscurely you can't tell what he's saying, that's the obscurantism part, and then when you criticize him, he can always say, 'You didn't understand me; you're an idiot.' That's the terrorism part." And I like that." Derrida complains in *Points, Interviews: 1974-1994* that Habermas is amongst the many who misunderstand him – and such a misunderstanding occurs because Habermas "visibly and carefully avoided reading me", p.218. In "Marx and Sons" Derrida complains about the general tendency to misread (locate) him as postmodern a "facile and demagogic, grave error of confusing my work (or even deconstruction in general)." Further, such misinterpretations are merely indicative "of a massive failure to read and analyse" his thought correctly. Sprinker, Michael (ed.) "Marx and Sons" in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Derrida's Specters of Marx* (London: Verso, 1999), pp.263-264. And in the "Afterword" to *Limited INC*, Derrida talks of being "interpreted ...inadequately" by Searle, who had "read me, or rather avoided reading me and trying to understand" through the "brutality" of such an avoidance or misreading. Indeed, like many interpreters before and after Searle, they are not willing or "able to read me" correctly. Such misinterpretations or "inability" remains generally "exemplary and symptomatic" of the attempt to wilfully obscure his thought (amongst many other thinkers) through "certain practices of academic politeness or impoliteness...that I disapprove of and would like to disarm, in my fashion", Jacques Derrida, *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.113

¹⁰⁰⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "Letter to a Japanese Friend" in Wood, David and Bernasconi, Robert (eds.) *Derrida and Differance* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.4.

Philosophy's "need"¹⁰⁰⁶ for clarity and rigor is itself said to be the result of calculated acts of linguistic "violence"¹⁰⁰⁷ and needs to be "understood"¹⁰⁰⁸ (deconstructed) via a "strategic device, opening onto its own abyss."¹⁰⁰⁹ It is constructive discourse which seeks to obscure the terrorism of rational thought via an attempt to "interiorize every limit as *being* and as being its own *proper*."¹⁰¹⁰ Following language's lead, deconstructive thought "can only tend toward justice by acknowledging and practicing the violence within it."¹⁰¹¹ Despite such territorial conflicts or markings, Derrida urges that deconstruction remains "affirmative"¹⁰¹² insofar as it requires "a thinking of Being"¹⁰¹³ and the way thought seeks to interiorize and authorize every limit as being. In this way, we may question "the authority... of the thinking of what is...and give it the possibility of being thought."¹⁰¹⁴ It is for this reason that Derrida questions the ways in which rational thought has *reason to be* or a "reason for being"¹⁰¹⁵ rational. By being thought (marked) via difference, thinking will in some way be able to "mark non-being"¹⁰¹⁶, moving us "to the beyond of beingness"¹⁰¹⁷ and reasoning.

While Derrida might sympathetically be called a philosopher "of hesitation,"¹⁰¹⁸ few have also hesitated to 'understand' (appropriate) him. This notoriously impenetrable thinker has somehow managed to penetrate a range of disciplines or territories. According to one sympathetic interpretation, Derrida's thought has come to shape "many debates and reflections"¹⁰¹⁹ in

¹⁰⁰⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Tympan" in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.x. In this essay, Derrida asks: "what is the specific resistance of philosophical discourse to deconstruction?" He answers that philosophy would seek to do violence by calling on Being to answer all of its questions. Specifically, "it is the infinite mastery that the agency of Being (and of the) proper seems to assure" itself, p.xix.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Derrida, Jacques. "Violence and Metaphysics" in *Writing and Difference* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p.79

¹⁰⁰⁸ Derrida, Jacques. "Tympan" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.xix.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Derrida, Jacques, "Punctuations: Time of a Thesis" in *Eyes of the University* trans. Jan Plug (California: Stanford University Press, 2004), p.118.

¹⁰¹⁰ Derrida, Jacques. "Tympan" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.xix.

¹⁰¹¹ Derrida, Jacques. "Violence and Metaphysics" in *Writing and Difference* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p.117.

¹⁰¹² Derrida, Jacques. *Points, Interviews: 1974-1994* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p.211.

¹⁰¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of the Pupil" in *Eyes of the University* trans. Jan Plug (California: Stanford University Press, 2004), p.130.

¹⁰¹⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Double Session" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.208.

¹⁰¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹⁸ Critchley, Simon. *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999) p. 42,

¹⁰¹⁹ Direk, Zeynep and Lawlor, Leonard. (eds.) *Jacques Derrida: Critical Assessments, Vol. 1*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), p.1.

contemporary thought because of its continued preoccupation with an "experience of the question."¹⁰²⁰ Nonetheless, deconstruction has inadvertently found its way into the unquestioning experiences of popular culture – it has given its name to a 1997 Woody Allen comedy, a British record label, a 2018 indie rock album and restaurant menu items.¹⁰²¹ The term *deconstructive criticism* has also become a recent 'achievement' in an open world third-person shooter video game (2016's *Tom Clancy's The Division*).¹⁰²² The Trump administration has even appropriated Derrida's term for its own reasons when calling for a "deconstruction of the administrative state."¹⁰²³ The irony is that the "most famous philosopher in the world"¹⁰²⁴ has primarily marked "fields outside philosophy"¹⁰²⁵, enabling a range of interpretations in various fields of knowledge. 'Deconstruction' marks the place where contemporary thought has taken up residence and continues to dwell. Specifically, deconstruction is said to be "the house that Jacques built"¹⁰²⁶ and its being-in-the-world has laid the foundations for a "pretentious and obfuscatory blight on the intellectual landscape."¹⁰²⁷ Derrida's *presence* – or omnipresence –

¹⁰²⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰²¹ See *Deconstructing Harry*, *Deconstruction Records* and the Eel's *The Deconstruction* respectively. Restaurants may also serve 'deconstructed food' in the culinary form of the sums of their parts – like the deconstructed Caesar salad (stacked romaine lettuce, an anchovy, an egg yolk, and some shaved Parmesan, in separate heaps on a plate), the deconstructed martini (separate shot glasses of gin, vermouth, and olives), etc.

¹⁰²² *The Division* is a popular online videogame combining role-playing and third-person shooting elements. The *deconstructive criticism* 'achievement' (or trophy) is awarded when players break down ('deconstruct') 100 items – weapons, armour, etc. – into parts that can be used to rebuild other items. One of the ironies of this achievement is that it is awarded in a notoriously unstable system. Despite *The Division's* increasing popularity – app. 10 million registered players at the time of writing – the game itself is frequently breaking down (missions fail to start and/or complete, players keep finding 'exploits' and turn the game against itself for their own ends, etc.).

¹⁰²³ Rucker, Phillip, and Costa, Robert. "Bannon Vows a Daily Fight For the 'Deconstruction of the Administrative State'" *Washington Post*, February 23rd, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/top-wh-strategist-vows-a-daily-fight-for-deconstruction-of-the-administrative-state/2017/02/23/03f6b8da-f9ea-11e6-bf01-d47f8cf9b643_story.html?utm_term=.3969ecad3e3f

¹⁰²⁴ We are now quoting episode 4 of the BBC comedy *Knowing Me, Knowing You* (1994). Mock French chef Phillip Lambert cites Derrida as the patron saint of his Restaurant With No Name to the talk show's know nothing host (Steve Coogan's Alan Partridge, who laughably counters that Peter Ustinov is the world's most renowned philosopher). *Knowing Me, Knowing You* appears to be mocking two different things simultaneously here – the *provinciality* of the British and the *pretentiousness* of the French.

¹⁰²⁵ Smith, Barry, et al. "Letter to London Times", *Cambridge Review*, 113, October 1992, p.138-139. The philosophers claim that since many other philosophers don't take Derrida seriously, Derrida cannot be thought a serious philosopher – his false and trivial claims have merely acquired intellectual currency amongst people who obviously wouldn't know the difference or any better (like literary critics).

¹⁰²⁶ Wolin, Richard. *The Terms of Cultural Criticism* (New York: Columbia Press. 1992), p.194

¹⁰²⁷ Stich, Steven. *Deconstructing the Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.9. While Stich might be hostile to the "heaps of badly written blather produced by people who call themselves deconstructionists", that does not prevent him from wanting to call his own mental activity 'deconstructing'. Nonetheless, it is a testament to the ubiquity (and indeterminacy) of Derrida's term that an analytical philosopher of an eliminativist or materialist bent like Stich will write a critique of consciousness under that heading. As Kirk Hagen complains in "The Death of Philosophy", however,

across the cultural landscape has resulted in conflicting interpretations about the meaning of his "cult following."¹⁰²⁸ It has been alleged that Derrida was either an "intellectual demigod"¹⁰²⁹ who exerted "immeasurable influence"¹⁰³⁰ on other rational thinkers or an "intellectual con artist"¹⁰³¹ who had "duped"¹⁰³² other impostures. While it is true that deconstruction is no longer the force it once was,¹⁰³³ the rational status of Derrida's questioning goes beyond any given intellectual trend or fashion statements – deconstruction moves us back towards the question of the historicity of understanding. Consequently, it is difficult to "calculate the age of deconstruction"¹⁰³⁴ since the "provocation of the Derrida text"¹⁰³⁵ continues to move across the contexts in question. Either way, the possibility of interpreting Derrida's interpretations is not without historical irony or significance. It highlights the impossibility of a philosopher to master his own limits. Particularly ironical is the way context has played a part in determining the rational status of Derrida's 'texts'.¹⁰³⁶ Nonetheless, Derrida himself acknowledges that his claims to understanding remain "impossible"¹⁰³⁷, and that he can only direct us towards "a certain

Derrida was "unforgivably reckless in his exposition"¹⁰²⁷, and "never made any effort to improve his prose. And yet... hordes of converts took to aping his impenetrable rodомontades in article after article, dissertation after dissertation, book after book." *Skeptic*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 2005, p.18 and p.20 (dis)respectively.

¹⁰²⁸ Mitchell, W.J.T., "Dead Again" *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 33, No.2, 2007, p.221.

¹⁰²⁹ *Time Magazine*, "Obituary" October 10, 2004, Vol. 164, No.16.

¹⁰³⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰³¹ Goldblatt, Mark. "Derrida, Derrida, Etc: The Philosopher As King" *National Review*, January 16, 2003. <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/205550/derrida-derrida-etc-mark-goldblatt>. Goldblatt is reviewing the 2003 *Derrida* documentary.

¹⁰³² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³³ Johnson, Barbara. *The Wake of Deconstruction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994). By 1994, Johnson was asking whether we should have a wake for deconstruction because its time appeared to have past. She argues, however, that rumours of its demise had been greatly exaggerated, and that deconstruction remains a force to be reckoned with. By this stage, of course, it had already been 'domesticated' by academia and became part of the tradition known as 'critical theory'.

¹⁰³⁴ Phillips, John. (ed.) "Deconstruction: How It Begins and Where It Ends" in *Derrida Now: Current Perspectives in Derrida Studies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), p.1

¹⁰³⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁰³⁶ Bates, David. "Derrida and the Origins of Undecidability" *Representations*, Vol.90, No.1, 2005, p.1. As Bates observes, deconstruction has generally "thus far resisted historicization," and any attempt to adequately contextualize Derrida's questioning – to do justice to it – is still to come. Edward Baring's *Young Derrida and French Philosophy, 1945-1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) is a more recent attempt to do just this. Baring provides a relatively infrequent attempt to contextualize Derrida's philosophical development. Baring questions Derrida's outsider status – that one of the world's most controversial and influential philosophers appeared to suddenly come out of nowhere and/or that he should somehow go back to where he came from. The "search for thick and dense philosophical ties" is therefore best approached via the "philosophically and socially proximate", pp.1-2. Specifically, Derrida's seemingly 'out-there' thought (amongst other French philosophers) was "formed in the philosophical crucible of the preceding century", and intellectual pathways can be readily traced or followed. The allegedly unintelligible philosopher is therefore primarily intelligible within the social and/or historical context in which he emerged, and Derrida's extraordinary career "can stand in metonymically for the intellectual history of the period", pp.3-4.

¹⁰³⁷ Derrida, Jacques. "Psyche: Invention of the Other" in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other Vol. 1* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p.15.

experience of the impossible."¹⁰³⁸ Derrida's avowed approach to questions remains besieged by the possibility of "becoming an available set of rule-governed procedures, methods, accessible practices."¹⁰³⁹ Given Derrida's reluctance to formalize or clarify his philosophical position, we should not "settle for methodological procedures"¹⁰⁴⁰ when trying to locate him within the problem of understanding. Following his lead, we can merely open "up a passageway"¹⁰⁴¹ by way of interpretation and move "ahead"¹⁰⁴² to mark a "trail"¹⁰⁴³ in our understanding. The conflict and multiplicity of interpretations have nonetheless resulted in attempts to secure or determine Derrida's movements – via endeavouring to move Derrida back into the field of philosophy.¹⁰⁴⁴ Such a backward movement urges that there *is* a correct way to interpret and understand Derrida – by situating his questioning within "the tradition of philosophical thought."¹⁰⁴⁵ In placing the being of Derrida's questioning within such a delimitation, we may determine the "limit of bonds of thinking that is simply no longer its limit."¹⁰⁴⁶

Derrida observes that "the question of knowing what can be called philosophy has always been the *very question of philosophy*."¹⁰⁴⁷ Philosophers have traditionally asked how thinking can be identified or distinguished to delimit the horizon of questioning. It is this *sense of direction* that legislates a given "tradition and style"¹⁰⁴⁸ of questioning. By following its directives, thought seeks to circumscribe its own limits and legislations. Philosophical practice remains primarily directed towards "being a tradition producing tradition out of itself."¹⁰⁴⁹ However, if we consider the "history of philosophy as one great discourse"¹⁰⁵⁰, how can thought decide to move around

¹⁰³⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁰³⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.23.

¹⁰⁴² *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴³ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁴ Gasche, Rodolphe. *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 1986.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Gasche, Rodolphe. "Law of Tradition" in *Inventions Of Difference: On Jacques Derrida* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.59.

¹⁰⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, "Strictly Bonded", p.181.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Derrida, Jacques. "Honoris Causa: This Is Also Extremely Funny" in Weber, Elisabeth (ed.) *Points: Interviews 1974-1994*. trans. Peggy Kamuf, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p.410. Derrida questions the way that analytic philosophers have questioned his position (status, authority) within philosophy.

¹⁰⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.411. Derrida goes on to observe that his "inquisitors confuse philosophy with what they have been taught to *reproduce* in the tradition and style of a particular institution, within a more or less well protected – or less and less well protected – social and professional environment."

¹⁰⁴⁹ Derrida, Jacques. *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction* trans. John Leavey, (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), p.176.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Derrida, Jacques. "The Supplement of Copula" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.177.

the circle of its own "autodetermination"¹⁰⁵¹? Since "the object of" knowledge is directed by the movement of thought, its contents remain bound by an "experience of circular closure"¹⁰⁵² – that is, structured by "that which knows"¹⁰⁵³ and is determined by "the knowledge"¹⁰⁵⁴ of its movements. If we chose to follow Heidegger, we already know that moving within such a "circle is unique"¹⁰⁵⁵ in that philosophy needs "the concepts of" ¹⁰⁵⁶ thought to question the direction of its own thinking. While we "have no language – no syntax and no lexicon – which is foreign to this history"¹⁰⁵⁷ "there are many ways of being caught in the circle"¹⁰⁵⁸ in which "tradition (or transmission) and language, thought and language, society and language, each precede the other, postulate and produce each other reciprocally."¹⁰⁵⁹

Derrida thereby follows Heidegger by placing himself at the "limit of philosophical discourse"¹⁰⁶⁰ in order to question the "legality of the decision"¹⁰⁶¹ delimiting (moving) thought *either way*. Derrida urges that his own approach "would not have been possible without the opening of Heidegger's questions"¹⁰⁶² regarding the "unthought by philosophy,"¹⁰⁶³ and the goal is to rethink the circle in such a way as to keep the question of the "difference between being and the entity"¹⁰⁶⁴ *open through* questioning. Derrida follows Heidegger's lead by reopening the "question of being"¹⁰⁶⁵, and understands "being itself as the question: the question of being is the being of the question."¹⁰⁶⁶ Derrida will attempt a "departure from the Heideggarian problematic"¹⁰⁶⁷ insofar as one can move away from (rethink) "the concepts of origin and fall."¹⁰⁶⁸

¹⁰⁵¹ Derrida, Jacques. *The Truth in Painting* trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987), p.26.

¹⁰⁵² Ibid, p.33. According to Derrida, such an experience "does not close anything" – it merely directs us to knowledge of the world of experience.

¹⁰⁵³ Ibid, p.26

¹⁰⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "Structure, Sign and Play in The Human Sciences" in *Writing and Difference* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p.280.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵⁸ p.281.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Derrida, Jacques. "The Linguistic Circle of Geneva" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.145.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Derrida, Jacques. *Positions* trans. Alan Bass (London: Athlone Press, 1981), p.6.

¹⁰⁶¹ Bennington, Geoffrey and Derrida, Jacques. *Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp.217-218. Note that Bennington's text attempts to explicate Derrida's thought, and Derrida comments in the margins.

¹⁰⁶² Derrida, Jacques. *Positions* trans. Alan Bass (London: Athlone Press, 1981), p.9.

¹⁰⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p.22.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Lawlor, Leonard. *Thinking Through French Philosophy and the Question of Being* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003), p.1.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Derrida, Jacques. *Positions* trans. Alan Bass (London: Athlone Press, 1981), p.54

¹⁰⁶⁸ Ibid.

Nonetheless, Derrida's way-making movement is brought forth via his appropriation of the Heideggarian conception of the 'destruction' of traditional concepts for "my own ends."¹⁰⁶⁹ Heidegger creates an opening through the very act of questioning traditional thought or practice, or that "community of the question"...(where) the question of being cannot be determined or directed "through the hypocrisy of an answer."¹⁰⁷⁰ Consequently, the nature of Heidegger's destructive question "had to be reconstructed in some way"¹⁰⁷¹, if only so the event of understanding can itself be "submitted to a deconstructive questioning"¹⁰⁷² across distinct contexts of interpretation. Derrida's questioning thereby occurs as a "contextual strategy"¹⁰⁷³ that desires "to be faithful to the themes and audacities of thinking."¹⁰⁷⁴ Derrida purports to be faithful by following the *game of language* through contexts caught within interplay between thought and language. If we are to remain faithful to thought, we "must think" of con/texts as a "game within language,"¹⁰⁷⁵ and understand that variability is "the constant of the game."¹⁰⁷⁶ Specifically, language plays by its own rules and "the concept of variability"¹⁰⁷⁷ is the "very concept of the game."¹⁰⁷⁸ It is "a rule of the game which does not govern the game, it is a rule of the game which does not dominate the game...(and)... when the rule of the game is displaced by the game, we must find something other than the word rule...to describe that game."¹⁰⁷⁹ Derrida approaches Heidegger's notion of being-in-the-world in a different way. It is the "*game of the world* (which) must first be thought, before attempting to understand all forms of play in

¹⁰⁶⁹ Derrida, Jacques. "Letter to a Japanese Friend" in Wood, David and Bernasconi, Robert (eds.) *Derrida and Difference*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.1.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Derrida, Jacques. "Violence and Metaphysics" in *Writing and Difference* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1978, p.80.

¹⁰⁷¹ Derrida, Jacques. "Letter to a Japanese Friend" in Wood, David and Bernasconi, Robert (eds.) *Derrida and Difference* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.2.

¹⁰⁷² *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷³ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁴ Derrida, Jacques. "Violence and Metaphysics" in *Writing and Difference* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p.84.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p.50.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences: Discussion" in Lambropoulos, Vassilis and Neal, David (eds.) *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory: An Introductory Anthology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p.53. Derrida invokes Einstein's constant to describe the play of language here. Alan Sokal mocks Derrida's appropriation of Einstein's constant in *Beyond the Hoax: Science, Philosophy and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.30. Specifically, Sokal "explicates" upon Derrida's use of Einstein in a playful way and "this was the only instance in which I was inspired enough to produce such a perfectly crafted crescendo of meaninglessness" when perpetrating the hoax on *Social Text*. According to Sokal, "no reader even minimally conversant with modern physics" — whatever his or her ideology — could fail to understand that Derrida's statements are utterly meaningless. In particular, they have nothing whatsoever to do with *either* special or general relativity", p. 28. Further, Sokal's phrase "Derrida's unequivocal reference to general relativity" is a joke on Derrida's insistence that all texts (except perhaps his own?) are "indeterminate", *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁹ *ibid.*

the world."¹⁰⁸⁰ Given Derrida's interpretations of (contexts of) interpretations, we cannot "break the circle violently (it would avenge itself), but would seek to understand it more "resolutely, authentically."¹⁰⁸¹ *The way* thought can do this is by following "the law of the circle"¹⁰⁸² and place our trust in its deconstructive movements. And "of this trust would thought consist."¹⁰⁸³ According to Derrida, there are "two interpretations of interpretation, of structure, of sign, of freeplay."¹⁰⁸⁴ The one (false) interpretation "seeks to decipher... a (final) truth or (first) origin"¹⁰⁸⁵ of meaning, and is brought forth via traditional conceptions of hermeneutics. The other (more truthful or faithful) interpretation attempts to move "beyond" a "reassuring foundation... the origin and the end" of meaningful thought¹⁰⁸⁶ by *moving with* the structure of understanding already always deconstructing itself. While it's true that interpreters find themselves presented with a choice as to which way they should approach contexts of interpretation, it is never really a "question of choosing"¹⁰⁸⁷ how (con)texts *should* be answered and/or interpreted. Specifically, thought invariably calls itself into being and/or back into question via language and such questioning "would withdraw it from any assured horizon of a hermeneutic question."¹⁰⁸⁸ The more truthful interpretation of interpretations would therefore "perforate such a horizon or the hermeneutic veil"¹⁰⁸⁹ and think about language in a more questionable (equivocal, undecidable) way. Such an approach "directs itself towards an irreducible remainder or excess"¹⁰⁹⁰ and the "excess of this remainder escapes any gathering in a hermeneutic."¹⁰⁹¹

Derrida's Way to Language.

The way thinking calls itself into question is through language. Specifically, it is via "the movement of signification"¹⁰⁹² that "language bears within itself the necessity of its own

¹⁰⁸⁰ Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p.50.

¹⁰⁸¹ Derrida, Jacques. *The Truth in Painting* trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987), p.33.

¹⁰⁸² Ibid.

¹⁰⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Derrida, Jacques. "Structure, Sign and Play in the Human Sciences" in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p.292.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Ibid, p.293.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Derrida, Jacques. *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles* trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p.127.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Derrida, Jacques. "Rams: Uninterrupted Dialogues – Between Two Infinities, The Poem" in *Sovereignities in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), p. 149.

¹⁰⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹² Derrida, Jacques. "Structure, Sign and Play in the Human Sciences" in *Writing and Difference* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p.289.

critique."¹⁰⁹³ Language invariably "finds itself erased or questioned"¹⁰⁹⁴ by the ways it cannot be "thought"¹⁰⁹⁵ (signified) across contexts of interpretation. The question of language's movements raises the problem of having to think (signify) "the unthinkable itself"¹⁰⁹⁶ any-way. The question of language's elusiveness is significant insofar as we still need to think about language's directives and movements – and we can only do this by allowing the constative to be caught up in the "overflowing of the performative."¹⁰⁹⁷ Given the way language moves and/or is directed, it will remain in a constant state of flux¹⁰⁹⁸ as it rushes past and overcomes thought. Derrida maintains that its "equivocity is in fact always irreducible"¹⁰⁹⁹ because "words and language in general are not and can never be absolute *objects*"¹¹⁰⁰ of thought. Derrida's questioning thereby places emphasis on the "meaningfulness"¹¹⁰¹ or "plentitude"¹¹⁰² of language – it cannot be reduced to a "complete and original intentionality of its meaning"¹¹⁰³ and a "thousand possibilities will always remain open even if one understands something...that makes sense."¹¹⁰⁴ While there might be many ways Derrida interprets interpretations, there is one question that tends to direct his thoughts: the impossibility of stemming language's flow through interpretations attempting to take hold of what remains in a constant state of flux. Specifically, Derrida questions the ways in which the *circle of language and thought* seek to become reciprocally related and mutually attuned. The question of their *reciprocity* or *attunement* is problematized in that language *passes through* thought and returns to it from different directions or in different ways. Thought might always understand itself to be "guided by an intention of

¹⁰⁹³ *ibid*, p.284.

¹⁰⁹⁴ *ibid*, p.283.

¹⁰⁹⁵ *ibid*, p. 279.

¹⁰⁹⁶ *ibid*.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Derrida, Jacques. "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority' in Cornell, Drucilla, Rosenfeld, Michel and Carlson, David (eds.) *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), p.14.

¹⁰⁹⁸ O'Connell, Erin. *Heraclitus and Derrida: Presocratic Deconstruction* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), p.1. During the original discussion of Derrida's *presentation* of his paper "Differance" at the Sorbonne in 1968, Derrida reportedly acknowledges that "yes, there is much of the ancient in what I have said. Everything perhaps. It is to Heraclitus that I refer myself in the last analysis." The irony is that when Derrida was reminded of this reference in a private conversation at UC Irvine in 1996, language's currents had taken him so far that he was also reported to say "I said that?" At any rate, O'Connell provides an interesting parallel between the currents of thought that Heraclitus and Derrida find themselves moving within.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Derrida, Jacques. *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction* trans. John Leavey, (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), p.104.

¹¹⁰⁰ *ibid*.

¹¹⁰¹ Derrida, Jacques. *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.63.

¹¹⁰² *ibid*.

¹¹⁰³ *ibid*.

¹¹⁰⁴ *ibid*.

truth"¹¹⁰⁵, but it can only find a "reference without a referent, without any first or last unit."¹¹⁰⁶ The movement of language can therefore only be appropriated by way of an *impasse*. The law of the circle cannot "escape the law of reappropriation"¹¹⁰⁷ in that it "always reappropriates for itself the discourse that delimits it."¹¹⁰⁸ Any attempt to question language "involves a decision"¹¹⁰⁹ regarding the appropriateness of given criteria. These way-making movements delimit the way language is to be appropriated – by deciding what is to be thought most fitting or suitable to its movements in the first place or last instance. The question of *how* to approach and/or which way to move within a horizon of being is said to be "metaphysics in its most traditional form."¹¹¹⁰ It is where "the deciding agency"¹¹¹¹ attempts to master the limit of its discourse through the very act of thinking or saying so. While the "constant"¹¹¹² attempt to determine the direction of fit between language and thought is understood to be "*the* metaphysical exigency"¹¹¹³ at its most "profound and potent"¹¹¹⁴, it is also *when* thought becomes superficial and powerless. Traditional *ways of thinking* involve a metaphysics of presence insofar as thought attempts to rationally order moving parts into a stable whole. The horizon of being is administered itself via a "hierarchal axiology"¹¹¹⁵, or "ethical ontological distinctions" that "setup value-oppositions clustered around an ideal and undefinable limit."¹¹¹⁶ By administering beings that "subordinate these values to each other,"¹¹¹⁷ thought attempts to return "to an origin, or a priority held to be simple, intact, normal, pure, standard, self-identical in order to *then* think in terms of derivation, complication, deterioration, accident, etc."¹¹¹⁸ Nonetheless, the given intentional horizon will continue to be determined by an "undecidability"¹¹¹⁹ of meaning: whichever way thought turns it remains in an unstable position and may be

¹¹⁰⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.166.

¹¹⁰⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Double Session" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p. 206.

¹¹⁰⁷ Derrida, Jacques. "The Supplement of Copula" in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.177.

¹¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*

¹¹⁰⁹ Derrida, Jacques. *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.93.

¹¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹¹ Derrida, Jacques. "Ja, or the Faux Bond" in Weber, Elisabeth (ed.) *Points, Interviews: 1974-1994* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p.54.

¹¹¹² Derrida, Jacques. *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.93.

¹¹¹³ *ibid.*

¹¹¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹¹¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹¹¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹¹¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹¹¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹¹¹⁹ Derrida, Jacques. "Double Session" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.213.

overturned. Conflicting movements "between two determined possibilities or options"¹¹²⁰ "continues to inhabit the decision."¹¹²¹ Consequently, thought will invariably find itself directed back to those "aporias"¹¹²² intending to delimit its own "constraints"¹¹²³, "categories"¹¹²⁴ and directives. The law of the circle will find itself on "trial"¹¹²⁵ again "by way of the undecidable."¹¹²⁶

Perhaps there is no better way to experience this aporia than through "the being of intention: intentionality itself"¹¹²⁷. The *question* of language becomes 'critical' because it will invariably encounter its "peculiar inability to emerge from itself in order to articulate its origin"¹¹²⁸ or direct its ends. The directedness of thought – the way it thinks it can direct itself and/or bypass language – merely puts us back on the path of a "non-road"¹¹²⁹ or at the intersection of a "blind spot"¹¹³⁰ where its "condition of possibility turns into a condition of impossibility."¹¹³¹ Intentionality is where language directs thought through an "interminable experience"¹¹³² that can only be "endured"¹¹³³ as an "ordeal"¹¹³⁴ or "risk."¹¹³⁵ This risk coincides with the problem of the criterion, and its relation to the question of being. It raises the question of *deciding* which way to move or direct our thought within language. Any attempt to disentangle thought from language involves

¹¹²⁰ Kearney, Richard and Dooley, Mark (eds.) "Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility: A Dialogue With Jacques Derrida" in *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, (London: Routledge, 1999), p.79.

¹¹²¹ Jacques Derrida, "Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism" in Mouffe, Chantal (ed.) *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.87.

¹¹²² Derrida, Jacques. "The Supplement of Copula" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.180

¹¹²³ *ibid.*

¹¹²⁴ *ibid.*, p.182.

¹¹²⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "Afterword" in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.116.

¹¹²⁶ *ibid.*

¹¹²⁷ Derrida, Jacques. *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction* trans. John Leavey, (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), p.139.

¹¹²⁸ Derrida, Jacques. "Force and Signification" in *Writing and Difference* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p.27.

¹¹²⁹ Derrida, Jacques. *Aporias* trans. Thomas Dutoit, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p.78.

¹¹³⁰ Derrida, Jacques. "White Mythology" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.228

¹¹³¹ Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Spivak, Baltimore: (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p.74.

¹¹³² Derrida, Jacques. *Aporias* trans. Thomas Dutoit, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p.78.

¹¹³³ *ibid.*

¹¹³⁴ *ibid.*

¹¹³⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "Differance" in *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* trans. David Allison and Newton Garver, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press), 1973, p.135.

an ontological commitment, or a "re-instituting act of interpretation."¹¹³⁶ In order to make a decision (ontologically commit ourselves) within a context of interpretation, interpreters must move through "the ordeal of an undecidable"¹¹³⁷ – by way of acknowledging the problem of knowing which direction to come from and/or go to. Whichever path we chose, the ordering of beings remains caught in a unique circular movement, where "any certitude or supposed criteriology that would assure us"¹¹³⁸ what to think turns thought and language back into each other. Intentionality merely directs thought to "the structural limit"¹¹³⁹ of experience, since the being of language can never be directed (intended) towards "the telos (the end)" or the "arche (beginning or commandment)."¹¹⁴⁰ While the force of Derrida's arguments "irreducibly belongs"¹¹⁴¹ to the logic of "metaphysical oppositions,"¹¹⁴² a deconstructive interpretation "uses the strength of the field to turn its own stratagems against it, producing a force of dislocation that spreads itself throughout the entire system, fissuring it in every direction and thoroughly *delimiting* it"¹¹⁴³ as an open question.

We began with the understanding that Derrida is a difficult thinker to understand (position, follow, etc.) Part of this difficulty remains Derrida's *principled* reluctance to provide criteria for a deconstructive approach. Derrida hesitates to reassure us with any presupposed criteriology or certitude, and directs us away from thinking the possibility of determinate criteria by way of his own questioning of the circle of understanding. Given the undecidability of meaning, it was not possible to know (decide in advance) which way the circle would turn or move. A related difficulty was the way Derrida approaches the circle in question. Derrida does not use straightforward language to clear the way, and attempts to follow language's lead by moving in different directions throughout such questioning. The problem of understanding Derrida is exemplified by his own interpretation of a traditional problematic: the delimiting of being by way of thinking (approaching, directing) the question of language. Following Derrida's lead, however, we have attempted to find our way by moving across a range of texts or passages that form a complex whole. Specifically, we have tried to open up a passageway by bringing forth a part/whole problematic regarding the movement of difference and/or the trial of the undecidability of

¹¹³⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'" in Cornell, Drucilla, Rosenfeld, Michel and Carlson, David (eds.) *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), p.23.

¹¹³⁷ *ibid*, p.24

¹¹³⁸ *ibid*, p.25.

¹¹³⁹ Derrida, Jacques. "Afterword" in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.130.

¹¹⁴⁰ *ibid*.

¹¹⁴¹ Derrida, Jacques. "Force and Signification" in *Writing and Difference* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p.22.

¹¹⁴² *ibid*.

¹¹⁴³ *ibid*.

meaning. We moved through these openings to mark a trail in our understanding. We have marked this linguistic trail – and trial – by following pathways that recur throughout Derrida's thinking. In this way, we've emphasized the question of the direction of fit between thought and language. We thereby found an opening within Derrida's interpretations by placing ourselves in a meaningful circle that does not admit of entry or exit points.

The Pharmakon: Derrida's Interpretation of Plato's (Con)text

We are finally in a position where we can direct ourselves back and forth. The following is a brief attempt to look at the way/s Derrida *performs* the question of the directedness of thought, and its relation to the directives of language. We shall primarily direct our thought to Derrida's deconstruction of Plato's own attempt to say (perform) the limit of being/s via the *pharmakon* of *writing*. The goal is to follow the way Derrida uses Plato's text to question the delimiting of meaningful linguistic contexts. We will examine the ways Platonism – understood here as the history of thought – has traditionally *performed* the question of delimitation through Derrida's interpretation of language *in action*. Such an approach highlights the way the *constative* (statements describing the reality in question by way of given truth-values) and the *performative* (statements that bring about or transform the reality being questioned) *move against* each other throughout history.¹¹⁴⁴

According to Derrida, the history of thought is to be meaningfully understood *contextually*, and it is the "philosophical, epistemic order of *logos* as an antidote"¹¹⁴⁵ to the "headache"¹¹⁴⁶ of the unthought that remains in question. Specifically, "Platonism"¹¹⁴⁷ provides both the historical and discursive context insofar as philosophical texts have traditionally sought to enact "the whole of Western metaphysics in its conceptuality."¹¹⁴⁸ The way thought chooses to identify and reflect

¹¹⁴⁴ While it is true that Derrida does not explicitly raise the question of performatives within his deconstruction of Plato's text here, the limitations of speech act theory remain implicit (or anticipated). As we've also anticipated and/or projected (see above and below), Derrida will move on to discuss the questionable relation between constatives and performatives in many other contexts – and so it can never be a question of delimiting one meaningful context from another (one way rather than another).

¹¹⁴⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.124.

¹¹⁴⁶ *ibid*, p.125. Derrida is quoting Plato's *Critias* dialogue here (155a-b).

¹¹⁴⁷ *ibid*, p.76.

¹¹⁴⁸ *ibid*. According to Derrida in *Limited INC* Western metaphysics begins with Plato's dialogues, and works its way through philosophical discourse that encompasses Descartes, Rousseau, Husserl, Austin, Searle, etc. (i.e., so-called continental and analytic philosophers). Platonism is the way of "all metaphysicians", p.93.

upon its concepts remain context-bound or specific, and "its interpretive"¹¹⁴⁹ contexts may be presented as a "pharmaceutical operation"¹¹⁵⁰ seeking to administer (conceive, prescribe) its limits. The epistemic order of the logos is therefore best approached as a "pharmaceutical enclosure"¹¹⁵¹ – as "being therapeutic in nature"¹¹⁵² in that it involves a rational 'treatment' of the very beings in question. Plato's inaugural movements "raises the problem of context"¹¹⁵³ across a range of philosophical (con)texts and/or concepts. The intentionality of thought "has the complex structure of a weaving, an interlacing"¹¹⁵⁴, that remains "woven"¹¹⁵⁵ into a "web"¹¹⁵⁶ of relations that problematizes the very notions of contextual boundaries or context specificity. Interpretations – and the interpretation of interpretations – remain "highly determined in strictly defined situations"¹¹⁵⁷, and can only be understood "pragmatically"¹¹⁵⁸ (within the context of their occurrence). Given these pragmatically determined situations, contexts *move through* one another and become interwoven. The activity of thinking inaugurates a part/whole problematic concerning its "syntactical praxis."¹¹⁵⁹ The move towards conceptuality is invariably directed back to "the problematic of the performative."¹¹⁶⁰ The very constructive nature of thought will inadvertently find itself deconstructed across a given linguistic context – by way of language's displacements and equivocations (passage *through* and *to* other concepts). The order of conceptuality – the way concepts prescribe and administer themselves via rational treatments – simultaneously undermines their claims to legality or prescriptiveness. Whenever a context

¹¹⁴⁹ Derrida, Jacques. "Differance" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.3. We now cite Derrida's text "Differance" from another context for the same reason – specifically, we originally encountered it in *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*. We have followed the movement of signification, however, and found our way by moving on elsewhere.

¹¹⁵⁰ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.128.

¹¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, p.143.

¹¹⁵² *ibid.*, p.128.

¹¹⁵³ Derrida, Jacques. "Signature Event Context" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.310. Note that Derrida's text is also reproduced in the subsequent publication *Limited INC*. We contextualize Derrida's approach by way of *Margins of Philosophy* if only because it enacts his own way-making movement intertextually. Specifically, it brings forth the notion of dissemination and speech acts that recurs in *Dissemination* and *Limited INC* respectively.

¹¹⁵⁴ Derrida, Jacques. "Differance" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.8

¹¹⁵⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.63.

¹¹⁵⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Signature Event Context" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.310

¹¹⁵⁷ Derrida, Jacques. "Afterword" in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.148.

¹¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*

¹¹⁵⁹ Derrida, Jacques. "Double Session" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.220.

¹¹⁶⁰ Derrida, Jacques. "Signature Event Context" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.321.

attempts to "decide and maintain"¹¹⁶¹ the order of beings, language's way-making movements performs (enacts) something *other than* what can be decided or maintained. The movement of beings thereby remain directed by the "ricochet of the moment"¹¹⁶² across the contexts in question. If and when thinking decides to move one way rather than another, every meaningful being "appearing on the scene of presence"¹¹⁶³ becomes "related to something other than itself."¹¹⁶⁴ The part/whole relation can only be meaningfully presented (constructed) "by means of this very relation to what it is not."¹¹⁶⁵ The very act of thinking moves being/s (back) towards or through "the displaced and equivocal passage of one different thing to other, from one term of an opposition to another."¹¹⁶⁶ Nothing – no concept or conception of being – can ever be presented (identified) with respect to itself, "in a sufficient presence that would refer only to itself."¹¹⁶⁷ Everything – every concept or conception of being – "lawfully"¹¹⁶⁸ remains an integral part of the complex signifying whole to which they belong and/or differentiate themselves. Every concept of being thereby *moves through* a chain linked to the condition of their possibility for displacement and equivocation. Derrida calls this process "non-synonymous substitutions"¹¹⁶⁹ and it is related by "the necessity of the context."¹¹⁷⁰ The context remains questionable (necessarily open and/or related to other contexts) because it is conditioned through meaningful displacements and equivocations – meaningful contexts remain the place where non-synonymous substitutions result in the determination and alteration of given truth-values. The beings in question invariably move back and forth within (ricochet across) a given intentional horizon, and so remain caught in "*between*"¹¹⁷¹ one another. Identity relations can therefore only occur as a "weave of differences"¹¹⁷² within "the circle"¹¹⁷³ that distinguishes and relates different beings from within "the spacing" of an "in-between-ness."¹¹⁷⁴ It is the differing relation

¹¹⁶¹ *ibid.*, p.204.

¹¹⁶² Derrida, Jacques. "Double Session" in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.211.

¹¹⁶³ Derrida, Jacques. "Differance" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.13.

¹¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*

¹¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*

¹¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p.17.

¹¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p.11.

¹¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p.12.

¹¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹⁷¹ Derrida, Jacques. "Double Session" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.212. Derrida italicizes the word 'between'.

¹¹⁷² Derrida, Jacques. "Differance" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.12. Note that Derrida invokes Plato's term *pharmakon* here to indicate the way difference moves (by way of non-synonymous substitutions). We shall follow his lead when encountering his deconstruction of this movement in "Plato's Pharmacy" (see below).

¹¹⁷³ *ibid.*

¹¹⁷⁴ Derrida, Jacques. "Double Session" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.212.

between beings that enables "the transcription and inscription of things"¹¹⁷⁵, if only "because there is no thing itself."¹¹⁷⁶ And these beings differ (signify) insofar as they defer to other beings throughout time and/or across contexts – by simultaneously moving *towards* and *away* from each other. It is within such a differential context that language and intentionality can never identify or locate one another according to a fixed homological relation. Neither can retain the quality of being identical nor meaningfully correspond by way of a given structural position or functional value. Their mutually generating movement encloses language and thought within a constantly deferred and differential relationship. Consciousness can never be fully present to itself as such – it is always already *caught between* thought and language. Any attempt to "gather itself into its presence"¹¹⁷⁷ is simply a form of self-privilege or a way of putting one *before* the other via the privileging of Self. It is where "consciousness offers itself to thought as self-presence, as the perception of self in presence."¹¹⁷⁸ Indeed, every attempt to put thought before language or language before thought "is the ether of metaphysics, the element of our thought caught in the language of metaphysics."¹¹⁷⁹ Despite our best intentions, the whole of metaphysics in its conceptuality (enactment) will call itself back into question – by way of the "thought of difference."¹¹⁸⁰ Derrida asks us to think the *thought of difference* in order to 'hear' the way language silently speaks and/or moves. Difference – that movement which differs and defers beings – raises the "question"¹¹⁸¹ of the nature of *relation between* part and whole in that we "must attempt to think this unheard thought....Since Being has never had a 'meaning', has never being thought or said as such, except by dissimulating itself in beings, then difference, in a certain and very strange way, (is) 'older' than the ontological difference or than the truth of Being."¹¹⁸² The enigma of language may nonetheless be thought when attempting to approach language through that unheard thought rendered (barely) audible via a trick of spelling. Difference *differs* by articulating a space between concept and object, and *defers* by locating their differences (openings, passageways) within a temporal chain. Its activity throws thought (back) into question by making language's constituent parts "shake as a whole" or "tremble in (their) entirety."¹¹⁸³ While the intentionality of any questioning can "never be through and

¹¹⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p.191.

¹¹⁷⁶ Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Spivak, Baltimore: (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p.292. Derrida notes here the ambivalence of a term (pharmakon) that he will subsequently 'deconstruct' in *Plato's Pharmacy* (see below).

¹¹⁷⁷ Derrida, Jacques. "Difference" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.16.

¹¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*

¹¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁸⁰ *ibid.*, 21.

¹¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.22.

¹¹⁸² *ibid.*

¹¹⁸³ *ibid.*

through present to itself and to its content"¹¹⁸⁴, we can still deconstruct the way/s thought *in* action might occur. Given such activity in context, "the category of intention will not disappear; it will have its place, but from this place it will no longer be able to govern the entire scene and system of utterances."¹¹⁸⁵

Derrida provides an interpretation of a Platonic text that attempts to govern the entire scene of understanding (the whole of Western metaphysics in its conceptuality). This metaphysical context extends beyond Plato's immediate text and moves thought across the many places that 'Platonism' has sought to occupy and regulate. Plato's *Phaedrus* – among many other texts across traditional thought or practice – attempts to address the question of language from within a place in language. Derrida questions the way Plato thinks he can answer (speak *to* or *for*) language from within a specific space of reasons, and he does this by positioning himself within the context of Plato's own text/s. The question of 'Platonism' remains an open text (context) in that any attempt to "decide and maintain"¹¹⁸⁶ refers to "the whole of Western philosophy, including the anti-Platonisms that regularly feed into it."¹¹⁸⁷ As Derrida maintains, "we do not believe that there exists, in all rigor, a Platonic text, closed upon itself, complete with its inside and its of outside."¹¹⁸⁸ Despite philosophy's best or avowed intentions, Derrida argues that philosophical questioning has never been able to decide or maintain the limit of understanding. The horizon of language continues to move rational thought *beyond* whatever is decided and the undecidability of meaning ensures that meaningful contexts can never be "certain or saturated"¹¹⁸⁹ whichever way reason approaches – writes or speak about – them. Consequently, "we must set back in place"¹¹⁹⁰ the "textual chain"¹¹⁹¹ always already in play and move beyond Plato's immediate text – towards the way language itself performs the contexts in question. Derrida remains "less interested in breaking through certain limits... than putting in doubt the

¹¹⁸⁴ Derrida, Jacques. "Signature Event Context" in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.18. We cite Derrida from the text reproduced in this context (as opposed to *Margins of Philosophy*) because he presents his point a little differently (and more eloquently) here. Note in advance that the difference between them is not one of translation – it is the same translated piece slightly amended in the subsequent publication. Specifically, in the earlier 1982 published text, Derrida writes "will never be completely present in itself and its content" instead, p.326. The *in* becomes *to*, and *completely* becomes *through* and *through*.

¹¹⁸⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "Signature Event Context" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.326.

¹¹⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p. 191.

¹¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸⁸ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.130.

¹¹⁸⁹ Derrida, Jacques. "Signature Event Context" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.320.

¹¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹⁹¹ *ibid.*

right to posit such limits in the first place."¹¹⁹² Derrida casts doubt on the limits of understanding via the inherent undecidability of the meaning of the *pharmakon of writing* in Plato's dialogue. Plato's *Phaedrus* is said to introduce a hierarchical opposition between speech and writing via the word in question. The difficulty, however, is that such a hierarchical axiology – Plato's *treatment* of the problem via the meaningful delimitation of beings – remains undecidable. The meaning of the *pharmakon* cannot be decided either way: *pharmakon* can either be a remedy or a poison, and the *pharmakon's* very presence in the text actively deconstructs the logic of Plato's own argument in different ways. Plato's text – a written dialogue – undermines the very context of its presuppositions. Plato's argument presupposes, of course, *knowledge as recollection* of an immutable truth *imprinted on the soul* recollected through *therapeutic speech* in the form of philosophical discourse. The logical problem is that Plato's dialogue inadvertently 'forgets' or displaces the role of this more originary 'writing' to make the privileging of speech intelligible (possible, meaningful). Derrida argues that the meaning of the *pharmakon* remains "ambivalent"¹¹⁹³ and the *pharmakon's* "ambivalence"¹¹⁹⁴ remains *part* of its *whole meaning*. The traditional difficulty (for translators and interpreters) was deciding on – arbitrating between – the intended meaning within the context of Plato's argument. Derrida's "critical reading"¹¹⁹⁵ of the *Phaedrus* argues, however, that the *pharmakon* is "already inhabited by difference"¹¹⁹⁶ that "precedes the opposition between different effects"¹¹⁹⁷: the *pharmakon* remains meaningfully constituted through its ambivalence, or reason(s) for being-there.

Derrida's interpretation of Plato's text proceeds in two directions. On the one hand, he examines the way Plato attempts to move forward, towards saying the "ontological: the presumed possibility of a discourse about what is."¹¹⁹⁸ This speaking corresponds to the way beings are presented – decided upon – within a given intentional horizon. On the other hand, Derrida's thinking involves a "reversal"¹¹⁹⁹ and deferral of what can be meaningfully presented and/or thought decisive in language. Derrida's interpretation presumes to throw into question whatever is "decided and maintained in the field of ontology or dialectics throughout all the mutations or

¹¹⁹² *ibid.*

¹¹⁹³ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.127.

¹¹⁹⁴ *ibid.*

¹¹⁹⁵ Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p.158.

¹¹⁹⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.127.

¹¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*

¹¹⁹⁸ Derrida, Jacques. "Double Session" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.191.

¹¹⁹⁹ Derrida, Jacques. "Outwork" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.6.

revolutions that are entailed."¹²⁰⁰ Such a questioning renders impossible a discourse about what *is* there. Derrida aims to show how thinking remains caught between the "circle"¹²⁰¹ and an "abyss"¹²⁰², or an unfathomable chasm between thought and language. This in-between is "syntactical"¹²⁰³ insofar as it opens up a "spacing and articulation"¹²⁰⁴ between "pairs of opposing terms, the ground of its presuppositions, the entirety of the discourse in which one could articulate the question of the 'entire-field' (as a question, and hence as a discourse)."¹²⁰⁵ According to Derrida, thought remains groundless because "non-truth is the truth"¹²⁰⁶ within the presuppositions of meaningful discourse. Any pharmaceutical operation will result in an "uncritical...treatment"¹²⁰⁷ insofar as rational thought will invariably take "from the order of the very thing"¹²⁰⁸ it is "trying to exclude from it."¹²⁰⁹ Given that truthful discourse moves within non-truth (what is unthought or excluded from rational thinking), "nonpresence is presence. Differance, the disappearance of any originary presence, is *at once* the condition of possibility *and* the condition of impossibility of truth."¹²¹⁰ Consequently, any attempt to distinguish between the *constative* and the *performative* remains caught between their respective directives and/or movements.¹²¹¹ The activity of the *pharmakon* indicates that there can be no context-independent criterion for distinguishing between what might be thought constant – truth-values that occur independent of their stating – and statements that perform (bring about) the scene of their occurrence. Such a trans/formation determines a scene's own de/construction – i.e., stages its performance through the act of stating. Derrida urges that a text's 'truth' or 'falsity' remains inextricably interwoven with the ways a context performs its statements – it is where language directs thought towards the staging of such repeat performances. Derrida leads us to this question by asking us to follow the ways the *pharmakon* performs on the stage of Plato's dialogue, and becomes subject to the "logic of play."¹²¹² The *pharmakon* prescribes its own rules

¹²⁰⁰ Derrida, Jacques. "Double Session" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.191.

¹²⁰¹ Derrida, Jacques. "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of the Pupil" in *Eyes of the University* trans. Jan Plug (California: Stanford University Press, 2004), p.137.

¹²⁰² *ibid.*

¹²⁰³ Derrida, Jacques. "The Double Session" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.229.

¹²⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p. 241.

¹²⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p.245.

¹²⁰⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.165.

¹²⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p.149.

¹²⁰⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁰⁹ *ibid.*

¹²¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.165.

¹²¹¹ Derrida, Jacques. "Signature Event Context" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.321. As we've already acknowledged, Derrida calls the problem of moving between them the "problematic of the performative."

¹²¹² Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.64.

within the "game"¹²¹³ of language. The pharmakon may therefore be thought to be undecidable because it plays within any presumed opposition or decision, and deconstructs language via its own interplay and "crossed connection making."¹²¹⁴ Generally understood as either a poison or remedy, Derrida urges that the pharmakon exhibits the "structure of iteration"¹²¹⁵ (the movement *between* an identity and difference) and so "makes one side cross over into the other (soul/body, good/evil, inside/outside, speech/writing, etc.)."¹²¹⁶ The iterability of the pharmakon "divides its own identity a priori...while constituting it."¹²¹⁷ Its very occurrence "constitutes the medium in which opposites are opposed"¹²¹⁸ insofar as its movements involve "the production of difference. It is the difference of difference."¹²¹⁹ The way the pharmakon produces oppositions and differences is through differential and deferring movements. From the outset – and across contexts of interpretation – the pharmakon enacts a "going or leading astray"¹²²⁰ via the condition of its possibility – i.e., possible and/or alternate routes of meaning. Derrida follows the pharmakon's lead by noting the way its contradictory meanings cannot be determined from whichever direction it comes or goes. Despite the one and same spelling, the pharmakon's signification "acts"¹²²¹ as both remedy and poison and "introduces itself into the body of discourse with all its ambivalence."¹²²² Such movement indicates that identity and difference need no formal introduction and are cast in one another's "spell"¹²²³ – they have already "been beckoning to each other from afar"¹²²⁴ by way of a "hidden mediation"¹²²⁵ and "secret argumentation."¹²²⁶ Although "Plato decides in favour of a logic that does not tolerate ...

¹²¹³ *ibid.*

¹²¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.127.

¹²¹⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "Limited INC a b c" in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.53.

¹²¹⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.127

¹²¹⁷ Derrida, Jacques. "Limited INC a b c" in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.53.

¹²¹⁸ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.127.

¹²¹⁹ *ibid.*

¹²²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 71.

¹²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹²²² *Ibid.*

¹²²³ *ibid.*, Derrida uses the term "spellbinding", where the term works like a "charm" and explicitly uses the term spell elsewhere- i.e., p.124. It goes without saying, of course, that it is the spelling of this ambivalent word that casts its own spell over the text.

¹²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.73.

¹²²⁵ *ibid.*

¹²²⁶ *ibid.* We quote Derrida slightly out of context here in that his interpretation of Plato's text actually says "this time" the activity of the pharmakon occurs "*without* hidden mediation, *without* secret argumentation." We defend our removal of the term "without" here because "up till this point in the dialogue" (*ibid.*) Derrida deconstructs the wayward movements of the pharmakon by way of a hidden mediation and secret argumentation. Indeed, the pharmakon's activities "have been beckoning to each other from afar, indirectly sending back to each other, and as if by chance, appearing and

passages between opposing senses of the same word"¹²²⁷, it is still possible to "watch it infinitely promise itself and endlessly vanish through concealed doorways that shine like mirrors and open onto the labyrinth"¹²²⁸ in question. Identity and difference are thereby *spellbound* (drawn and held to one another) through the linguistic act of thinking. While it might be possible to determine what Plato intends to say in the relevant *passages* (text, opening that connects one space of reasons to another rational space) the context cannot be determined either way. The activity of the *pharmakon* moves through or opens up its passageways. The *pharmakon*'s differential movements enact the passing from one state or place to other, and determines the way/s there. Derrida notes the way Plato's dialogue linguistically constructs its argument – through oppositions intended to administer its order of subordination and movement. While the *Phaedrus* covers much ground, it is noteworthy for the way it moves along pathways. The dialogue attempts to *legitimate thought through lineage* (via kinship relations from which thinking about language directly descends). Plato's dialogue attempts to distinguish and oppose categories of thought, but these linguistic distinctions become undermined by the very act of thinking them. Specifically, the signification *pharmakon* throws (back) into question self-administered prescriptions like *mythos/logos*, *speaking/writing*, *original/copy*, *good/bad*, *memory/forgetfulness*, *inside/outside*, *true/false*, etc. Witness the way the written text attempts to privilege speech over writing via "the original medium of that decision, the element that precedes it, comprehends it, goes beyond it, can never be reduced to it, and is not separated from it by a single word (or signifying apparatus), operating within the Greek and Platonic text."¹²²⁹

Plato's text is structured around knowing the difference "between good and evil" and the role of knowledge within "public morals and social conventions."¹²³⁰ Tradition is thought to play the decisive role in that Plato's dialogue typically "assigns the origin and power of speech, precisely of *logos*, to the paternal position."¹²³¹ That is to say, where the problem of language becomes a "question of morality"¹²³² through relations of order and transmission. Without irony, *logos* – via the father figure of Socrates – calls upon *mythos* to legitimate its position and lineage. Socrates tells a story where the god of invention presents the gift of writing to Egypt's King Thamus. Writing is presented as a remedy or corrective to ignorance and forgetfulness, and

disappearing together on the same line, for yet uncertain reasons, with an effectiveness that is quite discrete and perhaps after all unintentional", *ibid.*

¹²²⁷ *ibid.*, pp.98-99.

¹²²⁸ *ibid.*, p.128.

¹²²⁹ *ibid.*, p.99.

¹²³⁰ *ibid.*

¹²³¹ *ibid.*, p.76.

¹²³² *ibid.*, p.74.

offered to the king as the jewel in his crown. The King, however, rejects the present of writing as a poison – its presence will merely create false (incorrect) knowledge or memories. Since writing cannot literally speak for itself and occurs in the absence of an original speaker, readers can never really know the true intentions or intended referent of a written text. Writing can only act as a *supplement* to speaking – by supplementing inner knowledge with a copy of what was originally said to be true. Such a supplement merely acts as an external reminder, and can only occur in addition to speech through replacing it. Note that Socrates aligns himself with a father figure from mythos: he privileges speech over writing in a dialogue that will be subsequently written down by Plato. While the pharmakon of writing occurs as a supplement to – or the illegitimate offspring of – speaking, it somehow becomes integral to the question of language's well-being. This "dialectical inversion"¹²³³ is something that logos prescribes or administers to itself to legitimate and delimit philosophical inquiry. The dialogues thereby find themselves morally obliged to enact a distinction between good and bad writing. The prescribed activity, however, threatens to go from bad to worse and encounters an unintended moral dilemma – the dialogue finds itself talking in circles. The question of language as moral prescription is forced to swallow a bitter pill regarding the direction or fit between what is thought to be originary and/or derivative. In order to make sense of the origin and power of philosophical questions, Socrates finds himself talking of the "unquestioned legitimacy"¹²³⁴ of writing. Such talk threatens to make the cure worse than the disease, and throws into question the legitimacy of determining any value distinctions in the first place. Socrates speaks about knowledge originally "written down in the soul of the learner, that can defend itself, and know to whom (of what and when) it should speak."¹²³⁵ In other words, the dialogue displaces the linguistic order of its own conceptuality, and finds itself speaking about concepts other than originally intended. This metaphorical displacement or 'poisoning' (borrowing, inheritance) means that philosophy cannot literally know what it should speak of and remains haunted by its spectre. The written dialogue inadvertently privileges the very order it intended to subordinate through an act of expiation and exclusion. Derrida's interpretation similarly moves beyond Plato's text to determine its meaningful limits. This movement is intended to indicate that there is no 'outside' this text – where the activity of the pharmakon remains saturated by the weave of context. Derrida notes that whilst the term *pharmakos* (sorcerer *and* scapegoat) is nowhere to be found in Plato's text, its absence is woven into the differential movements of the pharmakon *anyway*. The movement between part and whole ensures that "certain forces of association unite – at diverse distances, with different strengths and according to different paths"¹²³⁶ and

¹²³³ *ibid*, p.123.

¹²³⁴ *ibid*, p.148.

¹²³⁵ *ibid*.

¹²³⁶ *ibid*, p.129.

"communicate with the totality of the lexicon through their syntactic play"¹²³⁷ and "all the words from the same family."¹²³⁸ For "all its hiddenness, for all it might escape Plato's notice"¹²³⁹ *pharmakos* nonetheless "passes through discoverable *points of presence* that can be seen in the text."¹²⁴⁰ Scapegoats highlight the problem of borderlines – they're an attempt to locate the source of misfortune through acts of transference. In locating perceived moral failings or social disorder, scapegoats become a *necessary evil* by virtue of being an aid to recovery. Scapegoats are found within borders to expiate and banish the evil of (say) 'sorcery'. Witness the way Plato attempts to make the *pharmakon* of writing the scapegoat of philosophy when passing through the trial of his own writings. Despite Plato's best or avowed intentions, he remained under the *pharmakon*'s 'spell' (undecidable spelling, magical thinking). Philosophy's original moral physician was also eventually put on trial for practicing *sorcery* with speech that (allegedly) poisoned the souls of others. Derrida traces the movements between *pharmakon* and *pharmakos* through the *spellbinding* effects of Socrates' speech acts: Socrates' questioning culminated in the attempt to silence him through execution by poisoning. The therapeutic effects of Socrates' poisoning, however, speak for themselves. Socrates invariably became immortal and continues to live on through Plato's dialogues. Despite the attempt to legislate the movements of the *pharmakon*, it continues on its ways – by passing through the trial of undecidability across cultural thought or practice. The *pharmakon* goes on to reintroduce itself into historical discourse to *reiterate the difference*. Specifically, where the movement of language continues to beckon thought through its hidden mediations and secret argumentations.

Critical Discussion (part 1)

Aims and Objectives

The aim of the following is to *begin* critically evaluating Derrida's conception of language. It is the first of two related parts displaced across logically distinct spaces of reasons. We thereby approach the question of the relation between part and whole via Lyotard and Habermas respectively. Following Derrida's lead, such an interrogation directs itself towards *an* interpretation of interpretations and primarily occurs as a contextual strategy. Specifically, we shall question the ways in which intentional relations – relatedness to a content, directedness upon an object, etc. – contextualizes the relationship *between* thought and language. If intentionality provides the horizon for any given movement, we must determine the ways in

¹²³⁷ *ibid.*

¹²³⁸ *ibid.*

¹²³⁹ *ibid.*

¹²⁴⁰ *ibid.*

which thought and language are directed (back) towards each other. The question we shall find ourselves re-turning to, then, is the nature of the relation between meaning and truth within Derrida's questioning. We are immediately faced, of course, with the difficulty of following (making sense of) such an elusive thinker in the first place. The possibility of conflicting or multiple interpretations therefore directly moves us towards the philosophical problem of delimiting understanding itself.¹²⁴¹ Given Derrida's ontological commitment – namely, that *there are no objective facts and only interpretations*¹²⁴² in a constant state of flux or transition – we are required to ask what such a fluctuating and/or transitional ontology commits us to. Specifically, there appears to be at least one objective fact and/or truth (that of *interpretation*), and the requirement is to ask what kind of fact an interpretation might be – especially if interpretations may come into conflict or be multiplied indefinitely. The underlying question for our purposes, then, is whether Derrida's thinking should be understood as "anti-hermeneutics...in all its radicality"¹²⁴³ or whether it best exemplifies hermeneutical thought when moving the problem of understanding "into its most extreme and radical formulation."¹²⁴⁴ Caught between these extremes is whether deconstructive thought should be interpreted as an instance

¹²⁴¹ Bennington, Geoffrey. "Deconstruction and the Philosophers (The Very Idea)" in *Legislations: The Politics of Deconstruction*, (New York: Verso, 1994). Bennington provides a scathing account of the conflict of interpretations and resists the idea that deconstruction can be best understood (conceived) philosophically...i.e., seriously and/or systematically. Specifically, he is mocking of *the very idea* to understand (conceive) deconstructive thought in a philosophical way, and argues that any attempt to interpret Derrida with an "undertaker's gravitas" or "stylistic solecism" merely provokes "hilarity in the reader", p.14. Bennington observes that different conceptions of deconstruction emerge within the given philosophical interpretation, and that the variants are all "reductive in specific and different ways", *ibid*. According to Bennington, the problem is that such interpretations display a "philosophical naivety" by being "too philosophical" in their reductive and/or specific ways, *ibid*.

¹²⁴² While it is true that this *explicit* claim derives from Nietzsche, Derrida appears to be tacitly committed to (or spurred on) by such an ontology. See, for example, Derrida, Jacques. *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles* trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978) where Derrida 'playfully' aligns himself with Nietzsche via the "cryptic and parodying...truth" claim "that the text will remain indefinitely open" to interpretation, p.137. It remains open to interpretation, however, whether such an ontology commits Derrida to Nietzsche's perspectivism. Specifically, "against positivism, which halts at phenomena – "There are only *facts*" – I would say: No, facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations. We cannot establish any fact "in itself"... In so far as the word "knowledge" has any meaning, the world is knowable; but it is *interpretable* otherwise, it has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings." Nietzsche, Frederick, *The Will to Power* trans. Walter Kaufman and R.J Hollongdale (New York: Vintage Books), p.267, par.481.

¹²⁴³ Frank, Manfred. *What Is Neostucturalism* trans. Sabine Wilke and Richard Gray, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p.432.

¹²⁴⁴ Caputo, John. *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p.4

of relativism,¹²⁴⁵ pluralism,¹²⁴⁶ nihilism,¹²⁴⁷ mysticism,¹²⁴⁸ idealism,¹²⁴⁹ perspectivism,¹²⁵⁰, scepticism¹²⁵¹ and/or transcendentalism.¹²⁵² Despite the possibility of multiple or conflicting

¹²⁴⁵ Norris, Christopher. *The Contest of Faculties: Philosophy and Theory after Deconstruction*, (London: Methuen, 1985). According to Norris, Derrida's thought is "simply the most hard-pressed and consequent of relativistic doctrines applied to questions of meaning, logic and truth." Nonetheless, he tries to soften this interpretation by urging that Derrida is not an "unbridled relativist" (whatever that might mean), p. 216-17. See also Maria Baghramian's more recent *Relativism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), for a possible elaboration. Baghramian includes Derrida in a tradition that extends back to the philosophical discourse of antiquity right through to postmodern conditions of knowledge. Like Norris, she attempts to put a constraint on such an interpretation by urging that Derrida is best understood as a "negative relativist", p.3. That is, Derrida's thought does not positively affirm *relativism* but actively denies universal claims relating to questions of meaning, logic and truth. Derrida is a negative relativist insofar as he does not "accept straightforward attempts to relativise epistemic and moral values to historical and social contexts", *ibid*.

¹²⁴⁶ Hoy, Couzens David. "One What? Relativism and Post Structuralism" in Krausz, Michael (ed.) *Relativism: A Contemporary Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). According to Hoy, Derrida is best understood as an "interpretive pluralist", p.530. Nonetheless, he observes that while Derrida is (like philosophical hermeneutics) committed to a form of "ontological pluralism", deconstruction's subsequent (or more explicit) identification with "certain unconditionals" like justice "is a move towards universalism", pp. 526 and 529 respectively.

¹²⁴⁷ Boly, John. "Nihilism Aside: Derrida's Debate over Intentional Models" *Philosophy and Literature*, Vol. 9, No.2, 1985. Boly argues that Derrida's interpretive pluralism (deconstruction's refusal to secure a given text's meaning and to let texts speak for themselves in many different ways and/or across contexts) leads to "speechless nihilism", p.153. Wolin, Richard, *The Seduction of Unreason: The Intellectual Romance With Fascism from Nietzsche to Postmodernism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004) claims that Derrida (amongst other French philosophers) is guilty of "philosophical nihilism" because of the "avidity with which French intellectuals have deconstructed and sent packing the concepts of the individual, reason and truth", p.39.

¹²⁴⁸ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), Habermas claims that deconstruction is a form of "Jewish mysticism" that seeks to retrace the invisible steps of God through the imprint of (re)writing, p.167. Specifically, "it is useful to recall the metaphor of the book of nature or the book of the world, which points to the hard to read, painstakingly to be deciphered handwriting of God...there are only books in the plural because the original text has been lost", p. 164. Consequently, our relationship to God's forgotten or missing text(s) need to be recovered (followed, reread, rewritten) through acts of interpretation that brings what is hidden and/or absent back "into play" so as to renew the "mystical concept of tradition as an ever delayed event of revelation" pp.173. and 183 respectively.

¹²⁴⁹ Stack, George and DiMaria, Mary. "Emerson and Postmodernism" in Tharaud, Barry (ed.) *Emerson for the Twenty-first Century: Global Perspectives* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2010). According to DiMaria and Stack, "in Derrida's interpretation of language and language use, we can discern a form of linguistic idealism: a reduction of language to a complex interrelationship of signs in an open-ended process that is divorced from concrete actuality and denuded of any naturalistic, empirical references...In Derrida's theoretical domain there is no exit from the labyrinth of language leading to the actual world in which we live and act", p. 424. See also Mander, William *Idealistic Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) which counters – or supplements – such a philosophically naïve concept of idealism and/or of our being-in-the-world. As Mander notes, idealism is the thesis that "the being of the world can never be separated from the conceptualization of it", and linguistic idealism – a related thesis widely attributed "to Derrida" (amongst others) is the "notion that any world in which we live can only be understood as a function of our linguistic practices. If there can be no access to reality – no thought of reality – except through a language which we fashion ourselves, the world itself becomes a linguistic creation", pp. 8 and 9 respectively.

¹²⁵⁰ Plank, William. *The Quantum Nietzsche: The Will to Power and the Nature of Dissipative Systems* (Lincoln: IUniverse, 1998). According to Plank, "deconstruction is, in fact, another name for perspectivism", and Derrida merely develops Nietzsche's views on "interpretation and textual commentary", in other contexts, p.471. Perspectivism is *idealism* taken further, and (following

interpretations, Derrida directs us towards one guiding question. Specifically, Derrida's thinking is rationally *motivated* by the general question: what is meaning to say? Furthermore, Derrida attempts to justify his answers via the *meaningfulness* of the very language in question. While it is true that Derrida throws 'truth' and 'method' into question, there is no getting around the problem of the truth-value of deconstruction's own 'methodology' at any given time and/or place. We must similarly attempt to do justice to those 'beings' *caught* moving across contexts of interpretation. The circle of understanding remains a directive insofar as Derrida continually questions the legal status of the circle's movements via the problem of *justification* – i.e., to what extent may the law of the circle be thought justified? If we are to do justice to Derrida's questioning, we must also determine its legal standing within the circle in question. We are therefore 'legally' obliged to situate his way-making movements within the context of their occurrence, and direct ourselves back towards the question of the relation between thought and language. By questioning meaningful thought *in* action, we shall be able to determine the ways in thought and language form a complex whole. The problematic of the performative will be brought forth insofar as it raises the question of meaningful context and its relationship to the determination (enabling, questioning) of truth. The circle of understanding, then, remains the

Nietzsche) claims that all *ideations* (meaningful conceptions of objects) arise within given perspectives. In other words, there is no objective reality or matters of fact – there are merely competing points of view (or interpretations) of objects thus conceived. Nietzsche's point of view was anticipated in Plato's *Protagoras* and *Theaetetus* insofar as the dialogues interrogate the relativistic notion that man is "the measure of all things, of the existence of the things that are and the non-existence of the things that are not." (*Theaetetus* 152a). See, also, Diethe, Carol *Historical Dictionary of Nietzscheanism* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2014). Diethe argues that "following Nietzsche, Derrida criticized traditional hermeneutics that purports to reveal "the truth," preferring to accentuate perspectivism", p.119. Consequently, deconstruction may be viewed as "Neo-Nietzscheanism and the new Nietzsche", p.261.

¹²⁵¹ Vandavelde, Pol. "Derrida's Intentional Skepticism: A Husserlian Response" *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Vol. 36. No. 2, 1995. Vandavelde questions Derrida's "attack on the very notion of intentionality", and its relationship to the possibility (intelligibility, truthfulness) of related knowledge claims. Specifically, Derrida is considered a skeptic about intentional states (rational beliefs and desires) because of Derrida's "attempt to undermine two notions crucial for intentionality: the possibility to repeat a meaning in its self identity, which guarantees the stability and availability of intentional states, and the possibility for subjects to be present to their intentional states, which guarantees the link between consciousness and its object. The first notion concerns the possibility for ideality, and the second concerns the possibility for a subject to have access to an ideality", p.160.

¹²⁵² Rorty, Richard. "Is Derrida a Transcendental Philosopher?" in *Essays on Heidegger and Others* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991). While Rorty asks this question, he does not answer it in the affirmative. Nonetheless, he raises the question to acknowledge and contest interpretations sympathetic to such a view. Rorty therefore provides a useful survey of thinkers who have interpreted Derrida as a transcendental philosopher, including Christopher Norris, Jonathan Culler and Rodolphe Gasche. Note that we have just observed that Norris has also interpreted Derrida as a relativist, and there remains the problem of reconciling such interpretations. Specifically, Norris argues elsewhere that Derrida "is broaching something like a Kantian transcendental deduction, an argument to demonstrate (perversely enough) that a priori notions of logical truth are a priori ruled out of court by rigorous reflection on the powers and limits of textual critique", Norris, Christopher, *Derrida* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), p.183.

context of our inquiry, and directs us to raise two related questions: to what extent does the circle make deconstruction possible and/or in what ways can it do justice – be truthful – to it? We shall argue that Derrida finds himself caught in what Hintikka¹²⁵³, Apel¹²⁵⁴ and Habermas¹²⁵⁵ call a *performative contradiction*. Searle and Vanderveken provide a preliminary characterization when arguing that a linguistic act appears to be "self-defeating if its conditions of success cannot possibly obtain"¹²⁵⁶ and "since a set of *illocutionary acts* is consistent if it is performable, no *self-defeating illocutionary act* is consistent."¹²⁵⁷ Derrida is certainly aware that he stands accused of being "never far from lying...and (giving) false evidence...(or) perjury within the statement."¹²⁵⁸ Truth be told, it *is* performatively contradictory to contest "the possibility of truth"¹²⁵⁹ when it is the presupposition of truth that makes such contesting possible, "beginning with your so-called questions."¹²⁶⁰ The immediate question, then, is whether the "reproach of performative contradiction"¹²⁶¹ directed towards Derrida's questioning is an "unanswerable strategy"¹²⁶² or the very condition of its possibility.

¹²⁵³ Hintikka, Jaakko. "Cogito Ergo Sum: Inference or Performance?" *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 71, No. 1, 1962, p.11. While this concept is typically attributed to Habermas (who originally appropriated it from Apel), Hintikka anticipated both philosophers by examining the way Descartes must *perform* the cogito in order for it to *be* (thought) consistent. Hintikka introduces the term "existential inconsistency", and argues "the inconsistency (absurdity) of an existentially inconsistent statement can in a sense be said to be of performatory (performative) character. It depends on an act or 'performance,' namely on a certain person's act of uttering a sentence (or of otherwise making a statement); it does not depend solely on the means used for the purpose, that is on the sentence which is being uttered. The sentence is perfectly correct as a sentence, but the attempt of a certain man to utter it assertively is curiously pointless": it doesn't prove anything other than it is self defeating to make such assertions, p.12.

¹²⁵⁴ Apel, Karl- Otto. "The Problem of Philosophical Foundations in Light of a Transcendental Pragmatics of Language" in Baynes, Kenneth, Bohman, James and McCarthy, Thomas (eds.) *After Philosophy: End or Transformation* (London: The MIT Press, 1987), p. 275. Apel uses the term performative self-contradiction.

¹²⁵⁵ Habermas, Jürgen. "Discourse Ethics: Notes on a Program of Philosophical Justification" in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen, (Cambridge: MIT, 1990), p. 80.

¹²⁵⁶ Searle, John and Vanderveken, Daniel. *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.151.

¹²⁵⁷ *ibid.* Although the *explicit term* performative contradiction is usually attributed to German philosophers like Apel and Habermas, it has its origins in the Anglo-American philosophy of Austin and Searle. It is also important to stress that all these philosophers differ from each other in significant ways, and so, the *theory laden term* *performative contradiction* is by no means self-validating or without conflicting interpretations.

¹²⁵⁸ Derrida, Jacques. *Monolingualism of the Other: or, The Prosthesis of Origin* trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p.4.

¹²⁵⁹ *ibid.*

¹²⁶⁰ *ibid.*

¹²⁶¹ *ibid.*

¹²⁶² *ibid.* We've understated Derrida's ridicule here – he goes so far as to say that the "weapon" typically used against him by "certain German or Anglo-American theorists" is "puerile" and "childish." Consequently, any attempt to move the so-called "French philosopher" from "the department of rhetoric and literature" back into the "department of sophistry" is equally ridiculous (beyond reason and/or a joke), pp.3-5.

Problematic of the Performative

In the following, we critically evaluate the rational status of Derrida's approach to language. We do this in three related parts. In the first part, we provide a brief overview of the concept of the *performativity of language*, and trace the corresponding notion of performative contradiction back to the philosophical discourse of antiquity. In the second part, we turn to Derrida's conception of truth in order to move back towards the performative contradiction of Derrida's questioning. In the final part, we locate Derrida's performative contradiction within the linguisticality of understanding, and move back towards a conception of language as a universal horizon directing such contradictory way-making movements.

The notion of a *performative* can be explicitly traced back to Wittgenstein's treatment of language games.¹²⁶³ Specifically, where the whole of language is said to consist of the "actions in which it is woven."¹²⁶⁴ Wittgenstein goes on to provide examples of the "multiplicity of language games"¹²⁶⁵ and these actions include: asking questions, giving orders, telling jokes, stating facts, etc.¹²⁶⁶ Wittgenstein's therapeutic approach purports to be able to treat (carefully act toward or deal with) language via the notion of distinct constitutive rules identifying and distinguishing them as *actions*. Wittgenstein's actions invariably gave rise to more systematic approaches across philosophical investigations¹²⁶⁷ and conflicting interpretations regarding the rational status of the activities in question continue to multiply indefinitely.¹²⁶⁸ As Searle notes,

¹²⁶³ Harris, Daniel, and Unnsteinson, Elmar. "Wittgenstein's Influence on Austin's Philosophy of Language", *British Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol.26, No.2, 2018, pp.371-395. Wittgenstein's influence on Austin's approach to language almost goes without saying. As Harris and Unnsteinson recently observe, however, the issue of Wittgenstein's influence is simply taken as given and typically occurs without argument or question - and (ironically) is something that Austin and his many followers have frequently taken issue with. Harris and Unnsteinson, then, raise the question of Wittgenstein's influence on Austin, and *arguably* provide a needless argument.

¹²⁶⁴ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), No.7, p.5.

¹²⁶⁵ *ibid*, No. 23, p.11

¹²⁶⁶ *ibid*. Wittgenstein provides a list of at least 19 language games, and the implication is that his examples could be multiplied indefinitely.

¹²⁶⁷ We have already encountered Wittgenstein's concept of language game via Gadamer. As we shall see, it recurs in both Habermas and Lyotard in very distinct ways, and Derrida indirectly references Wittgenstein's investigations via Austin (who introduces the concepts of constative and performative into Anglo- American and European philosophy). Searle, in turn, uses Austin's inquiry into ordinary language as a springboard for speech act theory. Searle and Derrida famously came into conflict over their interpretation of Austin – while Habermas and Apel turn back towards Wittgenstein (amongst other philosophers) to reorient Searle's theory of speech acts.

¹²⁶⁸ Biletzki, Andrei. *(Over) Interpreting Wittgenstein* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003). Biletzki's overview goes so far as to claim that Wittgenstein has been *over* interpreted and attempts to reclaim a more truthful approach via a narrative with a distinct moral or truth-value. While her attempt to turn the many interpreters into distinct heroes and villains is highly questionable (to say the least), it remains a remarkable overview of Wittgenstein's place in both Anglo-American and European philosophy.

the overarching goal is to make the performativity of language an integral "part of the general theory of rationality."¹²⁶⁹ Distinct linguistic actions would therefore become subject to the same rational standards of coherence and consistency. Drozdowicz reminds us, however, that making a ruling about the rationality of our standards (rulings) has always been *the* question of reason, and so, general theories of rationality remain predicated upon the contradiction of an unanswerable strategy (inability to determine the rationality of their own rules).¹²⁷⁰ Witness Austin's famed distinction between the constative and the performative. While Austin's inquiry is an attempt to determine the *rationality of actions woven into language*, the strands begin to unravel as he pulls on the threads of his own argument. The proposed "antithesis"¹²⁷¹ between words making true or false statements about the world (constative) and words bringing about meaningful changes in that world (performative) "will scarcely survive"¹²⁷² rational scrutiny and invariably "breaks down...in its original form."¹²⁷³ Although Austin goes so far as to make the statement that "stating is performing an act"¹²⁷⁴, the question is whether it is possible to *restate* Austin's distinction without circularity and/or in a non-contradictory (truth evaluative) way.¹²⁷⁵ Austin is certainly aware of the problem of the rational status of the performativity of language – he anticipates the concept of performative contradiction by observing that "We cannot say the cat is on the mat, but I do not believe it is"¹²⁷⁶ or "I promise but do not intend."¹²⁷⁷ Such actions are inconsistent with the corresponding *relations of presuppositions* and similarly direct themselves towards a "self-stultifying procedure."¹²⁷⁸ The question of the rational status of

¹²⁶⁹ Searle, John. "An Interview" *Versus* No. 26-27, 1980, p.23. It is not insignificant that Searle generally uses an analysis of promising in *Speech Acts* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1969) to illustrate the rationality of communicative acts. Such an analysis "should carry over into other types of illocutionary acts", p.64 and so deliver on the promise of being part of a greater whole – the general theory of rationality.

¹²⁷⁰ Drozdowicz, Zbigniew. *Standards of Philosophical Rationality: Traditions and Modern Times* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2013), pp.8-9. Drozdowicz provides a historical overview of philosophical attempts to provide a general theory of rationality, beginning with Plato and culminating in Popper.

¹²⁷¹ Austin, J. L. "Performative-Constative" in Searle, John (ed.) *The Philosophy of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1972), p.20.

¹²⁷² Austin, J. L. "Performative Utterances", in *J. L. Austin: Philosophical Papers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1970), p.251.

¹²⁷³ *Ibid*, p.247.

¹²⁷⁴ Austin, J. L. *How To Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p.139

¹²⁷⁵ Searle's *speech act theory*, Apel's *transcendental pragmatics* and Habermas's *theory of communicative action* all attempt to privilege the performative via the question of the rationality of the constative (or truth evaluative language) in different ways.

¹²⁷⁶ Austin, J.L. *How To Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p.48.

¹²⁷⁷ *Ibid*.

¹²⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p.51. Austin prefers to talk about the lack of 'happiness' (or harmony) of performatives when making such statements, and goes on to speak about *infelicities*, which is "the doctrine of *the things that can be and go wrong* on occasion", p.166. An infelicitous use of language is said to occur when a performative fails to function as the action described and Austin divides infelicities into two kinds: misfires and abuses. A misfire is said to occur when "the procedure which we purport to invoke is disallowed or is botched", p.167 and an abuse is an "act professed but hollow", p.168.

performatives, then, seeks to determine the "direction of fit"¹²⁷⁹ between word and world. If we are to determine the performative status of linguistic acts, we would therefore need to question whether – or in what way – what is being stated corresponds to the presuppositions and/or consequences of meaningful actions. It is important to stress that performatives are actions, which, in the *very act of stating*, bring about the corresponding actions. Statements perform meaningful acts – not describe the performance of actions. Take, for example, the statement "I think." The very stating *constitutes* thinking here – the statement does not describe an antecedent state of thinking, but actively brings the thought into being (action) and/or (possible) question. The constative and the performative thereby remain directed to each other: it remains possible to meaningfully ask whether it is true or false that "I think" and it is performatively contradictory (meaningless) to say "I do not think." Consequently, it is important to provisionally distinguish between the truth evaluative content of statements and the act of meaningfully stating – if only to determine how the meaningful enters into the occurrence of the truthful. Austin introduces the notion of *illocutionary act*¹²⁸⁰ to clarify the performative status of statements, and such actions are generally divided into two parts – *illocutionary point* (the reason for acting), and *illocutionary force* (the intended effects of the action taken).¹²⁸¹ Underlying the performative status of statements, then, are those pragmatic considerations that include the context and purpose of the performance, their presuppositions, structure, implications and effects. Nonetheless, Austin recognized that the problem of the "criterion"¹²⁸² threatened to stultify the rationality of his overall procedure. It was "not possible to lay down even a list of all possible criteria"¹²⁸³ to distinguish statements from actions – the one and same language "can be used on different occasions, in both ways, performative and constative"¹²⁸⁴ and each may "infect"¹²⁸⁵ the other's condition of possibility.

The *implicit* concept of performative contradiction, however, can be traced back to paradoxes originally encountered in the philosophical discourse of antiquity. We continue to be taken aback, for example, by (variants of) the liar's paradox. Take the statement spoken by Epimenides the Cretan that "all Cretans are liars" or the written statement *this sentence is false*.¹²⁸⁶ The paradox emerges via the contradiction between the meaning of these sentences

¹²⁷⁹ Austin, J.L. "How to Talk: Some Simple Ways" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. 53, No.1, 1953, p.234.

¹²⁸⁰ Austin, J.L. *How To Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p.98.

¹²⁸¹ Searle, John and Vanderveken, Daniel. *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.13-15, pp.20-21.

¹²⁸² Austin, J.L. *How to do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p.67.

¹²⁸³ *ibid.*

¹²⁸⁴ *ibid.*

¹²⁸⁵ *ibid.*

¹²⁸⁶ Etchemendy, John and Barwise, Jon. *The Liar: An Essay on Truth and Circularity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.3.

and their corresponding truth-values. Is the Cretan telling the truth about lying? Alternatively, can this false sentence also be true? Given the contradiction between what is meaningfully said or done and the truth or falsity of the statements in question, our linguistic actions appear to come apart at the seams in which they remain interwoven. If we are to presuppose that the spoken statement – or written sentence – is stating the truth when claiming to be lying and/or false, then the speaker is also lying when speaking truthfully and/or writing a falsehood. We therefore can only presuppose that they are lying when claiming to be a liar, and so they also appear to be speaking the truth when lying and/or writing false sentences. The liar's paradox contradicts what Aristotle called *the law of thought*¹²⁸⁷ – namely, the principle of non-contradiction. This "most certain of all principles"¹²⁸⁸ presupposes that "contradictory statements cannot both be true in the same sense at the same time"¹²⁸⁹, and is thought to be so fundamental that it stabilizes the very ground on which reason moves. Specifically, it is "impossible to hold the same thing to be and not to be."¹²⁹⁰ 'To be or not to be' (say) a 'circle' or a 'hammer' can never really be a question if we are *to be rational*. The only difficulty, however, is that the principle of non-contradiction appears to be contradictory: it can be neither true or false via Aristotle's conception of reason as rational inference. As Cohen notes, if all knowledge is supposed to be demonstrative through reason, it should follow that "a knowable first principle would have to be a demonstrable first principle."¹²⁹¹ There appears to be a contradiction "between the knowability and the unprovability"¹²⁹² of this first principle, and *the law* of rational thought can't even establish its own jurisdiction. Aristotle's performative contradiction moves rational thought in two different directions simultaneously. On the one hand, a denial of the principle appears to be self-defeating (or false) because it presupposes the truth of the law to contradict (falsify) it. In order to say that the law of non-contradiction is false we must therefore also be saying that it is true – and so performing the contradiction in question. On the other hand, the law's unknowability and/or inability to rationally derive its own 'truth' or 'falsity' calls into question the very legal standing of the straightforward opposition between 'true' and 'false'. The question of its rational status remains inherently circular insofar as we cannot presuppose and/or say whether it is true or false without contradicting ourselves – i.e., performing a contradiction in terms (or thought). To either affirm or deny the principle of non-contradiction is therefore contradictory in that it presupposes the possibility of contradictory truth-values in the

¹²⁸⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* trans. W.D. Ross. (Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1924), IV 3 1005b

¹²⁸⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁸⁹ Tzamalikos, Panayiotis. "Aristotle As Critic" in *Anaxagoras, Origen, and Neoplatonism: The Legacy of Anaxagoras to Classical and Late Antiquity* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), p.230.

¹²⁹⁰ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* trans. W.D. Ross. (Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1924), 1006b.

¹²⁹¹ Cohen, Mark. "Aristotle on the Principle of Non-Contradiction" *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 16, No.3, 1986, p. 360.

¹²⁹² *Ibid.*

first place. While Aristotle concedes the circular nature of rationally grounding the principle of non-contradiction, he argues that contradicting it leads to an abyss anyway.¹²⁹³ The law of non-contradiction must be inarguably or unquestionably true: built into the very *activity of reason*, the rationality of reason enacts itself via the (performative) contradiction in question.

Derrida On The Abysmal Truth

We now turn to the role "truth's abyss as non-truth"¹²⁹⁴ plays within Derrida's questioning of "the game of the world."¹²⁹⁵ Specifically, how can Derrida approach *the question* of 'truth' when the 'truth' remains *abysmal* (so deep as to be unfathomable and/or awful). Given that Derrida's interpretations problematize a hierarchical logic of opposition – oppositional values that include 'truth' and 'falsity', 'speech' and 'writing', 'good' and 'bad', etc. – can deconstruction be understood to be either 'true' or 'false'? Supposing that it is possible to assign a truth-value to Derrida's questioning – i.e., argue that it is 'true' as opposed to 'false' – in what way is it meaningful to privilege one value over the other within the context of his own questioning? While Derrida's questioning insists on the *reversal* and *displacement* of the logic in question, the question remains: why should we value (positively determine the relative worth or position) of such a contradictory movement anyway? Derrida's own interpretation(s) of the delimitation of being acknowledges that there is no escaping the circle in question.

We have no language – no syntax and no lexicon – which is alien to this history; we cannot utter a single deconstructive proposition which has already slipped into the form, the logic and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest.¹²⁹⁶

Nonetheless, Derrida claims a privileged position for deconstructive questioning: the circle's own movements always already displace the logic "inscribed in a system"¹²⁹⁷ in which truth can only act as a "function and a locus."¹²⁹⁸

¹²⁹³ 1008b. Aristotle argues that while the attempt to prove this most certain of all principles results in an infinite regress, we need to think it's true regardless – otherwise we'd fall into wells or off cliffs (our beliefs require firm ground otherwise it would not be possible to orient our beliefs and actions).

¹²⁹⁴ Derrida, Jacques. *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles* trans. Barbara Harlow, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p.119.

¹²⁹⁵ Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkin Press, 1997), p.50.

¹²⁹⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Structure, Sign and Play in the Human Sciences" in *Writing and Difference* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p.280.

¹²⁹⁷ Derrida, Jacques. "Ellipsis" in *Writing and Difference* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp.295-6.

¹²⁹⁸ Ibid. Specifically, "once the circle turns...(and)...is repeated, its identification with itself gathers an imperceptible difference which permits us efficaciously, rigorously, that is, discretely to exit from closure...The return, at this point, does not retake possession of something. It does not

Derrida's questioning, however, continues to be *in* question. The problem of its truth-value – of whether it's possible to *ground* deconstructive thought in logic and/or determine whether the related possibility of it *being true* is more valuable (has rational force or validity) *over* the possibility of it *being false* – remains questionable *in re-turn*. Wood expresses the performative contradiction in the following way.

The paradox lies in the status of what he writes, and the fact that he too is writing. If what Derrida writes is true, it would follow that we ought to read him and other philosophers in a new way. But if what he says is true in the ordinary philosophical sense of truth (which he describes as metaphysical) then in fact it cannot be true, for there would then be at least one species of writing – namely Derrida's type of metaphilosophy – which has escaped the universal condition of writing of never just being able to deliver the truth for consumption. But if we drop the claim to truth, then how and why should we believe Derrida's claims about language as writing? Derrida has the problem of saying what he means without meaning what he says.¹²⁹⁹

The paradox returns, us, then, to the question of the performativity of deconstructive questioning. If what Derrida says is true about the delimitation of being, Derrida can never do justice to – meaningfully express, justify and/or differentiate – his questioning. The paradoxical nature of Derrida's questioning gives rise to what Priest calls the "inexpressibility of difference."¹³⁰⁰ Priest recognizes that such a paradox is rationally forced on Derrida "by the internal logic of his position."¹³⁰¹ Derrida, of course, tries to be consistent about expressing (performing) an inexpressible: although "such a move might be thought absurd or foolish, it is at least heroic."¹³⁰² While it is arguably impossible to have a stable or *determinate sense of difference* as the *determination of meaning*, Derrida nonetheless purports to be able to "express (refer to) something...that cannot be expressed."¹³⁰³ Given that difference's rational status remains questionable, the question is whether we should ever have "reason to believe"¹³⁰⁴ that such a seemingly arbitrary or nonsensical word can ever "latch onto anything non-linguistic."¹³⁰⁵ Since difference can never refer to anything that can be meaningfully determined – direct

reappropriate the origin...the inscription of the origin is doubtless its Being-as-writing, but it is also its Being as inscribed in a system in which it is only a function and a locus."

¹²⁹⁹ Wood, David. "Derrida and the Paradoxes of Reflection" in Lawlor, Len and Direk, Zeynep (eds.) *Derrida: Critical Assessments* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.184.

¹³⁰⁰ Priest, Graham. "Derrida and Self Reference" *Australian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 72, 1994, p.108.

¹³⁰¹ Ibid.

¹³⁰² Ibid.

¹³⁰³ Priest, Graham. *Beyond the Limits of Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.219

¹³⁰⁴ Priest, Graham. "What Is Philosophy?" *Philosophy*, Vol. 81, No. 316, 2006, p. 195.

¹³⁰⁵ Ibid, p.200.

thought towards "an appropriate notion of truth to which assertion must answer"¹³⁰⁶ – Derrida invariably crosses the border of intelligibility and has arguably "agued himself out of the game."¹³⁰⁷

Derrida argues that truth emerges from – and falls back into – the abyss insofar as it can be neither found nor founded.¹³⁰⁸ Derrida purports to question the "limits of truth"¹³⁰⁹, and typically asks whether it is possible to "cross the borders of truth"¹³¹⁰ and allow reason to "be carried beyond the limits of truth."¹³¹¹ Derrida attempts to navigate his way around the circle "since truth would be a certain relation to what terminates or determines it."¹³¹² It is worth reminding ourselves, then, of the widespread *misconception* that Derrida argues against (the concepts of) reason and truth. Madison alleges, for example, that "deconstruction undermines traditional notions of truth, reality and knowledge, leaving nothing in their place (nihilism)"¹³¹³ and so rejects "truth altogether."¹³¹⁴ Searle claims that Derrida "turns the world upside down"¹³¹⁵ when turning reason on its head. Derrida does "not attempt to prove or refute, to establish or confirm, and he is certainly not seeking the truth"¹³¹⁶ – deconstruction is simply an arbitrary "game anyone can play."¹³¹⁷ Blackburn's guide to the "crisis of truth"¹³¹⁸ and the "limits of rational thought"¹³¹⁹ concurs that the "great postmodernist slogan made famous by Derrida ('there is nothing outside the text')"¹³²⁰ rejects truth and reference in favour of linguistic idealism and/or limitless interpretive license.¹³²¹ Many other philosophers, of course, publicly complained that

¹³⁰⁶ *ibid.*

¹³⁰⁷ *ibid.*

¹³⁰⁸ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.168. To reiterate: The "disappearance of truth as presence, the withdrawal of the present origin of presence, is the condition of all (manifestation of) truth. Nontruth is the truth. Nonpresence is presence. Differance, the disappearance of any originary presence, is *at once* the condition of possibility *and* the condition of impossibility of truth."

¹³⁰⁹ Derrida, Jacques. *Aporias* trans. Thomas Dutoit, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p.1.

¹³¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹³¹¹ *ibid.*

¹³¹² *ibid.* pp.1-2.

¹³¹³ Madison Brent Gary. *The Politics of Postmodernity: Essays in Applied Hermeneutics* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), p.26.

¹³¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹³¹⁵ Searle, John. "The World Turned Upside Down" *New York Review of Books*, Volume 30, Number 16, 1983, pp.74-79.

¹³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹³¹⁸ Blackburn, Simon. *Truth: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. xvi.

¹³¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.79.

¹³²⁰ *ibid.*, p.170.

¹³²¹ Blackburn, Simon, "Derrida May Deserve Some Credit for Trying, But Less for Succeeding" *Times Higher Education*, Nov 12, 2004. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/derrida-may-deserve-some-credit-for-trying-but-less-for-succeeding/192340.article>. Although Blackburn was not present at Cambridge during the infamous 'affair', he makes a point of saying (after Derrida's

Derrida's writing merely tested the limits of their patience and made a mockery of an entire profession. This so-called philosopher was allegedly guilty of malpractice because of Derrida's "semi-intelligible attacks upon the values of reason, truth and scholarship."¹³²² Derrida reiterates,¹³²³ however, that he has been taken out of context. Specifically, "the value of truth (and all those values associated with it) is never contested or destroyed in my writings, but only reinscribed in more powerful, larger, more stratified contexts."¹³²⁴ Further, "the phrase which for some has become a sort of slogan, in general so badly understood, of deconstruction ("there is nothing outside the text") means nothing else: there is nothing outside context."¹³²⁵ It is "totally false to suggest that deconstruction is a suspension of reference"¹³²⁶ since "differance is a reference and vice versa."¹³²⁷ Context itself refers to "all possible referents"¹³²⁸ – all (con)texts – and "thus to an incessant movement of recontextualization."¹³²⁹ To reiterate Derrida's position in *no uncertain terms*: to claim that there is nothing outside the text "does not mean that all referents are suspended, denied, or enclosed in a book... but it does mean that every referent, all reality, has the structure of a differential trace, and that one cannot refer to this 'real' except in an interpretive experience."¹³³⁰ It "goes without saying that in no case is it a question of a discourse against truth...we must have truth."¹³³¹ Derrida's "commitment to the truth"¹³³² involves an "engagement which calls for performative gestures...if only to question the possibility of the truth."¹³³³ Consequently, Derrida's questioning remains "motivated by (a)

death) that Derrida was "a poor candidate for an honorary doctorate" and "I relished the irony that he was eventually given this degree in the same ceremony as Geoffrey Elton, praised for his passionate defence of truth and objectivity in history." Blackburn also goes on to mock the 'bogey' of deconstruction, the prevalence of Derrida acolytes in the humanities and their attempt to "elbow out decent philosophy." Blackburn counters that "I think it is a political and social achievement to enable truth to prevail. The first thing to establish is that it is possible, the second to establish that it matters, and there is more to be done after that. I don't think we should honour an attitude that makes those tasks harder than they already are."

¹³²² Smith, Barry, et al. "Letter to London Times" *Cambridge Review*, 113, October 1992, pp.138-139.

¹³²³ Derrida, Jacques. "Afterword: Toward An Ethic of Discussion" in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.137. Specifically, "Once again (and this probably makes a thousand times I have had to repeat this, but when will it finally be heard, and why this resistance?)"

¹³²⁴ *ibid*, p.146.

¹³²⁵ *ibid*, p.136.

¹³²⁶ Kearney, Richard. *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p.172.

¹³²⁷ Derrida, Jacques. "Afterword: Toward An Ethic of Discussion" in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.137.

¹³²⁸ *ibid*, p.148.

¹³²⁹ *ibid*, p.136.

¹³³⁰ *ibid*.

¹³³¹ Derrida, Jacques. *Positions* trans. Alan Bass (London: Athlone Press, 1981), p.105.

¹³³² Derrida, Jacques. "Derrida's Response to Moore" in Glendinning, Simon (ed.) *Arguing With Derrida* (London: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), p.84

¹³³³ *ibid*.

concern with reason and truth" but "there comes a moment at which this interrogation of truth is no longer subject to the authority of truth."¹³³⁴

While it is true that Derrida is attempting to speak in a "straightforward way as possible,"¹³³⁵ the reality is that he is merely navigating the circle of his own understanding and *referring* to something *other than* the 'truth' in question.¹³³⁶ Reality conceived as differential trace is primarily intelligible within the context of the very inquiries (presuppositions, delimitations) in question and remains at odds with *ontological realism*. As Chalmers notes, ontological realism is committed to the belief that "every paradigmatic ontological existence assertion has an objective and determinate truth-value"¹³³⁷ and the question of an assertion's truth-values "does not depend on a context of assessment."¹³³⁸ The enabling presupposition is that there exists an independent or "objective structure to reality"¹³³⁹ transcending and/or acting upon our statements – and it is that context-transcending realm that we refer to (perform, enact) via competing truth-claims. The performative contradiction is that Derrida's disavowal of 'theoretical conceptions' or 'rational procedures' displaces the role of the historicity of understanding in his own questioning. Derrida's *conception of reality* remains *theory laden* in that such observations would not be possible (thought meaningful or true) without being ontologically committed to (say) Heidegger's concept of *ontological difference* or Saussure's notion of language as *differential elements* in *other (or different) ways*.¹³⁴⁰ Derrida's interpretations of interpretations

¹³³⁴ Flotzer, Florian. *Conversations with French Philosophers* (New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1995), p.72-73.

¹³³⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "Afterword: Toward An Ethic of Discussion" in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.113.

¹³³⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Differance" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.6. Derrida claims to somehow know, for example, that differance "exceeds the order of truth at a certain precise point, but without dissimulating itself as something, as a mysterious being."¹³³⁶ Further, differance "makes possible the presentation of the being-present, it is never presented as such. It is never offered to the present. Or to anyone."¹³³⁶

¹³³⁷ Chalmers, David, "Ontological Anti-Realism" in Chalmers, David, Manley, David and Wasserman, Ryan (eds.) *Metametaphysics: New Essays on The Foundations of Ontology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), p.92.

¹³³⁸ *ibid.*

¹³³⁹ Sider, Theodore, "Ontological Realism" in Chalmers, David, Manley, David and Wasserman, Ryan (eds.) *Metametaphysics: New Essays on The Foundations of Ontology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), p.16.

¹³⁴⁰ We don't mean to imply that Derrida conceals the nature or extent of his philosophical debt to Heidegger or Saussure – such an implication couldn't be further from the truth and can be readily observed via the 'parasitic' nature of his questioning. We are simply acknowledging the role that Heidegger's concept of *ontological difference* and Saussure's notion of language as *differential elements* actively play in his conception of reality and truth. Nonetheless, part of the reason Derrida is frequently misunderstood is that competing philosophers are speaking at cross-purposes or moving within distinct intentional horizons (philosophical traditions or contexts). We don't mean to reproduce the artificial divide between 'continental' and 'analytic' philosophy, and have already indicated that the infamous Cambridge Affair was inaugurated by a philosopher working within the so-called 'continental tradition'. The truth, of course, is that philosophically distinct traditions or

thereby run counter to the belief in a reality *ontologically prior to* – or has *ontological priority over* – our conception of it. Specifically, truth is interpreted as a 'value' that is context-bound or determined – *where* the beings in question are merely inscribed as a function or locus. Derrida understands truth as a *transitive relation* in that truth-values remain in a constant state of transition or flux – truth is valuable insofar as it remains on *the way* and *variable*. In order to make sense of Derrida's insistence that 'truth' is never contested or destroyed – but merely reinscribed in different ways across contexts of interpretation – we must therefore first understand that Derrida is playing a *different language game*. Derrida calls this activity, of course, the game of the world, and it plays by its own rules. We are therefore obliged to ask: if the value of truth remains necessary and questionable, how can it be reinscribed and/or recontextualized? Put another way: what can be the value of truth if it is always in transit or moving through meaningful contexts that cannot be decided (known, approached) either way?

It is frequently argued that it is *self-defeating to argue with* Derrida, and such a claim recurs across increasingly stratified and expanding contexts of interpretation.¹³⁴¹ The reason consistently given for the truth of such a proposition is that Derrida does not appear to play the language game of argumentation. A sympathetic interpreter will readily concede that Derrida's "philosophical style is often deeply idiosyncratic and challenges formal or argumentative norms in a way that can...seem almost wilfully perverse."¹³⁴² Searle is unsympathetic and complains that Derrida refuses to enter into rational discussions in which reasons can be transparently advanced for or against the truth of a given proposition.¹³⁴³ Gadamer professes to admire

movements invariably turn into highly stratified contexts of interpretation – i.e., like-minded philosophers may argue amongst themselves or splinter off into different schools of thought. We are merely acknowledging that frequent misunderstandings appear to stem from a lack of familiarity with (or regard for) Derrida's historical relationship to phenomenology, structuralism, hermeneutics et al.¹³⁴¹ Compare, for example, Foucault's and Rorty's view of Derrida's interpretations of interpretations. We have already encountered Foucault's characterization (via Searle) that there was no point in arguing with someone who plays the game of *obscurantisme terroriste* (terrorism of obscurantism). Since Derrida's writings are allegedly so obscure, it was not possible to understand him – and that Derrida would use the interpreter's inability to correctly follow him against them. Rorty claims in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), however, that Derrida ultimately turns into a "playful" writer toying with words, arguments and/or readers – and it would be pointless to take him (or ourselves) seriously. Derrida is said to be primarily interested in ironically "undercutting" philosophical pretensions – such as the public search for truth through argumentation and theorization – via private jokes and fantasies. The latter Derrida prefers to play with his readers, "giving free rein to trains of associations they produce. There is no moral to these fantasies, nor any public (pedagogic or political) use to be made of them", p.125.

¹³⁴² Bradley, Arthur. *Derrida's Of Grammatology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p.3. Bradley is more than just a sympathetic interpreter here – he is attempting to translate Derrida's unconventional use of language into more conventional linguistic forms.

¹³⁴³ Searle, John. "The World Turned Upside Down" *New York Review of Books*, Volume 30, Number 16, 1983. Searle claims that Derrida's wilfully perverse and obscure language reveals him to be "the kind of philosopher who gives bullshit a bad name", p.79.

Derrida's "ingenious play"¹³⁴⁴ with language, but proposes that Derrida's clever word play "in truth"¹³⁴⁵ turns into "nothing more"¹³⁴⁶ than a mere "game."¹³⁴⁷ Habermas argues that since Derrida collapses the genre distinction between philosophy (argumentation) and literature (fiction), he reduces standards of rationality to rhetorical devices (styles of writing).¹³⁴⁸ Bennington counters, however, that Derrida "has an argument with argument"¹³⁴⁹ and seeks to undermine rational presentations through more persuasive language. Specifically, Derrida argues against philosophical arguments by attempting to move them away from their "traditional telos"¹³⁵⁰ (the search for truth via logic) back into the world of *make-believe* (the pretending to be true by acting like every writer labouring under meaningful illusions and/or allusions).¹³⁵¹

Displacing the Space of Reasons – truth, justice and the deconstructive way.

We may now turn to the way Derrida *argues with* Plato. We do this to determine the limits of Derrida's 'argument with argument', and correspondingly, approach the 'border of truth in relation to what terminates or determines it'. Derrida purports to be able to enact the question of being *through* the being of questioning, and Derrida does this by calling (back) into question the legal justification of the circle in which meaningful beings move in. The concept of justice – insofar as 'justice' can be meaningfully conceived – occupies a *privileged space* in Derrida's question in that it plays an active role in questioning the legality of any given decision. As Derrida claims, "justice is what gives us the impulse, the drive, or the movement to improve the law,"¹³⁵²

¹³⁴⁴ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Dialogues in Capri" in Derrida, Jacques and Vattimo, Gianni (eds.) *Religion* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p.210. While Gadamer is speaking about Derrida's approach to a specific word here – the context or "point of reference" is Derrida's reinscription of Kant's *chora* – Gadamer doubts that an "etymology can tell us something important if what is uncovered does not somehow continue to speak to us in the living language of today. This is the case even if the etymology is correct, whatever correct may mean in this context", p. 201.

¹³⁴⁵ Ibid, p.210.

¹³⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁴⁸ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), pp.185-187.

¹³⁴⁹ Bennington, Geoffrey. "For The Sake Of Argument (Up to a Point)" in Glendinning, Simon (ed.) *Arguing With Derrida* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), p.47

¹³⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹³⁵¹ Waghorn, Nicholas. *Nothingness and the Meaning of Life: Philosophical Approaches to Ultimate Meaning Through Nothing and Reflexivity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p.125. Waghorn therefore writes that when we "turn to a critical assessment of Derrida...we cannot really argue with Derrida since all writers "cannot fundamentally disagree with" the presupposition of difference in the first place. If we "want to argue with Derrida, we need to argue with him without arguing with him...if difference is the structure of thought, we need to argue without argument."

¹³⁵² Derrida, Jacques. "The Villanova Roundtable: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida" Caputo, John (ed.) *Deconstruction in a Nutshell* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), p.16.

and so directs rational thought to judge "the true truth or the truth of the truth."¹³⁵³ In passing through an undecidable, any claim to truth will nonetheless circle back upon itself by being called back into being and/or question. Specifically, it is where the law remains on trial and "deconstructs from the inside every assurance of presence, and thus every criteriology that would assure us of the justice of the decision, in truth the very event of a decision."¹³⁵⁴ Irrespective of the question or approach, it is 'justice' which gives deconstruction its directives – and deconstruction can only remain *true to itself* – "be consistent with itself"¹³⁵⁵ – when questioning the legality of the decision making such questioning possible (truthful, just). While the lasting element of Derrida's thinking might be *the way*, it is the question of justice that continually gives him *pause for thought* (i.e., a reason for being) and renewed impetus. The concepts of law and justice presuppose one another, and it is the question of their presuppositional relation that remains open to questioning. The question, then, is: how can such a directive give Derrida's questioning pause for thought *and* forward movement?

Derrida's enactments occur by way of adopting contextual strategies thought relevant or adequate to such questioning. A given context permits him to question (select) the beings in question by directing his thinking towards what cannot be thought (selected) there. By placing thought at its limit, Derrida attempts to direct questioning towards an opening at the borders of 'truth'. Derrida's treatment of the pharmakon of writing thereby does two different things simultaneously. Specifically, Derrida claims to *move with* Plato's text in order to motion *against* it. Derrida's general argument is that it is always already arguing with itself, and such a back and forth movement occurs in relation to other (con)texts: the conceptual order invariably overturns and displaces its reasoning by being called (back) into question. Derrida claims to be able to navigate the "encirclement of the circle"¹³⁵⁶ by directing rational thought towards the "abyss"¹³⁵⁷ in which it is found moving: it is the circle itself which gives way to the loss of reason's rational ground. Derrida claims to be able to find – establish, reach, – such a falling away on the basis of the text's own 'secret argumentations' and 'hidden mediations' (points of reference and/or departures).¹³⁵⁸ Derrida plays the game of argumentation to show language's hidden

¹³⁵³ Derrida, Jacques. *The Truth in Painting* trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987), p.5. While it's true that Derrida is talking about the possibility of 'truth in painting' here, he remains concerned about what 'truth' might mean or be.

¹³⁵⁴ Derrida, Jacques. "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'" in Cornell, Drucilla, Rosenfeld, Michel and Carlson, David (eds.) *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp.25-26.

¹³⁵⁵ Ibid, p.8.

¹³⁵⁶ Derrida, Jacques. *The Truth in Painting* trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987), p.33.

¹³⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁵⁸ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.63. Derrida claims to be able to perceive that "a text is not a text unless it

rules and movements, and he proposes to be able to do this via *the ways* Plato's text secretly argues with the contexts in question. Derrida thereby seeks to displace what Sellars calls the logical space of reasons,¹³⁵⁹ and he does this by questioning the very logic of the "spacing and articulation"¹³⁶⁰ of reason. According to Derrida's reasoning, "language is no longer a region, it has won the totality of space, its reign...has a sort of extension without limits."¹³⁶¹ Derrida argues, of course, that Plato's 'text' attempts to delimit – create and/or occupy – a conceptual space through a logic of exclusion. Derrida questions the way Plato *does* this, and claims that Plato's thought remains predicated upon a hierarchy of axiological oppositions that overturns itself via a "symptomatic form of the return of the repressed."¹³⁶² Derrida argues with Plato, then, by purporting to follow Plato's lead and sharing in the metaphysical presuppositions of Plato's arguments. Derrida's goal is not so much to present reasons for or against the truth of Plato's position – it is to show the way Plato's text 'argues with' itself and cannot stand its ground.¹³⁶³ Derrida approaches the logic of Plato's statements regarding the pharmakon of writing in a performative sense, and so presupposes that its stated truth-value is already inscribed in a questionable way. As Derrida observes, metaphor "becomes the logic of contamination and the

hides...the law of its composition and the rules of its game. A text remains, moreover, forever imperceptible. Its law and its rules are not, however, harboured in the inaccessibility of a secret; it is simply that they can never be booked, in the present, into anything that could rigorously be called a perception."

¹³⁵⁹ Sellars, Wilfrid. *In the Space of Reasons* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007). We have already encountered Sellars's oft-cited term during the course of our Gadamer discussion, and (unlike Sellars) located this space within the historicity of understanding. As the editor's introduction notes, Sellars writing typically occurs in a "diagnostic way" (as opposed to "knockdown arguments") p.xi and his celebrated term is an attempt to *naturally* "represent the world so as to make possible objective knowledge of it", p. x. Although *In the Space of Reasons* does not contain the text that specifically uses this phrase (its naturalistic conception of the conceptual order is to be explicitly found in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*), the concept has nonetheless taken on a life of its own and recurs in other philosophical contexts. See, for example, Brandom, Richard, "Knowledge and the Social Articulation of the Space of Reasons" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. LV, No.4, 1995, pp. 895-906, McDowell, John, *Mind and World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.82 and Church, Jennifer, "Locating the Space of Reasons" *Teorema*, Vol. 25, No.1, 2006, pp. 85-96. The question, then, is how to best conceive (locate) the conceptual 'space of reasons' – and naturally this remains an open question or contested terrain.

¹³⁶⁰ Derrida, Jacques. "The Double Session" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.222.

¹³⁶¹ Derrida, Jacques. *Taste of the Secret* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), p.80.

¹³⁶² Derrida, Jacques. "Freud and the Scene of Writing" in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,) p.197. Although Derrida might be talking about Freud here, he argues that the "metaphor of writing which haunts European discourse, and the systematic contradictions of the ontotheological exclusion of the trace. The repression of the writing as the repression of that which threatens presence and the mastering of absence."

¹³⁶³ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p.135. According to Derrida, Plato attempts to justify a meaningful distinction between "knowledge as memory and non-knowledge remembrance, between two forms and two moments of repetition: a repetition of truth (*alitheia*) which presents and exposes the *eidos*; and a repetition of death and oblivion (*lithe*) which veils and skews because it does not present the *eidos* but re-presents a presentation, repeats a repetition.

contamination of logic"¹³⁶⁴ and it is remarkable that "the so-called living discourse should suddenly be described by a "metaphor" borrowed from the order of the very thing one is trying to exclude from it, the order of its simulacrum."¹³⁶⁵ Derrida deconstructs the space of reasons by relocating the logic in question, and in so doing, purports to be able to partially share *secret knowledge*. If the logical space of reasons turns on the way reason can be rationally motivated and/or justified – stands in relation to other reasons – Derrida argues that Plato's logic displaces the very conceptual terrain on which reason moves and directs itself. Consequently, Plato's text cannot rise to a "state of knowing"¹³⁶⁶ since it cannot put itself in the position of "justifying and being able to justify."¹³⁶⁷ Plato cannot locate the prescribed space because his own reasoning displaces the way rational thought is supposed to respond to the given reasons and applications coherently. Plato's "pharmaceutical operation"¹³⁶⁸ cannot even be at home in its "most secure dwelling place"¹³⁶⁹ since the prescribed standard of correctness also turns out to be inappropriate and/or true in unintended ways. The context acts on Plato's text any-way – by opening up the "pharmaceutical enclosure"¹³⁷⁰ to unintended operations and effects. Consequently, Derrida displaces the space of reasons by calling "into question...the presence of the fulfilled and realized intentionality adequate to itself and its contents."¹³⁷¹ Given that the meaning of the pharmakon can never be a "being that is somewhere present"¹³⁷² it is said to constitute the medium in which opposites are opposed and differentiated. The pharmakon "would be a *substance*... if we didn't have eventually to come to recognize it as antistubstance itself: that which resists any philosopheme, indefinitely exceeding its bounds as nonidentity, nonessence, nonsubstance; granting philosophy by that very fact the inexhaustible adversity of what funds it and the infinite absence of what founds it." ¹³⁷³ The pharmakon acts according to

¹³⁶⁴ *ibid*, p.149

¹³⁶⁵ *ibid*.

¹³⁶⁶ Sellars, Wilfrid. *Empiricism and the Philosophy of the Mind* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p.76. We are obviously quoting Sellars completely out of context here.

¹³⁶⁷ *ibid*. While Sellars is acutely aware that his own account of the structure of knowledge threatens to be circular – where does this space begin and when does it ever end? – Sellars attempt to circumvent the problem of circularity by deciding the question of its logical outcome. Specifically, "above all, the picture" – i.e., of knowledge resting on a firm foundation – is "misleading because of its static character. One seems forced to choose between the picture of an elephant which rests on a tortoise (What supports the tortoise?) and the picture of a great Hegelian serpent of knowledge with its tail in its mouth (Where does it begin?). Neither will do. For empirical knowledge, like its sophisticated extension, science, is rational, not because it has a *foundation* but because it is a self-correcting enterprise which can put *any* claim in jeopardy, though not *all* at once", p. 78.

¹³⁶⁸ *ibid*, p.128.

¹³⁶⁹ *ibid*, p.121.

¹³⁷⁰ *ibid*, p.143.

¹³⁷¹ Derrida, Jacques. *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.64.

¹³⁷² Derrida, Jacques. "Differance" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.11.

¹³⁷³ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), p. 70.

its own logic, and so actively deconstructs any given constituted (conceived, conceivable) space of reasons. Derrida does not claim to deconstruct Plato's reasoning personally – the 'text' deconstructs for its own reasons. Such activity neither begins or ends in human understanding, and should not be understood as an "act or operation."¹³⁷⁴ Derrida interprets deconstruction as an "event that does not await the deliberation, consciousness or organisation of a (thinking) subject."¹³⁷⁵ Deconstruction might find "its privileged site – or rather, its privileged instability"¹³⁷⁶ within an act of questioning, but Derrida argues as if deconstruction happens of its own accord *across contexts of interpretation* and/or irrespective of whether texts are consciously called into question. Such an approach obviously begs the questions: how can Derrida know that such events occur without thinking about them? That is to say, in what ways does deconstruction defer to thought in order to determine its hidden mediations and secret argumentations? Correspondingly: what is the ontological status of a 'context', and how can it relate to Derrida's contextual strategies? Although Derrida maintains that his interpretations are conditioned by what happens within a context, he also talks of an "unconditionality"¹³⁷⁷ determining "the injunction that prescribes deconstruction"¹³⁷⁸ across contexts. If there is no-thing outside of context, we are always already faced with the question of "the determination of context in general"¹³⁷⁹ and an injunction that seemingly "transcends this or that determination of a given context."¹³⁸⁰ Deconstruction therefore finds itself immediately caught between a context that *transcends* thought and one that enables thinking *across* contexts. It is here that the concept of justice arguably makes its entry and/or calls deconstruction into being. Derrida argues, of course, that *deconstruction is justice*, and he has joined (rationally forced) these two terms together via the official sanctioning of an *is*. Nonetheless, Derrida has also maintained that the search for truth, justice and the deconstructive way consists in "putting out of joint the authority of the is."¹³⁸¹ The possibility of justice is thought to exist "outside or beyond"¹³⁸² the legality of any decision and deconstruction remains legally bound to "maintain an interrogation of the origins, ground and limits of our conceptual, theoretical or normative apparatus surrounding

¹³⁷⁴ Derrida, Jacques. "Letter to a Japanese Friend" in Wood, David and Bernasconi, Robert (eds.) *Derrida and Differance* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.4.

¹³⁷⁵ *ibid.*

¹³⁷⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'" in Cornell, Drucilla, Rosenfeld, Michel and Carlson, David (eds.) *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), p.21.

¹³⁷⁷ Derrida, Jacques. *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.152.

¹³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸¹ Derrida, Jacques. "The Time Is Out Of Joint" in Haverkamp, Anselm (ed.) *Deconstruction is/in America*, (New York: New York University Press, 1995), p.25

¹³⁸² Derrida, Jacques. "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'" in Cornell, Drucilla, Rosenfeld, Michel and Carlson, David (eds.) *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), p.14.

justice."¹³⁸³ So although Derrida's strategies might be context or question specific, the possibility of 'justice' transcends the determination of any contextualization or questioning – i.e., horizon of thought adequate to its own thinking (selection, specification, etc.).

Note the way Derrida attempts to do justice to the *meaning* of the pharmakon via its (possible) *effects*, and such *rational treatment* – remedying of a condition – renders truth a mere effect of the texts in question. The concept of truth – insofar as it can be meaningful conceived and/or questioned – *becomes* inscribed within contexts of interpretation, and these inscriptions can only be meaningfully determined as an effect of questionable (unstable, undecidable) contexts. The question of whether we can ever do justice to the reality of the pharmakon becomes similarly context-bound and/or determined. Consequently, the way concepts stand in relation to objects occurs via a *referral* (transfer to another rational space for further diagnosis and/or possible remedy). Undecidable contexts are displaced insofar as they can be directed (sent) for further treatment or decision-making in equally questionable contexts of interpretation. The state of being true or false depends on the question of the relative effectiveness – "performative force"¹³⁸⁴ – of the very statements in question. Derrida's questioning attempts to do justice to the problem of the determination of context by ensuring that the constative remains directed by the "overflowing of the performative."¹³⁸⁵ By going with the flow, Derrida's questioning ascribes 'agency' to language and asks us to move along with its prevailing forces and/or over-rulings. Derrida argues *as if* language's movements are self-directed or motivated: it is 'secretive' or 'argumentative' and acts on its own behalf by enforcing (following) its own rules. The only way we can do justice to the beings in question is accepting the reality of the situation and follow language's own reasons for disagreeing with the conceptual ordering. While Derrida obviously does not intend this to be taken literally, there is no escaping the fact that Derrida's descriptions call on intentionalist language. He appeals towards a higher court (the legal authority of language) that is allegedly *more justified* in deciding on an original decision's reasoning: language therefore acts as if it were making its own pronouncements and/or remains intent on overturning our own decisions. Derrida's concept of the *meaning* of the pharmakon displaces the logical space of reasons by placing the burden of proof on the pharmakon's possible *effects* in an open-ended linguistic chain. The performative contradiction is that Derrida's questioning can only be thus effective (possible, meaningful) by *fulfilling* (presenting, realizing) *an* intentionality adequate to itself and/or its contents. Specifically, Derrida can only call into question the presence of a fulfilled and realized intentionality by actively calling on the very intentionality of the beings in question. Although Derrida argues that deconstruction does not

¹³⁸³ Ibid, p.20.

¹³⁸⁴ Ibid, p.14.

¹³⁸⁵ Ibid, p.27.

originate in or tend towards intentionality, the very 'object' of Derrida's inquiry involves an act – selection, specification – of conceptual content to determine the truth-value of given intentional horizons. In 'arguing with' Plato's 'text', *Derrida's intentions* thereby take *historical precedence* – precede it in time, override it by way of order of importance or value – and so *makes the text perform* according to his own statements. Derrida must first ascribe *substantive meaning* to the pharmakon of writing – an essential 'non-being' in the truthful form of the 'hidden law of composition' or 'rules of the (language) game that displace the game' – to argue that the pharmakon is an *antisubstance*. Derrida thereby *downplays* the identity of the meaning of *pharmaceutical substance* – a drug's essential attributes or durable 'being' existing prior to its possible effects and conceptually distinct from other substances or meaningful beings such as (say) circles or hammers – in favour of a causal chain only as strong as its weakest link. By conceiving the logical space of reasons in such a selective way, Derrida is able to rule over (regulate) the pharmakon's unstable movements – and the pharmakon effectively becomes a *controlled substance* in his own writing. Harland calls such a conceptual sleight of hand the "movement of categorical implication"¹³⁸⁶, and it follows the logic of "creating an abstracting space or vacuum around a word."¹³⁸⁷ By dividing concepts into opposing – but porous – boundaries, an "indeterminate whole...separates out into distinct categories"¹³⁸⁸ that may nonetheless pour – overflow – *through* each conceivable part. Derrida *performs* a given context by transforming the contexts of its possible meaning and/or occurrences. The pharmakon's identity of opposites is therefore made possible via the way Derrida *identifies and moves between* the categories of thought in question.

To bring the opposition to the fore, the substances have to be displaced in favour of their effects—and especially the principles of their effects. From 'drug which has a remedial effect', we need to draw off the general principle of Remedy or remedial-ness; from 'drug which has a poisonous effect', we need to draw off the general principle of poisonousness. But of course poisonousness is no longer limited to drugs as such—snakes too can be said to possess poisonousness. And the principle of remedial-ness can be invoked for massage, healing words, anything which has a remedial effect. As with any binary-polarization technique, we have made a shift of abstraction and arrived at a new conceptual level. And on this level, it is very easy to see how poisonousness and remedial-ness can be opposed as restoration versus destruction...¹³⁸⁹

¹³⁸⁶ Harland, Richard. *Beyond Superstructuralism* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.219.

¹³⁸⁷ *ibid.*

¹³⁸⁸ *ibid.*

¹³⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p.217.

The logical space of reasons, then, turns into a self-serving abstraction within Derrida's argument – the rationality of reason *becomes* an empty and/or open space that can be determined (emptied and/or filled) *at will*. Such an abstraction is only possible via the very relationship brought into (a) question – i.e., via the way *thought and language* are directed back towards each other and encircle one another. Derrida argues as if language directs or selects itself and moves with thought in a downward spiral. However, it appears to be Derrida's questioning which is directing and/or selecting language here – and so allowing language to spiral out of control. To think thus abstractly involves the act of *moving away* from specific beings so as to *move towards* a specified conceptual terrain upon which to build and/or direct an inquiry. Such a fulfilled or realized intentionality enables Derrida to displace the space of reasons via the quasi-transcendental claims that *non-truth is the truth* and difference is simultaneously *the condition of possibility and the condition of impossibility of truth*. The question of deconstruction's *condition of possibility* thereby occurs via the conditional that its questioning remains – in a contradictory way – truth functional or connected. Specifically, Derrida's contextual strategies *proceed from the presupposition that relations of presupposition* remain truth directed insofar as they invariably deconstruct their relation to each other. Given this 'conditional', Derrida can "think truth-claims through to the limit and thereby determine their relation to the problems that remain, of necessity, unthought (or unthinkable)."¹³⁹⁰ Derrida's "trick"¹³⁹¹ of spelling has a spellbinding effect for this very reason – *difference* can be made to cast a spell *over the contexts* in question and bind them in different ways. Like any trick, deconstruction is performed to manipulate 'objects' through misdirection – and it *does* this by directing our attention away from the *presupposed* meaning of given terms to possible effects overturning relations of presupposition *actively* brought into (a) question. Note that we are *not* suggesting that Derrida is being deceitful or fraudulent – merely, that 'misdirection' (selective and/or directed thinking) is the way of all argumentation.¹³⁹² Derrida's deconstruction of Plato's text shares in this very presupposition: it stage manages (controls) the meaning of *pharmakon* by re-enacting its performance – and this would not be possible (meaningful, truthful) without

¹³⁹⁰ Norris, Christopher. *Spinoza and the Origins of Modern Critical Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), p.179.

¹³⁹¹ Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkin Press, 1997), pp.23-24.

¹³⁹² Fearn, Nicholas. *Zeno and the Tortoise: How To Think Like A Philosopher* (London: Atlantic Books, 2009), p.1. As Fearn's historical overview indicates, "tricks of the trade" have remained important to philosophy from Zeno onwards. Specifically, "thinking rationally involves deployment of the right philosophical tool" to (re)shape objects. Fearn calls philosophical tools (such as Plato's dialectic, Occam's Razor, Hume's Fork or Wittgenstein's language games) *tricks* because of the way concepts and arguments direct us to – and away from – the objects in question. Fearn's text begins with an example on reductive arguments found in contemporary biology – where experiences of love are reduced to the *pharmakon* of a *drug*. Fearn traces reductionism back to Thales (who alleged that every being could be reduced to the substance of water).

managing an audience's attention for the *intended effect*. Derrida's 'argument with argument' can only be effective if Derrida actively calls on a *willing suspension of disbelief for the moment*,¹³⁹³ or where reason *implicates itself via the categories and directedness of thought*.¹³⁹⁴ A willingness to suspend disbelief, then, is made possible *through* the beliefs in question. Derrida's sleight of hand actively controls our perception of reality via the question of our being-there. Derrida's so-called deconstruction must also borrow from the rational order what it is effectively trying to exclude from it, the order of 'what there is' (relevant ontological commitments). Derrida's argument, then, acts in three related ways a) it claims to show us Plato's sleight of hand regarding the *pharmakon* of writing by restaging its actions, b) it is directed towards showing us that the concept of 'truth' is a mere illusion or effect and c) Derrida's use of misdirection appears to be an integral part of the performance – the very effectiveness of his argument relies on an avowed *trick of writing*. Derrida willingly shows his sleight of hand by weaving a (con)text together to pull *differance* out of an apparently empty or bottomless hat. Unlike Plato, however, Derrida's hand waving seems intent on proving that the rationality of reason is all part of the 'act'.

Nonetheless, Derrida's performance doesn't prevent him from acting "as if"¹³⁹⁵ his own statements were *objectively true*. Derrida concedes that he must "let himself be caught out in a performative contradiction"¹³⁹⁶, and such a condition of possibility – acting 'as if' what *he argues* were also truth-bearing or directed – presupposes *the way* reality appears to be. Derrida argues as if his statements about the *pharmakon* agree with an objective reality that is linguistically accessible and/or expressible. Derrida's argument contradictorily purports to state what *the* truth really is, and these statements play by the rules of language game of argumentation when presupposing that others can similarly rise to a state of knowing. Derrida's argument aims to produce true belief about an unknown or inconceivable truth and so *acts to remedy* (correct, treat) false beliefs about the way language meaningfully (truthfully, correctly) represents the

¹³⁹³ Coleridge, Samuel. *Biographia Literaria; Or, Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1847), p.442. Coleridge's famous phrase is worth quoting in context to appreciate its significance here. Specifically, "it was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith."

¹³⁹⁴ Hoffman, Professor. (Lewis, Angelo) *Modern Magic: A Practical Treatise on the Art of Conjuring* (London: Routledge, 1878). Hoffman's classic treatise begins with the Latin inscription *Mundus vult decipi, ergo decipiatur*, meaning "The world wants to be deceived, so let it be deceived." In other words, the real trick of magic – the performative contradiction – is that it requires a *willingness to believe via a suspension of disbelief*. Further, such momentary suspensions constitute a poetic faith in the power of imagination.

¹³⁹⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "As If It Were Possible Within Such Limits" in *Paper Machine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 76.

¹³⁹⁶ Ibid.

world. In this way, Derrida presupposes that false beliefs can also meaningfully express the 'truth' if they can be made to 'cohere with' – refer to, represent – the reality in question. Equally questionable is the way Derrida treats the pharmakon of writing in order to remedy reason's diagnosed 'condition'. Specifically, Derrida's displacement of the space of reasons acts as a reminder that a *remedy might be worse than the disease*. Derrida's rational treatment potentially poses a greater risk to the rationality of reason via unintended (or unforeseen) consequences. Witness the way deconstruction has arguably "infected" ¹³⁹⁷ the "academic bloodstream"¹³⁹⁸ as *the* prescribed antidote to reason. The question is whether Derrida can do anything other than "move thought in the direction of a new organization of a theoretical space,"¹³⁹⁹ and this directive moves thought in two different directions simultaneously. On the one hand, deconstruction potentially exposes reason to effects that become (in theory or principle) *more* adverse and/or untreatable. On the other hand, Derrida's treatment threatens to render his own questioning meaningless – as having no direction or purpose other than affirming a mode of questioning that can be neither directed nor purposeful. While Derrida's questioning might privilege the unstable relation between the constative and performative, Derrida *inadvertently* privileges the theoretical over the practical by moving reason towards a mode of speculation that appeals to questionable concepts like 'deconstruction' 'différance', 'pharmakon', 'justice' etc.¹⁴⁰⁰ The reality is whether *différance* should leave thought indifferent or can rationally motivate it one way rather than another. Although Derrida's linguistic performance argues against the rational belief that truth-bearing statements correspond to the world in a coherent and/or consistent way, he nonetheless argues *as if* his own statements align with (latch onto, move with) a context-independent reality: they remain true irrespective of the context and/or independent of what anyone says or does. Derrida, however, also wants to turn the conditional of an 'as if' on its head, and argues "as if it were possible to overcome a performative contradiction...or rule out the possibility"¹⁴⁰¹ of arguing with arguments. The condition of possibility is simultaneously a condition of impossibility, and the *as if* is no longer (or just) about a belief in the possibility of rational argument: it also refers to a lack of belief in the possibility (meaningfulness, truthfulness) of rational argumentation. In other words, Derrida wants to argue that he is being performatively consistent when being performatively contradictory. The logical space of reasons is therefore

¹³⁹⁷ Gross, Paul and Levitt, Norman. *Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and its Quarrels with Science* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2011), p.75.

¹³⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p.15.

¹³⁹⁹ Wood, David. "Derrida and the Paradoxes of Reflection" in Lawlor, Len and Direk, Zeynep (eds.) *Derrida: Critical Assessments* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.194.

¹⁴⁰⁰ Pecora, Vincent. "What Was Deconstruction"? *Contentions*, Vol.1. No.3, 1992, pp.59-79. Pecora goes so far as to argue that Derrida's questioning has "actually stimulated a return to a form of scholasticism, to those abstract and totalizing methods of the traditional Western humanist the new theory claimed to reject."

¹⁴⁰¹ Derrida, Jacques. "As If It Were Possible Within Such Limits" in *Paper Machine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p.76.

displaced into an outer – or beyond – space when calling on a quasi-transcendental reason for justifying his overall approach across contexts "in the first place."¹⁴⁰² Specifically, "the modality of *quasi* (or the logical-rhetorical fiction of *as if*)"¹⁴⁰³ directs reason towards the "question of problematic context and strategies, presumably: one must *in this place* relentlessly reaffirm questions of the transcendental type; and *in that place*, almost simultaneously, also ask questions about the history and the limits of what is called transcendental."¹⁴⁰⁴ Such a mode of being obviously begs the question: how is it possible to make sense of an approach that simultaneously displaces its own questioning?

Let's begin by noting that the performative status of all (quasi) transcendental arguments remain in question. Bennington notes, for example, that the concept of the "quasi-transcendental"¹⁴⁰⁵ merely "names a problem to be further explored."¹⁴⁰⁶ The concern goes beyond the rational status of a 'logical-rhetorical fiction'. As Stern notes, the problem is whether it is rational for reason to rise above the space of reasons in the first place. Given that such movements occur within the language game of argumentation – and the spaces can only be situated and navigated accordingly – attempting to move beyond the boundary of given experiences may disqualify them from the outset.¹⁴⁰⁷ Consequently, the "status of transcendental arguments...is curiously hard to fix unequivocally"¹⁴⁰⁸: philosophers cannot decide what they could possibly be and/or mean anyway. Nonetheless, Sacks provides us with a way to move towards Derrida. Specifically, Derrida's approach may be thought quasi-transcendental insofar as it directed towards "presuppositional relations"¹⁴⁰⁹ and "conceptual structures"¹⁴¹⁰ as "a necessary condition"¹⁴¹¹ of questioning, and "the question is, what is meant by 'a necessary condition', 'presupposition' "¹⁴¹² or conceptual structure. Although Derrida's movements within the circle of

¹⁴⁰² *ibid*, p.83.

¹⁴⁰³ *ibid*.

¹⁴⁰⁴ *ibid*.

¹⁴⁰⁵ Bennington, Geoffrey. "The Frontier: Between Kant and Hegel" in Kunneman, Harry and de Vries, Hent (eds.) *Enlightenments: Encounters Between Critical Theory and Contemporary French Thought*, (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1993), p.46.

¹⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Stern, Robert. *Transcendental Arguments: Answering the Question of Justification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.1. Stern notes that other philosophers have called transcendental arguments cheating and merely go beyond the pale: "they have all the advantages of theft over honest toil."

¹⁴⁰⁸ Stern, Robert. (ed.) *Transcendental Arguments: Problems and Prospects* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.1

¹⁴⁰⁹ Sacks, Mark. "The Nature of Transcendental Arguments" *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 2006, p.440. Note that Sacks is not talking about Derrida here – he is simply trying to determine what the procedure of transcendental thinking might generally involve.

¹⁴¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹⁴¹¹ *ibid*.

¹⁴¹² *ibid*.

understanding may be all over the place at a given time, presuppositional relations necessarily "hold between concepts or propositional contents."¹⁴¹³ The aim is to move beyond the relations in question so as to determine their "conditions of possibility."¹⁴¹⁴ Such questioning can only take place within the context of "the situated thought"¹⁴¹⁵, and so must be "internally structured or articulated."¹⁴¹⁶ The beings in question, then, can only be understood with respect to the way they are "phenomenologically embedded and directed."¹⁴¹⁷ The problem, however, is whether such a 'questionable' approach can escape the circle directing its movements. If transcendental arguments attempt to make the presupposition of the world simultaneously possible (conceivable) and questionable (answerable), they are rationally motivated by the "problem of the inference to reality...and the problem of the universality of that inference."¹⁴¹⁸ Within the context of Derrida's arguments about difference and/or the pharmakon, the problem is the rational status of inferences to a (linguistic) reality. Specifically, does Derrida substitute an *intensional context* (the terrain of meaning) for an *extensional context* (the realm of truth), and so *treat* one context *as if* it were another? Philosophers traditionally distinguish between the content (or intension) of statements and the referent (or extension) of statements. The distinction attempts to capture a reality about language – namely, that while our expressions might consistently refer to 'objects' with objective meaning (their extensions or reference), there are nonetheless different ways in which they can express said meaning (their intensions or sense). A context might therefore be thought to be extensional if it can preserve truth-values across *coextensive* linguistic contexts and/or expressions, and intensional if the meaning changes between expressions and/or *nonsynchronous* linguistic contexts.¹⁴¹⁹ Take the following two statements, where it is possible to change the meaningful content without an alteration in truth-values.

Cary Grant acted in *The Awful Truth*¹⁴²⁰

Archibald Leach acted in *The Awful Truth*

¹⁴¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.443.

¹⁴¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.444.

¹⁴¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹⁸ Sacks, Mark. (ed.) "Transcendental Arguments and the Inference to Reality: A Reply to Stern" in Stern, Robert (ed.) *Transcendental Arguments: Problems and Prospects* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.67.

¹⁴¹⁹ Crane, Tim. *The Mechanical Mind* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp.30-41. Crane provides a relatively straightforward introduction to the intractable 'puzzle of representation'. The example he provides is that of George Orwell and Eric Arthur Blair being the author of *Animal Farm*

¹⁴²⁰ *The Awful Truth* (dir. Leo McCarey) is a 1937 American comedy starring Cary Grant and Irene Dunne.

Although the sense (intensions) of these linguistic contexts is distinct, they nonetheless share the same referent (extension) in that 'Cary Grant' and 'Archibald Leach' refer to the same person in different ways. Given that Cary Grant is the stage name for Archibald Leach, we have co-referring terms that refer to the same extensional context in meaningfully distinct ways. The extension of these statements transcends the context of their occurrence insofar as they remain identical (or the contexts can be identified with each other despite the substitution of coextensive expressions). The distinction typically occurs via an acknowledgment of the difference between *propositional knowledge* (descriptive and/or objective states of affairs with given truth-values) and *propositional attitudes* (subjective mental states that can be either true or false, or simply misdirected). The philosophical problem, of course, is that both contexts presuppose the active role of intentionality and the difficulty is sustaining a distinction entangled within the specification (determination, constituting) of meaningful contexts and/or objects in the first place. Given this distinction, does deconstructive questioning require the mutable – alterable, unstable, transient – to contradictorily play (perform) the transcendental role of an invariant or immutable *across* the contexts in question? Witness the way Derrida invokes deconstruction's truth-value "from its inscription in chain of possible substitutions"¹⁴²¹ when determining the ontological status of "a context."¹⁴²² Contexts may be similarly identified and/or differentiated if they remain coextensive or co-referring via the way "différance lends itself to a certain number of non-synonymous substitutions, according to the necessity of the context"¹⁴²³ in question. On the one hand, deconstruction cannot refer to anything other than an *example of itself* to justify the being of its own questions. On the other hand, it situates its approach by appealing to quasi-transcendental 'non-beings' such as différance and the pharmakon to *exemplify* such questioning. While deconstruction may be neither here or there, it nonetheless acts as a kind (or mode) of being – a neither here or there that is also acting everywhere.

Différance Writ Large – the truth-value of exemplarity.

Perhaps what is most relevant for our purposes is *the way* deconstruction accords itself an "exemplary value"¹⁴²⁴ as it throws into question the nature of exemplarity (the relation between

¹⁴²¹ Derrida, Jacques. "Letter to a Japanese Friend" in Wood, David and Bernasconi, Robert (eds.) *Derrida and Différance* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.3.

¹⁴²² *ibid.*

¹⁴²³ Derrida, Jacques. "Différance" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.12.

¹⁴²⁴ Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p.97. While Derrida is talking about the "age of Rousseau" here, he nonetheless raises questions that similarly (or subsequently) apply to the age of Derrida. Specifically, in justifying his reason for deconstructing Rousseau in particular, he lodges an appeal to the law of the circle (or general rules and examples). Derrida asks: "what privileged place does Rousseau occupy in the history" of thought? What can be "meant by that proper name and to the texts in which it was

part and whole). The value of exemplarity is made possible *through* the presuppositional relations moving between 'text' and 'context' in that these constituent parts form a complex whole and exemplify one another. The example of Plato's text deconstructing itself is therefore *thought exemplary* because it exemplifies – calls forth, makes possible – the question of justice within the law of the circle, and such examples may be multiplied and/or repeated indefinitely *throughout* the circle calling itself (back) into question in distinct ways. Derrida's contextual strategies *thereby* repeatedly attempt to bring forth the *question* of the difference between being and non-being by giving expression to the inexpressible by way of the circle incapable of meaningfully directing itself (finding its bearings or true standing). The reason Derrida moves between qualitatively distinct strategies across contexts is that he has already decided that exemplarity is of particular value and/or universal significance. Derrida chooses to privilege and/or occupy conceptually distinct spaces of reasons – sites of instability – by way of the rationale that written and/or interpreted texts exemplify the logic of linguistic contexts as a whole. Particular texts are treated as a *universal model or pattern* of the contexts in question in that they exemplify the way they may be *underwritten* and/or *overwritten* by them. As Harvey notes, the truth-value of exemplarity is made particularly valuable (truthful) because it presupposes "the law as conceived through the functioning of exemplarity"¹⁴²⁵ via case studies, and so "marks the place"¹⁴²⁶ to be displaced in Derrida's questioning. Witness the way the pharmakon of writing functions within Derrida's writing – it is difference "writ large"¹⁴²⁷ and so arguably gives expression to the *structure of iteration* as the condition of the possibility of writing (i.e., actively participates in the trans/formation of the beings in question). While the legality of Plato's decision might have been questioned and deferred indefinitely, Derrida must nonetheless also be able to direct and *justify* his own decision-making at any given time. Derrida's contextual strategies remain "one of many"¹⁴²⁸ potentially available to him, and deconstructive questioning purports to *move with* the production of difference by being "the one and the many at the same time."¹⁴²⁹ The performative contradiction, of course, is that deconstruction must therefore 'act' as if it were being objectively true – by pretending to be what it cannot be: a neither here or there that somehow encompasses (or *remains on the horizon of*) every being.

underwritten"? As we shall see, Derrida and deconstructive thought exemplify such questions in different ways.

¹⁴²⁵ Harvey, E. Irene. *Labyrinths of Exemplarity: At the Limits of Deconstruction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), p. 173.

¹⁴²⁶ Ibid, p.205.

¹⁴²⁷ Ibid, p.173.

¹⁴²⁸ Harvey, E. Irene. "Derrida and the Issues of Exemplarity" in Wood, David, (ed.) *Derrida: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1992), p.214

¹⁴²⁹ Ibid.

As the condition of possibility and of impossibility, with all the paradoxes to which this last formula constrains us, iterability retains the value of generality that covers the totality of what one can call experience or the relation to something in general...and is presupposed by all intentionality.¹⁴³⁰

Given the "necessary presupposition"¹⁴³¹ of the ways in which an intentional object can be specified, the "question of the specificity of intentionality... without limit remains open"¹⁴³² to questioning. Specifically, how can deconstructive thought decide its "relation to the object in general, of transcendence and of appearing *as such*"¹⁴³³? By his own admission, Derrida's thought is *intentionally related* to beings in that it not only presupposes the intentionality of thought, intentionality is what makes such presuppositions the condition of possibility *and* impossibility. If Derrida cannot question the delimitation of beings without presupposing the intentionality of the beings in question, he remains implicated in the ways thought directs itself (back) to language. The performative contradiction is that Derrida attempts to direct rational thought away from its sense of direction or directedness, and so attempts to transcend any given intentional horizon or movement. As Willard notes, however, Derrida's questioning cannot escape the ways in which "an act of consciousness and/or language selects *its* object."¹⁴³⁴ We must therefore continue to question the way/s in which language and thought "relate to each other and to the objects present to or through them...the grounds (in the act and object) of the intentional grasp of the object by the act."¹⁴³⁵

We have observed that Derrida consistently attempts to displace the space of reasons by calling their spacing – logic, ordering – back into (a) question. We have also observed that Derrida is caught in a performative contradiction: he must act *as if* his own reasoning was internally consistent or coherent in that the displacement in question *progresses logically* in *some way*. Derrida's linguistic acts therefore express the contradictory belief that deconstruction's *reason for being-there* were *ever-present* insofar as its own 'events' may be *placed over and above* any given logical space of reasons. By attempting to move beyond what can be rationally thought, deconstruction questions the very possibility of locating a space in which to decide a meaningful course of action. Deconstruction thereby displaces the way reason can meaningfully direct or orient itself, and so attempts to do the impossible – by giving expression to the inexpressible

¹⁴³⁰ Derrida, Jacques. Afterword in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.129.

¹⁴³¹ *ibid.*

¹⁴³² *ibid.*, p.130.

¹⁴³³ *ibid.*

¹⁴³⁴ Willard, Dallas. "Predication as Originary Violence: A Phenomenological Critique of Derrida's View of Intentionality" in Madison, Gary, (ed.) *Working Through Derrida*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), p.120.

¹⁴³⁵ *ibid.*, p.133.

(inconceivable, undecidable). Derrida attempts to get rational thought caught within the overflow of the performative, and so directs reason towards the organization of potentially new and/or endlessly deferred spaces of reasons. By moving thought towards what cannot be thought or done, deconstruction questions the way the space of reasons can be approached or directed. Nonetheless, Derrida's questioning remains capable of being thought and understood as a question – relative to the context and/or beings *in* question. Derrida's ways of thinking continue to be *dependent upon* (conditioned by, related to) *the way* a context can be meaningfully understood and/or questioned. To presuppose that the performativity of language may be rationally questioned and/or recontextualized is to *provisionally* acknowledge that it can be called (back) into question and answer for itself in a performatively consistent manner. The question, then, is: how does language perform thought in such a contradictory way?¹⁴³⁶

Gadamer *paves the way* by providing a logically prior ontological standard that can meaningfully call the relation between language and thought (back) into being and/or question. Specifically, "the coming into language of meaning points to a universal ontological structure, namely to the basic nature of everything toward which understanding can be directed. *Being that can be understood is language.*"¹⁴³⁷ That is to say, what can be meaningfully brought forth or held back within the circle of understanding occurs via the way language performs thought. Furthermore, it is our *being-there* that makes it possible to find our way around language, and the way back determines the way forward. The question, however, is determining the 'where' of the 'there' – locating our being-there – within the horizon of Derrida's own questioning. Specifically, how can we find our place within Derrida's questioning when Derrida remains ontologically committed to displacing any given 'being' or 'there'? Following Gadamer, it is the historicity of Derrida's position that constitutes the initial directedness of his ability to bring relations of presupposition into conflict and/or question and so determines *the way* interpreters can open ourselves up to the world in question. We are therefore now required to give expression to "the reality and efficacy of history within understanding itself"¹⁴³⁸ insofar as the true object of Derrida's questioning contradictorily involves displacing a "unity of effect"¹⁴³⁹ or the historical "texture of reciprocal effects."¹⁴⁴⁰ We have been arguing that Derrida's questioning *exemplifies* the relationship between part and whole, and remains caught in the movements between them.

¹⁴³⁶ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*, trans. Weinsheimer, Joel and Marshall, G. Donald, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.542. As we've already seen, Gadamer anticipates a variant of this question in Supplement 2 when he asks "to what extent does language perform thought?"

¹⁴³⁷ *ibid*, p.474.

¹⁴³⁸ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*, trans. Weinsheimer, Joel and Marshall, G. Donald, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.300.

¹⁴³⁹ *ibid*, p.282.

¹⁴⁴⁰ *ibid*, p.283.

Although Derrida argues against the possibility of integrating a complex whole, locating the contradiction between the constative and performative remains integral to deconstruction's way-making movements. We witnessed the way, for example, Derrida attempts to throw into question what he called the dialectical inversion of the pharmakon. Derrida argued that the pharmakon can never be the sum of its distinct or moving parts, and so cannot be a prescription for the performativity of language. Given the way the pharmakon divides and multiplies the beings in question – disseminates itself – it actively moves against the possibility of integration and stability. The process of differentiation merely "affirms the always already divided generation of meaning"¹⁴⁴¹, and would ideally replace "hermeneutic"¹⁴⁴² conceptions of what it is to mean or be by way of language's hidden mediations and secret argumentations. Although Derrida argues that there is no (prescribed) way for reason to be, he always manages to find a way to displace the space of reasons anyway. Derrida's acts as *if* his questioning comes from outer space – i.e., receives its directives from outside the space of reasons. Nonetheless, Derrida is somehow able to direct his thought to a concept of dialectic that can be traced back to the history of thought – beginning (arguably)¹⁴⁴³ with Plato and (allegedly)¹⁴⁴⁴ culminating in the "Hegelian sublation"¹⁴⁴⁵. Derrida conceives the dialectical version of the pharmakon as

¹⁴⁴¹ Derrida, Jacques. "Double Session" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: Continuum, 2004), p.272.

¹⁴⁴² Ibid, p.269.

¹⁴⁴³ We say arguably because Plato's account of dialectic is more sophisticated than Derrida concedes. Indeed, the Parmenides dialogue is arguably a precursor to deconstruction – it provides the most thoroughgoing dismantling of dialectic (by way of a consideration of the one and many) on record.

¹⁴⁴⁴ Derrida's concept of dialectic is surprisingly determinate and unambiguous, and has somehow bypassed more nuanced versions throughout effective history. There have been at least two more recent attempts to rethink the Platonic notion of dialectical reason. These include Gadamer's concept of *dialectic of question and answer* and Adorno's notion of *negative dialectics*. Gadamer and Adorno independently develop a conception of dialectic that stands in contradiction to that of reason as an operation of mastery – and they couldn't be more diametrically opposed. While both remain indebted to Plato and Hegel in their own way, they nonetheless move in distinct or opposing directions to each other. On the one hand (Gadamer), we have a dialectical view of reason that continues to conceive truth as the whole. On the other hand, (Adorno), the whole is thought to be false. Whatever the (considerable) differences between Adorno and Gadamer, they agree on two things – the need to prioritize conceptions of the (historical) object, and thought's inability to achieve an identity or unity with the objects thus conceived. Given such a problematic, the whole can never conceive (think) itself – and it is the parts (or thoughts, and the way they are expressed) that make such a conception im/possible. Our aim is not to compare or reconcile such disparate thoughts in history – it is to provisionally acknowledge Derrida's own tendency to decide and totalise. The irony is that Derrida's concept of deconstruction brings him into close proximity with Adorno's conception of dialectic in *Negative Dialectics* trans. E. B. Ashton, (New York: Seabury Press, 1973). Specifically, Adorno argues that "dialectics is the consistent consciousness of non-identity", and contradiction is the "nonidentical under the aspect of identity... The contradiction is the nonidentical under the aspect of (conceptual) identity; the primacy of the principle of contradiction in dialectics tests the heterogeneous according to unitary thought. By colliding with its own boundary, unitary thought surpasses itself", p.5.

¹⁴⁴⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "Outwork" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: Continuum, 2004), p.25.

involving a performative contradiction, if “it is understood according to a noncircular linearity”¹⁴⁴⁶ that enacts a “teleological program, internalized and assimilated by the circle of its unfolding.”¹⁴⁴⁷ As Derrida consistently maintains, we need to understand the relation between part and whole “according to a relation that no speculative dialectic of the same and other, for the simple reason that such a dialectic always remains an operation of mastery.”¹⁴⁴⁸ Whatever the context or question, Derrida thereby attempts to move rational thought beyond a given intentional horizon, and uniformly acts as a reminder that reason can never completely grasp itself or the objects in question. Since the objects of thought can never be adequately determined, Derrida decides to place emphasis on the *ineffectiveness* of reason. The questions that need to be asked, however, are these: how is the general being of Derrida’s questioning itself effected, and in what ways may it generally be thought effective? We raise these questions in a general register because of the quasi-transcendental status of Derrida’s questioning. Derrida’s contextual strategies are intended to do more than place thought at its limit – the limit is supposed to determine the ways in which thought can never be adequately contextualized and displaces the determination of meaning across given intentional horizons. The performative overflow of meaning allegedly contextualizes a historical process that cannot be meaningfully contextualized. On the one hand, Platonism provides the horizon in which thought is conceptualized and delimited. On the other hand, the concepts of thought multiply and divide themselves across a range of horizons (delimitations). While Derrida resists the suggestion that there can be one overriding context, he nonetheless adopts a position that somehow displaces the way contexts meaningfully relate to each other. The performative contradiction is not just that Derrida’s thought requires distinct contexts of interpretation to flow through each other. The problem is the way history continually effects and/or contextualizes his actions – Derrida’s displacements require him to strategically select and position himself within a range of horizons that remain (potentially) available and/or related. Whilst Derrida acts as if contexts select and/or direct themselves, Derrida’s linguistic interactions highlight the problem of what to select and/or how to be directed. Despite the waywardness (randomness or arbitrariness) of meaning, Derrida does not randomly or arbitrarily select the horizon to move in. Nor does Derrida want to claim that deconstruction acts without rhyme or reason – the question of ‘justice’ keeps thought open to the possibility of alternate contexts or directives (reasons). Derrida’s own questioning is itself directed by the problem of giving expression to the beings in question and/or the delimitation of movements. Derrida’s interpretation of the differential movements of the pharmakon attempts to con/fuse horizons of meaning so as to give expression to what can be meaningfully said. Derrida selects a horizon in order to move towards the effects of history, and

¹⁴⁴⁶ Ibid, p.15.

¹⁴⁴⁷ Ibid, p.42

¹⁴⁴⁸ Ibid, p.5

was thereby able to question the ways thought orientates itself to given relations of presupposition. In order for Derrida perform this movement, however, he needed to defer to the very structure that the event of deconstruction continually throws into question. Specifically, displacing the space of reasons can only be thought effective if we can continue to re-turn to the very effectiveness of the reason in question. Following Gadamer, the performative status of reason can only be thus possible and/or questionable by way of a historically effected consciousness. The performative status of deconstruction coincides with Derrida's own movements within a historically effected consciousness, and is therefore directed by an effective historical consciousness that – contradictorily – attempts to become conscious of (and direct) the effects of history. We will, however, need to displace the question of the *effectivity of history* in Derrida's understanding to another place, and *rationaly reconstruct* his questioning accordingly.

Chapter 4:

Lyotard and the Conflicting Rules of Understanding.

Aims and Objectives: The aim of this chapter is to move beyond Derrida's conception of the circle of understanding. We venture this movement by turning towards Lyotard's concept of language, and the ways he brings forth the circle in question. While Lyotard occurs as a *transitional* figure here, he nonetheless places us at the intersection between related parts taken as a complex whole. Lyotard is relevant to us, then, because he enables movement between distinct ways of thinking and invariably directs us *through* Derrida and Habermas respectively. The problem of the criterion – and its relation to the question of being – occurs by way of the concepts of *language games* and *phrase regimes*. The difficulty is determining *the rule* for following rules when different semantic fields may conflict over their respective borders and conceptual terrains. Lyotard introduces the notion of (a) *differend* to question the way *distinct rulings* may come into being and/or conflict. Lyotard thereby proceeds from the following ontological standard: *to be is to be ruled (out) or overruled in contexts of action*. Given that Lyotard approaches this problematic in myriad ways, we shall need to orient ourselves. The following is thereby divided into two interdependent parts. In the first part, we provide an overview of Lyotard's approach to language, and argue that these parts form a complex whole. In the second part, we direct ourselves towards selective parts to make such a whole approachable.

Understanding Lyotard : Ways Not Works

We begin by acknowledging the problem of understanding Lyotard, and locate this problematic within the question of understanding itself. As Bickis observes, the "seemingly straightforward question"¹⁴⁴⁹ of "how and where to begin...must attend to and grapple with"¹⁴⁵⁰ the issue of orienting itself towards a philosopher who problematizes the very idea of directing the event of (an) understanding. Part of the problem is attempting to contextualize the movements of a thinker questioning the rational status of knowledge and contexts in the first place. Lyotard's approach to contexts of interpretations is understood to be "tactical" and "always take into account the context in which it appears."¹⁴⁵¹ By his own account, Lyotard's published writings

¹⁴⁴⁹ Bickis, Heidi. "New and Late Encounters" in Bickis, Heidi and Shields, Rob (eds.) *Rereading Francois-Jean Lyotard: Essays on His Later Works* (London: Routledge, 2016), p.1

¹⁴⁵⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁵¹ Lyotard, Francois-Jean and Thebaud, Loup-Jean. *Just Gaming* trans. Wlad Godzich, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p.54.

are merely "rough drafts"¹⁴⁵² that remain piecemeal¹⁴⁵³: such *partial measures* become, in turn, open to interpretation and questioning since "one cannot enclose oneself in language; for that to occur it would have to be a closed totality."¹⁴⁵⁴ Lyotard approaches linguistic contexts *through* questions that actively resist integration, and the question is the way such a complex whole may be brought forth or held back. Lyotard's "discontinuous"¹⁴⁵⁵ approach goes so far as to ask whether the con/text of his questions can ever add up to more than the sum of their parts.¹⁴⁵⁶ Lyotard provides a "critical philosophy"¹⁴⁵⁷ insofar as a "crisis of criteria"¹⁴⁵⁸ informs his inquiry into the limits of representation and "what is not presentable under the rules of knowledge."¹⁴⁵⁹ The "incommensurability of reality to concept"¹⁴⁶⁰ and the "powerlessness of the faculty of presentation"¹⁴⁶¹ remain *reference points* in that the inconceivable – events such as the Final Solution and September 11 – move rational thought towards an "impenetrable abyss."¹⁴⁶² Each "one of these abysses, and others... liberate judgment (and) if they are to be felt, judgment must take place without a criterion and that this feeling in turn becomes a sign of history."¹⁴⁶³ From the outset, Lyotard questioned philosophy's need for unity¹⁴⁶⁴ and consistently argued that reason should remain divided against itself. Specifically, "the totalizing idea of reason"¹⁴⁶⁵ is as self-refuting as it is terrifying since "there is no one reason, only reasons."¹⁴⁶⁶ Given that the

¹⁴⁵² Van Den Abbeele, Georges and Lyotard, Francois-Jean. "Lyotard Interview" *Diacritics* Vol. 14, No. 3, 1984, p.16.

¹⁴⁵³ *ibid.* Lyotard claims that his major philosophical work (The Differend) "remains a sketch, whose master I have not been."

¹⁴⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p.17.

¹⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.xiv

¹⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.* Lyotard asks whether his major philosophical work can be anything other than a "notebook of sketches."

¹⁴⁵⁷ Trottein, Serge. "Lyotard: Before and After the Sublime" in Silverman, J. Hugh (ed.) *Lyotard: Philosophy, Politics and the Sublime* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p.192.

¹⁴⁵⁸ Flynn, Thomas. "Lyotard and History Without Witnesses" in Silverman, J. Hugh (ed.) *Lyotard: Philosophy, Politics and the Sublime* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p.163.

¹⁴⁵⁹ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.57.

¹⁴⁶⁰ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. "Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?" in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.79.

¹⁴⁶¹ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁶² Lyotard, Francois-Jean and Grubner, Eberhard. *The Hyphen: Between Judaism and Christianity* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 1999), p. 13. Although Lyotard is specifically talking about the Holocaust here, the following quote indicates that we cannot conceive (measure) the inconceivable in terms of the magnitude – or quantity – of suffering. Nonetheless, Lyotard maintains here that the Holocaust conceals "a suffering that is perhaps the most impenetrable *abyss* in Western thought."

¹⁴⁶³ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. "The *Sign of History*" in Benjamin, Andrew (ed.) *The Lyotard Reader* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 409.

¹⁴⁶⁴ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *Why Philosophize?* trans. Andrew Brown (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), p.44. This recently published collection of lectures given in 1964 highlights Lyotard's own need to consistently displace (the search for) meaning and truth.

¹⁴⁶⁵ Reijen, van Willem and Veerman, Dick. "An Interview with Jean-Francois Lyotard" *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1988, p.278.

¹⁴⁶⁶ *ibid.*

"totality of relations... is at once a relation of complement and contrariety"¹⁴⁶⁷ the "enemy is within thought itself."¹⁴⁶⁸ Lyotard's questioning therefore primarily occurs in the form of "observations, remarks, thoughts and notes...relative to an object"¹⁴⁶⁹ of reflection. While the "linguistic turn"¹⁴⁷⁰ might provide the philosophical "context"¹⁴⁷¹, the question is the way we can re-turn to traditional thought or practice. Lyotard's turn to language is thereby given meaningful expression via disputes over the "sense of the referent."¹⁴⁷² Lyotard's statements within language can only be accorded "strategic value in relation to the question(s) raised,"¹⁴⁷³ and are oriented along a directional "semantic axis"¹⁴⁷⁴ subject to reversals in direction and/or strategic withdrawals. We must therefore similarly follow the "thought of dispersion"¹⁴⁷⁵ that "shapes our context."¹⁴⁷⁶ Given Lyotard's "partial and tendentious"¹⁴⁷⁷ approach to contexts of interpretations, the "periphery of thoughts...is immeasurable"¹⁴⁷⁸ – they "never stop changing their location with one another"¹⁴⁷⁹ and the question of their rational status "varies with the angle from which they are approached."¹⁴⁸⁰ Lyotard argues that the true threat to "the work of thought"¹⁴⁸¹ is not that it remains partial (can only exist in part, might be entirely 'prejudicial'), but that such thinking "pretends to be complete"¹⁴⁸² and/or impartial. Lyotard repeatedly invokes¹⁴⁸³ – and attempts to move beyond – Wittgenstein's concept of "language games"¹⁴⁸⁴

¹⁴⁶⁷ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *Why Philosophize?* trans. Andrew Brown (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), p.119.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. xiv.

¹⁴⁷⁰ Ibid, p.xiii.

¹⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷² Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.xii.

¹⁴⁷³ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.7.

¹⁴⁷⁴ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. "The Affect Phrase" in Crome, Keith and Williams, James (eds.) *Lyotard Reader and Guide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p.104.

¹⁴⁷⁵ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.xiii.

¹⁴⁷⁶ p.xiii.

¹⁴⁷⁷ Williams, James. *Lyotard: Towards A Postmodern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p. 77.

¹⁴⁷⁸ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *Peregrinations: Law, Form, Event* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p.5

¹⁴⁷⁹ Ibid. Lyotard goes on to say "When you feel like you have penetrated far into *their* intimacy in analysing *their* so-called structure or genealogy or even post structure, it is actually too late or too soon."

¹⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸¹ Ibid, p.6

¹⁴⁸² Ibid.

¹⁴⁸³ Lyotard, Francois-Jean and Thebaud, Loup-Jean. *Just Gaming* trans. Wlad Godzich, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 49, p.58, pp.61-62, p.93, etc.

¹⁴⁸⁴ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.130.

to question the performative status of linguistic activities. If the "whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven"¹⁴⁸⁵ may be called a *language game*, the partiality of Lyotard's questioning *acts as a corrective* to Wittgenstein's own linguistic actions. Kant's conception of the sublime as "the immeasurability of nature and the insufficiency of our capacity to adopt a standard proportionate to"¹⁴⁸⁶ it provides a critical turning point in that it returns us to Wittgenstein's concept of language games in a different way. Specifically, sublime feelings – the feeling of being overpowered by a "formless object insofar as limitlessness is represented in it"¹⁴⁸⁷ – provides the most truthful way through language in that such boundless feelings act as "the transport that leads all thought (critical thought included) to its limits."¹⁴⁸⁸ Consequently, Lyotard attempts to move around the "humanistic obstacle to the analysis"¹⁴⁸⁹ of language games and the role it plays in understanding the *immeasurable*. Lyotard's goal is to invariably *downplay* or *overturn* the presupposition that "people make use of language"¹⁴⁹⁰ or "play at it"¹⁴⁹¹. Lyotard argues that it is the other way around – it is language which plays with people by actively taking hold of them and moving them around. The question, then, is the way they can be thrown – or taken aback – by language's movements. Nonetheless, Wittgenstein's view of language as a "labyrinth of paths"¹⁴⁹² remains integral *throughout* and the problem is finding our way around a disorientating arrangement without losing our bearings. Lyotard follows Wittgenstein in different ways for two related reasons – to allow for the possibility of *movement*

¹⁴⁸⁵ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), No.7, p.5.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.145.

¹⁴⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p.144. Kant famously goes on to provide examples of what such limitless or unbounded feelings might be referring to (inadequately represent via their presentation to reason). Specifically, "Bold, overhanging, as it were threatening cliffs, thunder clouds towering up into the heavens, bringing with them flashes of lightning and crashes of thunder, volcanoes with their all-destroying violence, hurricanes with the devastation they leave behind, the boundless ocean set into a rage, a lofty waterfall on a mighty river, etc., make our capacity to resist into an insignificant trifle in comparison with their power. But the sight of them only becomes all the more attractive the more fearful it is, as long as we find ourselves in safety, and we gladly call these objects sublime because they elevate the strength of our soul above its usual level, and allow us to discover within ourselves a capacity for resistance of quite another kind, which gives us the courage to measure ourselves against the apparent all-powerfulness of nature", p.144-145.

¹⁴⁸⁸ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 124

¹⁴⁸⁹ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. "Wittgenstein-After" in *Political Writings* trans. Bill Readings and Kevin Paul Geiman, (London: UCL Press, 1993), p. 21.

¹⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹¹ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹² Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), No. 203, p.83. According to Wittgenstein, "language is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from one side and know your way about; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about"

between language's network of interconnecting "passages"¹⁴⁹³ and to throw into question the legitimacy of *conflicting moves* resulting from the act of passing from one state (condition, territory) to another. Such reasoning directs Lyotard's approach insofar as "judgment's expeditions"¹⁴⁹⁴ attempt to find their way through the "labyrinth"¹⁴⁹⁵ in question. Lyotard doesn't so much think in terms of a circular relation between thought and language as circular *relations* that legitimate and problematize (redirect, disperse) themselves within a complex whole. Lyotard's interpretations understand that "no exit"¹⁴⁹⁶ can be "made from the circle"¹⁴⁹⁷ in question or "can escape this "circulus" "¹⁴⁹⁸ *through* questioning. The problem is finding our way around the circle "without presupposing"¹⁴⁹⁹ the direction of language's own movements. The goal is to move around distinct contexts of interpretation in order to "paradoxically declare that their regimens or genres are incommensurable."¹⁵⁰⁰ The relation between part and whole therefore remains as necessary as it is questionable. The question that Lyotard invariably finds himself returning to is: "if no guiding thread leads the way"¹⁵⁰¹ to language as a whole, how can thought "find its way amid the labyrinth of passages"¹⁵⁰² when "the passages are what circumscribe the realms of legitimacy"?¹⁵⁰³

Lyotard expands upon Wittgenstein's conception of language by way of the concepts of "*phrase regimens*"¹⁵⁰⁴ and "*heterogeneous genres of discourse*"¹⁵⁰⁵ to get around such a question. That is to say, where a given a phrase is "constituted according to a set of rules (its regimen)"¹⁵⁰⁶, and the corresponding phrase regime presents a meaningful universe (possible world or "being-there"¹⁵⁰⁷) that remain open to each other and/or questioning. Lyotard approaches the rational

¹⁴⁹³ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.135.

¹⁴⁹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁰² *ibid.*

¹⁵⁰³ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p.xii.

¹⁵⁰⁵ *ibid.* p.xiv.

¹⁵⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p.xii.

¹⁵⁰⁷ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. "Dead Letter" in *Political Writings* trans. Bill Readings and Kevin Paul Geiman, (London: UCL Press, 1993), p.33. This early essay (1962) invokes Heidegger's concept of being-there to identify cultural thought or practice, and it recurs two decades later in a bid to make sense of the problem of differends, or phrases in dispute. Specifically, in *Dead Letter* Lyotard claims that "culture is a particular way of being" in the world, and it the "being-there that is the people." In *The Differend*: (1988), Lyotard applies the concept to the being of language and urges that any description of the world and/or an extra-linguistic reality must be given *in* language – it is *where* cultural thought is presented and merely a particular way of being as such. "...it is your phrase that

status of 'language' through the problem of interrogating the legitimacy of given rulings and/or inevitable *links between phrases*,¹⁵⁰⁸ and so returns to the question of a linguistic field's self-conception as a meaningful activity. Unlike Wittgenstein, however, Lyotard's rational treatments do not purport to "leave everything as it is"¹⁵⁰⁹ or claim to take up "a position far outside in order to see things more objectively."¹⁵¹⁰ Lyotard's approach purports to be therapeutic – and efficacious – in that it seeks to remedy cultural practices immanently, or *through* the acts of questioning and interpretations actively *brought into conflict*. By taking up – or prescribing – positions within contexts of interpretation, Lyotard's rational treatments operate inside them and thereby attempt to transform the performative "status of knowledge."¹⁵¹¹ The "predominance of the performativity criterion"¹⁵¹², or the way the "performativity of the supposed social system is taken as a criterion of relevance"¹⁵¹³ is critically treated by Lyotard's linguistic actions.¹⁵¹⁴ Lyotard calls into question the way "the objects and the thoughts which originate in scientific knowledge and the capitalist economy convey with them one of the rules which support their possibility: the rule that there is no reality unless testified by a consensus between partners over a certain knowledge and certain commitments."¹⁵¹⁵ Generally speaking, Lyotard's "illocutionary"¹⁵¹⁶ "point is that one effects new moves, one opens up the possibility of new efficacies in the games with their present rules."¹⁵¹⁷ By emphasizing the search for "possible utterances"¹⁵¹⁸ Lyotard raises the "stakes"¹⁵¹⁹ of knowledge claims and "sketches the outline of

presents it. It presents it as a being there before all phrases. That is the paradox that in general signals reality as that which is", p.28.

¹⁵⁰⁸ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.xii.

¹⁵⁰⁹ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), No.124, p.49. According to Wittgenstein here, "philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot give it any foundation either. It leaves everything as it is."

¹⁵¹⁰ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Culture and Value* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p.45. Wittgenstein claims to adopt an "ethnological approach" to language, and so sees himself as standing above it in some way.

¹⁵¹¹ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.6

¹⁵¹² *ibid*, p.47.

¹⁵¹³ *ibid*, p.48.

¹⁵¹⁴ *ibid*, p.88 Lyotard explicitly – and systematically – moves the rational status of Austin's performative utterances towards the performativity ("optimal performance") of integrated social practices. If the 'supposed social system' is where distinct linguistic actions may become subject to a common standard or measure, the requirement is turn Austin's (alleged) performativity criterion on its head.

¹⁵¹⁵ *ibid*.

¹⁵¹⁶ Lyotard, Francois-Jean and Thebaud, Loup-Jean, *Just Gaming* trans. Wlad Godzich, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p.37.

¹⁵¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 62.

¹⁵¹⁸ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.67.

¹⁵¹⁹ *ibid*.

a politics that would respect the desire for justice and the desire for the unknown."¹⁵²⁰ Lyotard's 'political' approach to language "brings us to the first principle underlying our method as a whole: to speak is to fight, in the sense of playing, and speech acts fall within the domain of a general agonistics."¹⁵²¹ Consequently, the tenability of "the observable social bond"¹⁵²² is said to be "composed of language moves"¹⁵²³ calling themselves into being and/or question. The "question of the social bond, insofar as it is a question, is itself a language game, the game of inquiry."¹⁵²⁴ Lyotard's 'first principle' thereby moves rational thought in two different directions simultaneously, and invariably finds us re-turning to the problem of contextualizing his overall movements. On the one hand, Lyotard insists on the possibility of putting "forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself"¹⁵²⁵ in order to "testify to a difference (the differend) on which the fate of thought depends."¹⁵²⁶ Lyotard's insistence on the "withdrawal of the real...according to (the) sublime relation"¹⁵²⁷ between the conceivable and the inconceivable is the consequence of Lyotard ontologically prioritising the language game of art over all other language games: art's disregard for "pre-established rules"¹⁵²⁸ arguably puts the artist in the ideal "position as the (true) philosopher."¹⁵²⁹ Lyotard thereby places emphasis on "the increase of being and the jubilation which results from the invention of new rules."¹⁵³⁰ On the other hand, Lyotard holds the conflict between established rules in high regard because of the way such conflicts can put forth and testify to *differends*, or situations "that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both arguments."¹⁵³¹ Lyotard retreats back into the real (conceptions of reality) since "all thought conceals something of the unthought",¹⁵³² and the laws of rational

¹⁵²⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵²¹ Ibid, p.10. As we shall, Lyotard returns to a more sophisticated version of this principle in *The Differend*.

¹⁵²² Ibid, p.11.

¹⁵²³ Ibid.

¹⁵²⁴ Ibid, p.15.

¹⁵²⁵ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. "Answer to the Question: What is Postmodernism?" in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.81.

¹⁵²⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵²⁷ Ibid, p.79.

¹⁵²⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵²⁹ Ibid. We've inserted the term 'true' here because Lyotard clearly thinks that philosophy can only be true to itself if it can create new rules or bring the rationality of distinct rulings into conflict. In *The Differend*, for example, Lyotard distinguishes between true philosophy and the activity of intellectuals, arguing that a real philosopher brings forth the conflicts of interpretations (differends) instead of resolving them. Specifically, "this is what a philosopher does. An intellectual is someone who helps forget differends by advocating a given genre, whichever one it may be...for the sake of political hegemony," p.142.

¹⁵³⁰ Ibid, p.80.

¹⁵³¹ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.xi.

¹⁵³² Van Den Abbeele. Georges and Lyotard, Francois-Jean "Lyotard Interview" *Diacritics*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1984, p.16.

thinking must be brought to justice "be it at the price of self-contradiction."¹⁵³³ Specifically, "one's responsibility before thought consists ... in detecting differends and in finding the (impossible) idiom for phrasing them."¹⁵³⁴ The strategic and/or therapeutic value of Lyotard's questioning may therefore be similarly called in question: in what way can it be meaningfully contextualized (distinguished and/or legitimated) when it remains open to interpretation and questioning within the complex whole making it possible?

Witness the way Lyotard provides a narrative of the history of thought, and places his inquiry within "the context of the crisis of narratives."¹⁵³⁵ Lyotard calls this narrative the *postmodern condition*, and our narrator prescribes that we no longer think in terms of meta-narratives, or overarching stories about our knowledge of the world of experience.¹⁵³⁶ Lyotard's "incredulity to metanarrative"¹⁵³⁷ comes by way of a discourse that questions the very coherence of the historicity of understanding. A metanarrative is a global or totalizing story directed towards the integration of distinct intentional states and relations, and so moves contexts of interpretation towards the same intentional horizon. Lyotard calls such directives a "mode of unification"¹⁵³⁸, and generally divides their modalities into two main movements – the "speculative narrative"¹⁵³⁹ and "narrative of emancipation."¹⁵⁴⁰ Each mode unifies in that the speculative or emancipative finds expression within a "philosophy of history"¹⁵⁴¹ endeavouring to direct and/or integrate our "relation to time."¹⁵⁴² Lyotard claims that "tradition needs to be rethought"¹⁵⁴³ and argues against "what we (traditionally) call history,"¹⁵⁴⁴ namely that we "think it progresses because it

¹⁵³³ *ibid.*

¹⁵³⁴ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.142.

¹⁵³⁵ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.vii.

¹⁵³⁶ Lyotard, Francois-Jean and Thebaud, Loup-Jean. *Just Gaming* trans. Wlad Godzich, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). It is worth noting that Lyotard is not unaware of the contradiction here – prior to the publication of his 'report on knowledge', Lyotard allows himself to be mocked as the "great prescriber" when urging his interpretation of justice via a discussion of the multiplicity of language games, p.100. In fact, the discussion ends with Thebaud laughing at Lyotard for presuming to know what's best and legislating/narrating accordingly.

¹⁵³⁷ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.vii.

¹⁵³⁸ *ibid.*, p.37.

¹⁵³⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.* Lyotard's examples of smaller narratives appealing to grander narratives to legitimate themselves include "the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or the working subject, or the creation of wealth", xxiii.

¹⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, xxiv.

¹⁵⁴² Lyotard, Francois-Jean and Thebaud, Loup-Jean. *Just Gaming* trans. Wlad Godzich, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p.34.

¹⁵⁴³ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁴⁴ *ibid.*

accumulates."¹⁵⁴⁵ As Cohen notes, Lyotard brings the notion of incommensurability into the inquiry of history: our understanding of the continuum of events – the relations between distinct parts – remains "out of joint"¹⁵⁴⁶ and so "leaves open the question: Is it happening?"¹⁵⁴⁷ (i.e., where does this leave us or what now)? According to Lyotard, we live in a *post modern* era – our relation to being and time remains in a "nascent state"¹⁵⁴⁸ or *on the way* and may be narrated as a "general situation of temporal disjunction."¹⁵⁴⁹ Consequently, the postmodern condition cannot "be taken in a periodizing sense"¹⁵⁵⁰ since there is "no reason of history,"¹⁵⁵¹ "no assigned addressee and no regulating ideal"¹⁵⁵² and "no court in which one can adjudicate"¹⁵⁵³ the rationality of being *in time*.¹⁵⁵⁴ Lyotard asks "could the presentation entailed by a phrase be called Being?" and answers "not Being, but one being, one time"¹⁵⁵⁵ that occurs as "instances or relations here in universes presented by phrases, they are situational":¹⁵⁵⁶ beings are yet to be-there or be present(ed). The 'postmodern' refers to *the way* modernity stands in relation to discontinuous events, and is merely a pole set up to mark and direct questioning – by directing our being-there towards what *remains* at stake and/or in question. Lyotard claims that *truly justified* interpretations can only take place within spaces of reasons seeking to legitimate potentially questionable conceptions of 'reality' in *distinct ways*. Narratively speaking, the aim is to turn semantic fields – segments of reality represented by meaningful concepts delineated according to affinity¹⁵⁵⁷ – on their head by moving the "semantico-referential axis"¹⁵⁵⁸ around

¹⁵⁴⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁴⁶ Cohen, Sande. *History Out of Joint: Essays on the Use and Abuse of History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006), p.182.

¹⁵⁴⁷ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.xv.

¹⁵⁴⁸ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. "Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?" in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.79

¹⁵⁴⁹ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.3.

¹⁵⁵⁰ Lyotard, Francois-Jean and Thebaud, Loup-Jean. *Just Gaming* trans. Wlad Godzich, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p.16. Lyotard initially refers to his position as "pagan", but invokes the concept of postmodern in a footnote to clarify the "confusion" surrounding it.

¹⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.73.

¹⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, p.16.

¹⁵⁵³ *ibid.*, p.73.

¹⁵⁵⁴ McLennan, Matthew. *Philosophy, Sophistry, Anti-Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p.13. McClaren observes that Lyotard thereby becomes ontologically committed to *temporalizations* of 'being' that derive from the later Heidegger: Lyotard's conception of 'being' involves a reversal in direction by way of "thinking with Heidegger and against him."

¹⁵⁵⁵ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 70.

¹⁵⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p.75.

¹⁵⁵⁷ Finegan, Edward. *Language: Its Structure and Use* (Belmont: Thomson, 2007), p. 180. Finegan defines a semantic field as a "set of words with an identifiable semantic affinity."

¹⁵⁵⁸ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. "The Affect Phrase" in Crome, Keith and Williams, James (eds.) *Lyotard Reader and Guide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p.104.

the "axis of address."¹⁵⁵⁹ Lyotard's concept of language circles around "two axes"¹⁵⁶⁰ insofar as these distinct poles encircle each other. Given that they remain caught in one another's movements, the question is the way "this double polarization"¹⁵⁶¹ is a "transcendental condition of the articulation"¹⁵⁶² of meaning. Language is thereby understood as a complex whole with "no common measure"¹⁵⁶³ between its constituent parts – 'language' remains comprised of immeasurable "language games"¹⁵⁶⁴ that enable players to become "several (or distinct) beings."¹⁵⁶⁵ Lyotard purports to follow Wittgenstein by therefore urging that "the examination of language games, just like the critique of the faculties, identifies and reinforces the separation of language from itself. There is no unity to language; there are islands of language, each of them ruled by a different regime, untranslatable into others. This dispersion is good in itself, and ought to be respected. It is deadly when one phrase *regime* prevails over others."¹⁵⁶⁶ Lyotard ontologically commits himself to the paradox of rule-following in a paradoxical way. Although Lyotard insists that the arbitrariness of rules remain an integral part of the *performativity* of language, he also takes it as a given that rules *state* the way things are or should be done. Lyotard follows the lead of given rules in a performatively contradictory way, and argues as if the performative contradiction calls into being and/or question rational standards for linguistic activities and evaluation. Lyotard thereby assigns a *critical* role to the inquiry into rule-governed language games, and such a critical faculty arises from a quasi-transcendental "as-if intuition to validate itself."¹⁵⁶⁷ The *act* of identifying and reinforcing the separation of language from itself is therefore said to be of *intrinsic value*, and should be done *for its own sake*. The possibility of movement between "heterogeneous genres of discourse"¹⁵⁶⁸ presupposes a certain openness in the way distinct linguistic rules can be approached – and it is the rules themselves that determine which domains and ends are relevant to them. Lyotard invokes the metaphor of an "archipelago"¹⁵⁶⁹ to capture the possibility of circumnavigating the wide-open space phrased as

¹⁵⁵⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁶⁰ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. "The Affect Phrase" in Crome, Keith and Williams, James (eds.) *Lyotard Reader and Guide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p.104.

¹⁵⁶¹ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁶² *ibid.*

¹⁵⁶³ Lyotard, Francois-Jean and Thebaud, Loup-Jean. *Just Gaming* trans. Wlad Godzich, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p.51.

¹⁵⁶⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁶⁵ *ibid.* We've inserted the "or distinct" in brackets to convey Lyotard's point better.

¹⁵⁶⁶ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. "Wittgenstein- After" in *Political Writings* trans. Bill Readings and Kevin Paul Geiman, (London: UCL Press, 1993), p. 20.

¹⁵⁶⁷ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *Enthusiasm: The Kantian Critique of History* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p.12. Lyotard is repeating sections of *The Differend* verbatim here (p.130).

¹⁵⁶⁸ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.xiv.

¹⁵⁶⁹ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *Enthusiasm: The Kantian Critique of History* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p.12.

'language'. Heterogeneous discourses are nonetheless linked by the very ocean that separates them, and the requirement is to find the "passages"¹⁵⁷⁰ between language's many phrase regimes. Following Lyotard's lead, we are therefore obliged to ask: "where can legitimacy reside"¹⁵⁷¹ when providing a narrative of the history of thought and prescribing such a linguistic remedy? The difficulty is trying to determine the limits of his own thinking, and raises the questions: from *where* does Lyotard claim to know what he does, and *how* can he prescribe knowledge in such a way? Lyotard not only attempts to prioritize parts over the whole, but the partiality of Lyotard's writing exemplifies the relation between part and whole. Lyotard follows various directives – the search for justice, determining the rule/s for rule-following, delimiting contexts, etc. – and explores them in distinct ways. Lyotard moves *through* contexts of interpretations in order to problematize the very notion of what it is to contextualize and understand thought. We therefore witness Lyotard attempting to argue against a unitary position in a unified or totalizing way.¹⁵⁷² The performative contradiction is that history conceived as a 'temporal disjunction' provides the historical context for Lyotard's own questioning. While it is true that Lyotard subsequently distanced himself from his 'report on knowledge' on the grounds that it was false (or falsifying)¹⁵⁷³, it nonetheless continues to provide the context – and "marks the transit point"¹⁵⁷⁴ – for his overall movements. Lyotard therefore remains a pivotal thinker insofar as he moves us between questions and helps to locate our own approach.

¹⁵⁷⁰ *ibid*, p.131.

¹⁵⁷¹ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.xxv.

¹⁵⁷² Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.135. Lyotard himself asks "are we not telling, whether bitterly or gladly, the great narrative of the end of great narratives?" Lyotard complicates his own response by wondering if his questioning is simply another "genre" of discourse, and so a "bad parody."

¹⁵⁷³ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. "Interview with Alain Arias-Misson" *Lotta Poetica*, Series 3, Vol 1, No 1, January 1987, p.82. Lyotard's delimitation of knowledge is (ironically) limited by his own knowledge and storytelling. He subsequently claimed that the postmodern condition shouldn't be taken seriously as an objective or informed report. Specifically, "I made up stories, I referred to a quantity of books I'd never read, apparently it impressed people, it's all a bit of a parody ... It is simply the worst of all my books, they're almost all bad, but that one's the worst." Although Lyotard subsequently claimed that he didn't really know what he was talking about (regarding the rational status of the natural sciences and its relationship to other language games or narratives) the *Postmodern Condition* nonetheless provides an overview of the questions that concerned him over time. During the interview, Lyotard reiterates his ontological commitment to the "artistic community" as "a model for society...which...has no laws, no rules...people who do research, invent things, show them to one another, discuss them", and is said to be the result of a "very deep ethic", p.81-82.

¹⁵⁷⁴ Lyotard, Francois-Jean and Thebaud, Loup-Jean. *Just Gaming* trans. Wlad Godzich, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p.59. This phrase provides the context for Lyotard's questioning. Specifically, when talking about the justification and/or separation of language games, he invokes the "ought of ideal maximization" and claims that this "ought does not signal that a field of prescription is opening up, it marks a transit point from a descriptive game whose goal is the field of knowledge, to a descriptive game (by Ideas) of the exploration of the possible. The transit point is marked by the prescriptive." We shall return to this transit point.

Lyotard remains "indispensable to any reflection on the most difficult problems"¹⁵⁷⁵ of cultural thought or practice. Lyotard's way-making movements provide "an overview of these problems and is one of the most important theories to draw them together."¹⁵⁷⁶ The main difficulty in approaching Lyotard, of course, is that he actively resists offering a theory that *can* bring disparate parts together. Barker notes that Lyotard not only remains "consistent in his inconsistency"¹⁵⁷⁷ but (consistently) "reinvents himself with each new work"¹⁵⁷⁸ to displace the possibility of ordering the relation between parts. Naas cautions that since Lyotard's writings consist of a "scattered corpus...with heterogeneous interests and competencies,"¹⁵⁷⁹ we should resist speaking "of Lyotard in a more complete or comprehensive way."¹⁵⁸⁰ It is not possible to "mark out limits and horizons"¹⁵⁸¹ or "fly over the archipelago and make a map"¹⁵⁸² since there will always be "new phrases to surprise us"¹⁵⁸³ and "shifts in genre to interrupt our panoramic vision or make us revise our panoptic pronouncements."¹⁵⁸⁴ And as James concurs, Lyotard's interpretation of interpretations provides a "critical safeguard against the dogmatism of the theoretical in general."¹⁵⁸⁵ Lyotard's account of the questionable status of knowledge claims avoids resolving the problem of the criterion in any conceivable way: it is the "consensus about the criterion for this reality"¹⁵⁸⁶ that would *ideally* remain in dispute by way of the *differend*. If and when a given 'reality' is called into question or unjustly displaced, we find ourselves brought before "the unstable state and instant of language wherein something which must be put into phrases cannot yet be... This state is signalled by what one ordinarily calls a feeling."¹⁵⁸⁷ It therefore becomes necessary to "find new rules for forming and linking phrases that are able to express the differend disclosed by the feeling"¹⁵⁸⁸ and so "bear witness to differends by finding idioms for them."¹⁵⁸⁹ Lyotard claims that his own questioning "is called forth by a feeling...(like)

¹⁵⁷⁵ Williams, James. *Lyotard: Towards A Postmodern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p.1.

¹⁵⁷⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁷⁷ Barker, Stephen. "The Weight of Writing" in Bickis, Heidi and Shields, Rob (eds.) *Rereading Francois-Jean Lyotard: Essays on His Later Works* (London: Routledge, 2016), p.64.

¹⁵⁷⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁷⁹ Naas, Michael. "Lyotard Archipelago" in Nouvet, Claire, Stahuljak, Zrinka and Still, Ken, (eds.) *Minima Moralia: In the Wake of Jean-François Lyotard* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p.176.

¹⁵⁸⁰ *ibid.*, pp.176-179.

¹⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸² *ibid.*

¹⁵⁸³ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁸⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁸⁵ Carroll, David. *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida* (New York: Methuen, 1989), p.182.

¹⁵⁸⁶ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.26.

¹⁵⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p.13.

¹⁵⁸⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁸⁹ *ibid.*

anxiety and surprise"¹⁵⁹⁰, and such feelings cannot be meaningfully expressed via a systematic approach to language. It is the delimitations (rulings and/or linkages) of language that gives rise to such feelings, displacing the logical space of reasons in a more meaningful way. Lyotard calls this limit the *inarticulate affect phrase*, or a feeling for which "one cannot find the words."¹⁵⁹¹

We have observed that Lyotard is somehow able to find a place in which to diagnosis and prescribe a remedy for cultural thought or practice. Lyotard thereby performs a "global or totalizing cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience."¹⁵⁹² While the *performative status* of Lyotard's interpretation of language has given rise to conflicting interpretations – commentators have argued either in the affirmative¹⁵⁹³ or negative¹⁵⁹⁴ – the status of performatives cannot themselves be simply affirmed or negated within the problem of understanding.¹⁵⁹⁵ The issue isn't straightforward as so much circular, giving rise to the problem of interpretation in the first place. As Jay observes, "the tension between the constative and performative modes of language is permanent and irreducible"¹⁵⁹⁶ and has its basis in the relation between part and whole. While Lyotard maintains that competing and/or conflicting

¹⁵⁹⁰ *ibid*, p.75.

¹⁵⁹¹ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. "The-Affect Phrase (A Supplement to the Differend" in Crome, Keith and Williams, James (eds.) *Lyotard Reader and Guide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p.104.

¹⁵⁹² Stephens, John and McCallum. Robyn. *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture: Traditional Story and Metanarratives in Children's Literature* (New York: Garland Publishing. 1998), p.10. While the authors provide a useful definition of metanarrative, they do not intend it as a critique of Lyotard. Instead, they employ Lyotard's concept of knowledge and narrative for their own ends – by studying the ways traditional stories are retold across different cultures and times.

¹⁵⁹³ Benhabib, Seyla. "Epistemologies of Postmodernism: A Rejoinder to Jean-Francois Lyotard" in Lambert, Gregg, and Taylor, Victor (eds.) *Jean François Lyotard: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, 2006). Benhabib claims that Lyotard remains caught in a "performative self-contradiction", p.43 because he "wants to deny the choice between instrumental and critical reason." And yet the "choice is still between an uncritical polytheism of values and a self-conscious recognition of the need for criteria of validity, and the attempt to reflexively ground them. Lyotard cannot escape the Scylla of uncritical polytheism nor the Charybdis of criteriological dogmatism," *ibid*, pp.39-40.

¹⁵⁹⁴ Keane, John. "The Modern Democratic Revolution: Reflections on Jean-Francois Lyotard's The Postmodern Condition" in Lambert, Gregg and Taylor, Victor (eds.) *Jean François Lyotard: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, 2006), p.121. According to Keane, "Lyotard is not caught in a performative contradiction. He covers himself against this outcome by rehabilitating the logic of occasion... This procedure is not at all self-contradictory, since this logic of particularity is presented as neither a more universal logic nor a 'truer truth'. On the contrary, Lyotard's interrogations consistently depend upon the logic of particularism, and consequently they contribute decisively, or so I would argue, to a revised theory of the ideological functions of language games", *ibid*.

¹⁵⁹⁵ Jay, Martin. "The Debate Over *Performative Contradiction*: Habermas Versus the Poststructuralists" Honneth, Axel et al (ed.) *Philosophical Interventions in the Unfinished Project of Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992). Martin Jay observes that while there can be "few more withering rebukes... than the charge of performative contradiction" in Habermas's philosophy, the actual concept itself remains surprisingly undeveloped there. There is "no sustained examination of the implications of this concept in his work, despite its central importance", p.262.

¹⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p.271.

interpretations of the world are becoming increasingly subject to the same standard of interpretation (the performativity criterion), his own thought is ruled by interpretations that seek to displace *all* thinking and linguistic contexts.¹⁵⁹⁷ Specifically, Lyotard directs us towards a metanarrative to ontologically prioritize smaller narratives (contexts of interpretations that legitimate their own movements by being directed towards themselves) while throwing into question the nature of truth *across* the contexts in question anyway. By claiming that all knowledge claims remain an integral part of incommensurable discourses – as being relative to context-bound *narratives or regimes* – truth-values invariably possess a mere 'fictional' and/or 'power differential' status. If all knowledge claims *are* to be contextualized as either works of 'fiction' or as relations of 'force', what does this say about the truth-value of Lyotard's narrative and the role it plays in displacing other genres of discourse? Particularly unsettling is the way Lyotard attempts to raise "the fact/value disjunction to a high ethical principle"¹⁵⁹⁸ in order "to displace... all manner of problems at its very heart."¹⁵⁹⁹ Instead of emphasizing the *parallel* between epistemology and ethics, Lyotard wants to maintain a distinction between their corresponding object domains. Lyotard argues that *the descriptive* and *the prescriptive* are distinct language games,¹⁶⁰⁰ and prescribes (rules) that it is *against the rules* to derive an *ought* from an *is*. The only problem is that Lyotard's *description* of the divide finds itself moving within a circle. If someone were to (say) play the language game of inquiry, they would need to follow the rules of argumentation, and such rules act as a norm for prescribing (other) actions – such as establishing the burden of proof and producing rational belief through the "normative force of reasoning."¹⁶⁰¹ Thus: if what distinguishes and legitimates linguistic actions is the prescriptive notion of rule-following, the concept of prescription is already *built into* the description of rules as normative. Lyotard's understanding of constitutive rules not only permits him to describe the alleged divide between 'facts' and 'values', it also enables him to prescribe what allegedly divides and unites the "facts of language."¹⁶⁰² While it is true that Lyotard will go on to make the

¹⁵⁹⁷ Fraser, Nancy and Nicholson, Linda. "Social Criticism Without Philosophy: An Encounter Between Feminism and Postmodernism" in Jaggar, Alison (ed.) *Just Methods: An Interdisciplinary Feminist Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p.355. Fraser and Nicholson note that "even as he argues explicitly against it, Lyotard posits the need for a genre of social criticism which transcends local mini-narrative. Despite his strictures against large totalizing stories, Lyotard narrates a fairly tall tale about a large scale social trend" that somehow – or from somewhere – calls for "metapractical...normative judgments." Given this (performative) contradiction, the philosopher is somehow able to move "from the premise that Philosophy cannot ground social criticism to the conclusion that criticism must be local, ad hoc and non theoretical."

¹⁵⁹⁸ Norris, Christopher. *Deconstruction and the Unfinished Project of Modernity* (Routledge: New York, 2001), p.27.

¹⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p.28.

¹⁶⁰⁰ Lyotard, Francois-Jean and Thebaud. Loup-Jean, *Just Gaming* trans. Wlad Godzich, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp.44-52.

¹⁶⁰¹ Wedgwood, Ralph. "The Normative Force of Reasoning" *Nous* Vol. 40, No.4, 2006, pp.660-686.

¹⁶⁰² Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.9.

factual claim that "there is no 'language' in general, except as the object of an Idea,"¹⁶⁰³ the ontological status of rules – the question of their very existence and/or value – is taken as given and remains open to questioning. Lyotard therefore risks finding himself all at sea when navigating the circle in question: to what extent is Lyotard presupposing the value (prescriptions) of the rules being described and how can he evaluate (prescribe) the way they should be followed? Although Lyotard argues that he "does not presuppose the rules of his own discourse"¹⁶⁰⁴, he understands that such "discourse too must obey rules...to the extent that its stakes are in discovering its rules rather than in supposing their knowledge as a principle".¹⁶⁰⁵ Given this description, "philosophical discourse is waiting for its criterion"¹⁶⁰⁶ in that it "has as its rule to discover its rule: its *a priori* is what it has at stake."¹⁶⁰⁷

The Problem of the Criterion

Lyotard's inquiry into the rational status of rules – determining their validity conditions – presupposes the question of the conditions of its own possibility, and so turns on the problem of legitimating the search for a criterion in the first place. Witness the way Lyotard invokes the problem of *the* criterion when trying to validate the quasi-transcendental status of the very conditions of possibility in question. Specifically, rational thought "cannot fail to wonder how the critical thinker could ever establish conditions of thought that are *a priori*. With what instruments can he formulate the conditions of legitimacy of judgments when he is not yet supposed to have any at his disposal? How, in short, can he judge properly 'before' knowing what judging properly is, and in order to know what it might be?"¹⁶⁰⁸ Lyotard follows the problem of the criterion to its logical conclusion when exploring it within the context of legitimating rule-governed practices. The circle in which Lyotard moves is thereby approached from two different directions simultaneously. On the one hand, Lyotard argues for the multiplicity – separation or exclusiveness – of diverse linguistic practices, and so insists upon the need to legitimate (govern, regulate) distinct actions according to the rules governing (distinguishing, legitimating) them. On the other hand, the problem of legitimation turns on the question of the status of their

¹⁶⁰³ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.xii.

¹⁶⁰⁴ *ibid*, p.xiv.

¹⁶⁰⁵ *ibid*.

¹⁶⁰⁶ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. "The Sign of History" in Benjamin, Andrew (ed.) *The Lyotard Reader*, (Oxford: Basil Baswell, 1989), p.394.

¹⁶⁰⁷ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.60.

¹⁶⁰⁸ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p.32. Although Lyotard is specifically talking about "the reader of Kant" here, anyone reading Lyotard should be able to see that such questions extend to his own approach.

prescribed rulings, and so the problem is determining the normative content of the very practices in question: what criteria – rules or norms – should govern (justify) such practices in the first place? The problem of the criterion, then, emerges within the context of the language game of inquiry, and Lyotard recognizes from the outset that the state of play cannot be ruled either way. Lyotard's questioning occurs "after Wittgenstein"¹⁶⁰⁹ in that he problematizes the role human agreement can actively play in determining our *sense* of fair play (feelings of equity that follow on from our understanding of the rules in question). Unlike Wittgenstein, Lyotard argues that the question of justifying distinct 'forms of life' – deciding the truth-value and/or normative content of our practices – is distinct from the question of whether such practices can really be thought justified (possess the quality of being fair or just).¹⁶¹⁰ In response to the question of how it was possible for judgments to navigate the circle of their own understanding, Lyotard claims that "if I am asked by what criteria do I judge, I will have no answer to give. Because if I did have criteria... (or) a possible answer to your question, it would mean that there is actually a possible consensus on these criteria (and) we would not be in a situation of modernity."¹⁶¹¹ Lyotard questions the justification of trying to determine *the* rule for following rules, and urges that he only has one "criterion – the absence of criteria to clarify various sorts of discourse here and there."¹⁶¹² The problem of the criterion is only a problem here – and there – insofar as there can be "no criteria because the idea of criteria comes from the discourse of truth, and supposes a referent or reality... it does not belong to the discourse of justice."¹⁶¹³ Consequently, Lyotard attempts to make "judgments about the just and the unjust without the least criterion"¹⁶¹⁴ since "the just is not of the same game as the true."¹⁶¹⁵ Lyotard distinguishes between factual and evaluative judgments in order to situate and problematize "the very process by which a legislator is authorised to promulgate a law as a norm."¹⁶¹⁶ Lyotard does not deny, then, that facts and values are related in some way, and the question of their intersection turns on the way the "ought of ideal maximization"¹⁶¹⁷ may be crossed (out). Specifically, all language games remain

¹⁶⁰⁹ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. "Wittgenstein-After" in *Political Writings* trans. Bill Readings and Kevin Paul Geiman, (London: UCL Press, 1993).

¹⁶¹⁰ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), No. 241, p.88. If we recall, Wittgenstein says, "So you are saying that human agreement decides what is false and what is true?" -- It is what human beings say that is false and true; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life."

¹⁶¹¹ Lyotard, Francois-Jean and Thebaud Loup-Jean. *Just Gaming* trans. Wlad Godzich, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p.15.

¹⁶¹² *ibid*, p.18.

¹⁶¹³ *ibid*, p.98.

¹⁶¹⁴ *ibid*, p.14.

¹⁶¹⁵ *ibid*, p.24

¹⁶¹⁶ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.8.

¹⁶¹⁷ Lyotard, Francois-Jean and Thebaud, Loup-Jean. *Just Gaming* trans. Wlad Godzich, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p.59.

"impure...inasmuch as these games are infiltrated by prescriptions"¹⁶¹⁸ and the question of their justification "will consist in preserving the purity of each game."¹⁶¹⁹ The problem is the way the descriptive and prescriptive intersects in the world and whether the divide becomes a crossing (out). The question of what we ought to do "marks a transit point from a descriptive game whose goal is knowledge of the given, to a descriptive game (by 'Ideas') of the exploration of the possible. The transit point is marked by the prescriptive."¹⁶²⁰ We need to be wary of wielding an "ontological axe"¹⁶²¹, or cutting a "divide between that which conforms to being and that which does not."¹⁶²² The very act of cutting is unwieldy in that it *contradictorily* links distinct modes of being – by actively blurring the divide between the descriptive and the prescriptive in order to 'fix' (rig or determine) a game in advance. The process of legitimation simultaneously renders itself (potentially) illegitimate because of the way it falsifies the relationship between facts and values: in transcribing the being of justice from the being of the law (or 'truth') it corrupts the relation between them. Lyotard is particularly concerned by the tendency to universalize the transcription (ordering) of beings in society. Specifically, where there is a "true being of society, and that society will be just if it is brought into conformity with this true being, and therefore one can draw such prescriptions from a description that is true in the sense of 'correct'. The passage from the true to the just is a passage" that follows the logical imperative "If, then."¹⁶²³ The problem of legitimation remains critical because the act of identifying and reinforcing the separation of language concerns "the very distribution of being"¹⁶²⁴ and corresponding "distribution of assignments, responsibilities, values."¹⁶²⁵ Consequently, the *idea* of justice merely provides a "horizon that performs a sort of regulatory role with respect to action."¹⁶²⁶ Such an idea arguably puts players in a position of "transcendence"¹⁶²⁷ by "keeping prescriptions in their proper order"¹⁶²⁸ and by prescribing "the observance of the singular justice of each game such as it has just been situated: formalism of the rules and imagination in the moves."¹⁶²⁹ It is for this reason that Lyotard talks about the horizon of justice in two ways when it *performs* a regulatory role with respect to (speech) action. Specifically, the *multiplicity of justice* (or playing each game by its own rules) and the *justice of multiplicity* (or questioning the way

¹⁶¹⁸ Ibid, p.96.
¹⁶¹⁹ Ibid, p.97.
¹⁶²⁰ Ibid, p. 59.
¹⁶²¹ Ibid, p.66.
¹⁶²² Ibid. p.66.
¹⁶²³ Ibid, p.23.
¹⁶²⁴ Ibid.
¹⁶²⁵ Ibid.
¹⁶²⁶ Ibid, p.46.
¹⁶²⁷ Ibid, p.69
¹⁶²⁸ Ibid, p.97.
¹⁶²⁹ Ibid, p.100.

each game is played).¹⁶³⁰ The "justice of multiplicity" is thereby "assured, paradoxically enough, by a prescriptive of universal value. It prescribes the observance of the singular justice of each game."¹⁶³¹

We have been observing that Lyotard is a difficult thinker to approach because he remains *on the way* to language. Given that such movements occur in different ways – follow distinct directives or leads – it was not possible to re-turn to each part in a complete (uniform, coherent) way. We have attempted to pave a way back and forth, however, by following guiding themes – such as the problems of justifying rule-following and normativity in linguistic practice, and the impossibility of resolving inevitable *conflicts* due to a lack of *the* rule for judgment in language. We are finally in a position to approach Lyotard's conception of the differend, or the way distinct rules may come into conflict and unjustly overturn (overrule or rule out) justified movements within language. The concept of the differend is the way Lyotard attempts to present the question of justice as an irreconcilable dispute between conflicting modes of presentations. Lyotard moves around the labyrinth of language "to open an abyss between parts by analysing their differend."¹⁶³² The (illocutionary) point of Lyotard's 'analysis', however, is *not* to provide a systematic examination of the elements of a complex whole. It is rather to bring forth an understanding of the *incommensurability of reality to concept* in order to be taken aback by the sublime, *where* questioning may find "its legitimacy in a principle that is expounded by critical thought and that motivates it: a principle of thinking's getting carried away."¹⁶³³ Specifically, Lyotard's questioning is directed towards what cannot be completely understood (expressed, contextualized) either way – by simultaneously moving towards "an outside and an inside"¹⁶³⁴ of thought. Lyotard thinks that incommensurable phrase regimes invariably find expression in a differend, which is "to be found at the heart of sublime feeling: at the encounter of the two 'absolutes' equally 'present' to thought, the absolute whole when it conceives, the absolutely measured when it presents."¹⁶³⁵ Feelings of the sublime are "subjectively felt by thought as differend"¹⁶³⁶ and occurs when the rationality of (a) reason "seeks, unreasonably, to violate the interdict it imposes on itself."¹⁶³⁷ Given reason's inadvertent violation of the rational order (a crossing of boundaries via the act of exceeding a permitted limit), "thinking defies its own finitude

¹⁶³⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁶³¹ *ibid.*

¹⁶³² Lyotard, Francois-Jean. "Judiciousness in Dispute, or Kant after Marx" in Benjamin, Andrew (ed.) *The Lyotard Reader* (Oxford: Basil Baswell, 1989), p.326.

¹⁶³³ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 55.

¹⁶³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

¹⁶³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹⁶³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.131.

¹⁶³⁷ *ibid.*, p.55.

as if fascinated by its own excessiveness."¹⁶³⁸ Lyotard's overall aim is "to connect this feeling with the transport that leads all thought (critical thought included) to its limits."¹⁶³⁹ The reason Lyotard wants to transport thought *through* such feelings is to lead it to the understanding that there is no Reason that can conceive every 'object' and so "with reflection, thinking seems to have at its disposal the critical weapon itself."¹⁶⁴⁰ The possibility of identifying and reflecting on an inconceivable actively places a constraint on conceptual thought insofar as it releases it from permitted bounds when "thinking becomes impatient, despairing, disinterested"¹⁶⁴¹ in directing itself any further. The situation becomes *critical* when reason can be mobilized against its reasons *for being-there*. Consequently, it is the "limit itself that understanding cannot conceive of as its object. The limit is only conceivable with an outside and an inside"¹⁶⁴² and "immediately implies both the limited and the unlimited...The limit is not an object for understanding. It is its method."¹⁶⁴³ Lyotard's 'methodologies' actively bring forth the "limitation"¹⁶⁴⁴ of an understanding, and Lyotard *does* this by questioning the way the circle acts as a delimitation – i.e., via links passing *through* each possible part. Lyotard explores the way distinct criteria of relevance or adequacy may be called into being and/or question, and the resulting conflict enacts the questionable relation between part and whole. Lyotard phrases the problem before him in the following way.

Given 1) the impossibility of avoiding conflicts (the impossibility of indifference) and 2) the absence of a universal genre of discourse to regulate them (or, if you prefer, the inevitable partiality of the judge): to find, if not what can legitimate judgment (the linkage), then at least how to save the honour of thinking.¹⁶⁴⁵

The Reality of the Referent.

Lyotard remains reluctant to provide a definition of the most fundamental concept of his analysis. Although the "phrase event"¹⁶⁴⁶ remains an integral part of Lyotard's questioning, he argues that phrases are – in principle – undefinable, and such events are "merely what happens"¹⁶⁴⁷ in language. Any attempt to define a phrase's "being"¹⁶⁴⁸ would privilege one kind of phrasing over

¹⁶³⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁶³⁹ *Ibid*, p.x.

¹⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p.31.

¹⁶⁴¹ *ibid*, p.52.

¹⁶⁴² *ibid*, p.59.

¹⁶⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁴⁵ *ibid.* p.xii.

¹⁶⁴⁶ *ibid*, p.66.

¹⁶⁴⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁴⁸ *ibid.*

another and illicitly "fix the sense of a term."¹⁶⁴⁹ Lyotard's strategic use of the term *phrase*, then, is merely deployed to call "upon the capacity of ordinary language to refer to itself"¹⁶⁵⁰ when "one phrase calls forth another, whatever it may be."¹⁶⁵¹ Such phrasing, of course, immediately raises two related questions: if we cannot determine the sense of our most fundamental term – or phrase – how is it possible to argue as *if* (other) phrases meaningfully refer to the language in question and/or go on to argue that these other phrases – or events – invariably come into an irreconcilable conflict 'there'? In the first instance, we need to be able to fix a reference point if we are to follow (understand, agree with) Lyotard, and in the second instance, we need to be able to determine the referent of the corresponding 'differend' (phrase events in dispute). Lyotard is obviously not unaware of the circle in which he is moving, and the goal is to move (back) towards it by arguing that it is the "reality of the referent"¹⁶⁵² that is being called into question *through* differends. While Lyotard presents various examples of a differend, one "situation in question"¹⁶⁵³ continues to call forth his thinking. The "so called Final Solution"¹⁶⁵⁴ poses a difficulty insofar as it presents a situation that cannot be answered with specific criteria. The situation becomes even more questionable when historical revisionists deny the Holocaust's reality and displace the burden of proof onto the very victims of genocide. Given the denier's frame of reference, a differend emerges when it is "not only reality, but also the meta-reality that is the destruction of reality"¹⁶⁵⁵ that is called into being and/or question. While "it is true that there would be no history without a differend"¹⁶⁵⁶ such "a differend is born from a wrong and is signalled by a silence"¹⁶⁵⁷ indicating "that phrases are in abeyance of their becoming an event, that the feeling is the suffering of this abeyance."¹⁶⁵⁸ The feeling of being wronged is not *just* how such an inconceivable event could have possibly come into being, but the way Holocaust deniers *unjustly* refuse to even conceive of the gas chambers existence in the first place. The problem is that the victims cannot bear witness to their own experiences, making it possible for Holocaust deniers to question that such a historical event actually took place. The burden of proof is shifted onto the people that cannot be (act as) its truth-bearer: lacking the capacity to speak for themselves, millions of people are denied the reality of their own mass murder. Given this speech act criterion – where it becomes "necessary to prove that

¹⁶⁴⁹ *ibid*, p.69.

¹⁶⁵⁰ *ibid*.

¹⁶⁵¹ *ibid*, p.66.

¹⁶⁵² *ibid*, p.16.

¹⁶⁵³ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.3.

¹⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid*.

¹⁶⁵⁵ *ibid*, p.57.

¹⁶⁵⁶ *ibid*.

¹⁶⁵⁷ *ibid*.

¹⁶⁵⁸ *ibid*.

the gas chamber was used to kill at the time it was seen"¹⁶⁵⁹ – it is not possible to testify to the existence of the gas chambers silencing millions of people. Indeed, "if one is dead, one cannot testify that it is on account of the gas chamber" since the "only acceptable proof that it was used to kill is that one died from it."¹⁶⁶⁰ So if no one can testify to the fact that they were murdered in a gas chamber, it follows that there were no gas chambers to murder anybody – reported millions of deaths are either a lie or hoax. We thereby find ourselves presented with the logic of the "double bind"¹⁶⁶¹, a situation where phrases may come into conflict by contradicting one another. Further, the victims have been put in the wrong (or doubly wronged) because they cannot resolve the conflict or opt out of the situation initially wronging them. The Holocaust denier not only attempts to silence the screams of its many victims, but to bury the reality of the Holocaust in a silence that cannot be heard throughout history. Nonetheless, "the *silence* imposed on knowledge does not impose the *silence* of forgetting, it imposes a feeling"¹⁶⁶² of (say) anxiety or alarm that needs to be immediately answered or remedied (rephrased). The 'honourable' *thought* of the differend is therefore an attempt to locate what is passed over or rendered silent in language, where the event of "silence is (also) a phrase"¹⁶⁶³ calling out to be heard in other ways. In such a differend, an unjust situation "asks to be put into phrases, and suffers from the wrong of not being able to be put into phrases right away...(we) learn through the feeling of pain which accompanies silence... to recognize that what remains to be phrased exceeds what can they can presently phrase, and that they must be allowed to institute idioms which do not yet exist."¹⁶⁶⁴ Lyotard goes so far as to say that while "every reality entails this exigency insofar as it entails possible unknown senses, Auschwitz is the most real of realities in this respect."¹⁶⁶⁵

It is now legitimate to ask two related questions: why does Lyotard ascribe the possibility of legitimacy to the act of denying genocide and why is the reality of the Holocaust legitimated – felt to be more real – than other historical realities anyway? The answers, of course, are to be found within Lyotard's conception of language, and turns on the question of his ontological commitments. That is to say, Lyotard's "mode"¹⁶⁶⁶ of inquiry – in the "philosophic"¹⁶⁶⁷ form of "observations"¹⁶⁶⁸ and "reflections"¹⁶⁶⁹ – is determined by the theoretical presuppositions

¹⁶⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶¹ Ibid, p.4.

¹⁶⁶² Ibid, p.56.

¹⁶⁶³ xii.

¹⁶⁶⁴ Ibid, p.57.

¹⁶⁶⁵ Ibid, pp.-57-58.

¹⁶⁶⁶ Ibid, xiv.

¹⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶⁹ Ibid.

already thought to be true in some way (adequate and/or relevant to his overall approach). Lyotard might deny having *the* criteria for making rational determinations, but *a* criterion of relevance and/or adequacy is already *in play* and brought to bear upon his questioning. Lyotard's commitment to a) an *agnostics* of language, b) the lack of a universal rule to regulate (arbitrate, decide between) linguistic conflicts and c) an insistence on creating new rules to give expression to the inexpressible enables Lyotard to call the ontological status of 'reality' into question. The real question is: what is 'reality' within Lyotard's questioning? We ask this question for a 'realistic' reason: to what extent is it legitimate to locate the reality of the Holocaust within the potentially discontinuous events of language, or in relation to *the ways* in which it can be meaningfully referred to (denied, affirmed)? Put another way: isn't the question of its truth-value – of whether the Holocaust actually occurred – independent of the question of whether its existence can be either affirmed or denied? Lyotard argues that the reality of the referent cannot be "subordinated to the effectuation of verification procedures"¹⁶⁷⁰ since the "annihilation of the reality of the gas chambers conforms to the annihilation of the referent's reality during verification procedures."¹⁶⁷¹ In other words, it is not possible to determine a referent's reality without being *on the way* through language (caught within the circle turning 'reality' into a limit and/or question). According to Lyotard, 'reality' occurs by way of the referent, and the way 'reality' emerges and/or withdraws is through its relation to phrase events (distinct frames of reference). Given that it is the links between phrase regimes that may be called into being or question, Lyotard argues that 'reality' is similarly context-bound or determined (framed in terms of its reference points). Given this approach, the question of the adequacy or relevancy of referring terms does *not* have its ontological ground in the referent. Indeed, the "ontological argument"¹⁶⁷² – or the context-independent truth-value of the objects in question – "is false"¹⁶⁷³ since "nothing can be said about reality that does not presuppose it."¹⁶⁷⁴ The act of referring to reality, then, can never determine the truth-value of a referent by way of simply specifying (naming, describing) the object in question. A given designation – referring term – can never be adequate to (secure, determine) reality by way of *the ontology of a referent* since phrase events merely act as an *interim measure*. Designation "is not, nor can it be, the *adequation of the logos* to the being of the existent"¹⁶⁷⁵ and "reality is not a property attributable to the referent answering to the name."¹⁶⁷⁶ Lyotard therefore rejects *ontological realism*, and (like Derrida) may be called

¹⁶⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p.32.

¹⁶⁷¹ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁷² *ibid.*

¹⁶⁷³ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁷⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p.37.

¹⁶⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p.43.

an *ontological anti-realist* for lack of a better referring term.¹⁶⁷⁷ Lyotard ontologically commits himself to the view that 'reality' remains constituted through phrase regimes, and it is phrase events that may be called into being and/or question. The "possibility of reality, including the reality of the subject, is fixed in networks of names 'before' reality shows itself and signifies itself in an experience" ¹⁶⁷⁸ and (the question) of reality emerges when "a swarm of senses lights upon a field pinpointed by a world. It is able to be signified, to be shown, and to be named, all three."¹⁶⁷⁹ The circle in which Lyotard moves within, then, is determined via the way phrases refer to each other within a complex whole. Specifically, our conception (and questioning) of "reality entails the differend"¹⁶⁸⁰ in that "it concerns (and tampers with) its ultimate presuppositions."¹⁶⁸¹ In order to make sense of this enabling presupposition, we need to re-turn to the reality of the referent. Specifically, determine *the way* Lyotard can claim that "reference cannot be reduced to sense"¹⁶⁸² when it is the "sense of the referent"¹⁶⁸³ within "at least one universe"¹⁶⁸⁴ that may be called into being and/or question.

Lyotard argues that when a Holocaust denier "does not have a stake in establishing reality"¹⁶⁸⁵ it is because they are "playing another game"¹⁶⁸⁶ by "rules"¹⁶⁸⁷ permitting them to preclude the possibility of referring to the reality in question. While it is true that victims of genocide can never refer to the events of their deaths, the reverse is also true: how can we ever know – establish – that we were even born if we can never personally testify to (refer to, remember) our births?¹⁶⁸⁸ We only ask this question to bring forth what is really at stake here: the problem of determining

¹⁶⁷⁷ Chalmers, David. "Ontological Anti-Realism" in Chalmers, David, Manley, David and Wasserman, Ryan (eds.) *Metametaphysics: New Essays on The Foundations of Ontology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), p.93. To reiterate the meaning of the phrase referred to in the previous Derrida chapter. Specifically, Lyotard is *not* ontologically commitment to the view that objects and events have "an objective and determinate truth-value." Correspondingly, Lyotard's ontological anti-realism affirms that the reality of the referent always "depends on the context of assessment."

¹⁶⁷⁸ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.46.

¹⁶⁷⁹ *ibid*, p. 50.

¹⁶⁸⁰ *ibid*, p.92.

¹⁶⁸¹ *ibid*, p.xv.

¹⁶⁸² *ibid*, p.41.

¹⁶⁸³ *ibid*, xii.

¹⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 70.

¹⁶⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p.19.

¹⁶⁸⁶ *ibid*.

¹⁶⁸⁷ *ibid*.

¹⁶⁸⁸ Witness the way reality is presented as false – or simulated – memories in the HBO television series *Westworld* (2016). The television show reinterprets the movie of the same name from 1973, and primarily sees the world – or reality – through the traumatized eyes of artificially intelligent and/or sentient beings. Although these 'creations' have false memories, their sense of self (or reality) is expressed through memories called into question by the links between their own recollections. During one particularly striking scene in the episode *The Adversary*, the character Maeve witnesses the way such 'hosts' are born, live and die – in a laboratory as fully-fledged adults with a particular role to play in specific narratives.

whether *any* past event actually occurred and/or the possibility of ensuring continuity between discontinuous events throughout time.¹⁶⁸⁹ The question, then, is the way 'reality' may be built up and held in place or broken down and displaced via given referents. Lyotard follows Kripke here – or at least, purports to¹⁶⁹⁰ – by providing a causal theory of reference that actively undermines descriptivism (the view that the meaning of proper names is identical to the meaning of the descriptions associated with them).¹⁶⁹¹ Consequently, the issue is the way the referent is passed around in the circle of understanding, and in being "passed from link to link"¹⁶⁹² we may call the reality of the referent (back) into being or question. Lyotard's goal is to preserve the possibility of reference while claiming that referring terms are without true (real) content or sense. The reality of the referent is said to be determined via *the way* it is specified (named). Such specifications (naming) do two things simultaneously – they act as a "rigid designator"¹⁶⁹³ of the objects in question, and actively refer to the referent through its links in a casual chain designating 'reality' as such. Lyotard urges that "reality is not established by ostension alone"¹⁶⁹⁴ and the problem is determining whether the "referent is real"¹⁶⁹⁵ in related ways. The reality of the referent *Holocaust* may therefore be established if the referring term can be "'signified', 'named', 'shown'"¹⁶⁹⁶ through self-referential terms (such as Auschwitz, Zyklon B, etc.). Nonetheless, it is "not sense which can supply the identity of referents, but the "empty rigidity of the name"¹⁶⁹⁷ which "can act as a linchpin"¹⁶⁹⁸ when identifying related terms. A referring term thereby "holds the position of linchpin"¹⁶⁹⁹ and "endows its referent with a reality."¹⁷⁰⁰ In this way, phrase events may present a meaningful universe – and the meanings presented in such a universe follow the rules of the regimes constituting them as meaningful presentations. Specifically, a "phrase presents what it is about, the case, *ta pragmata*, which is its referent;

¹⁶⁸⁹ Descartes raised the famous possibility in *Meditations on First Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), of course, that reality might refer to (be) an illusion created by an evil demon. Gilbert Harman expanded upon such a systematic doubt in *Thought* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015), p.5. Harman proffers the more modern notion of a *brain in a vat* being misled by a mad scientist (the brain thinks that it is an embodied person experiencing the external world when its experiences merely refer to its relationship to its connection to neurons and electrical impulses).

¹⁶⁹⁰ We shall return to Lyotard's rephrasing of Kripke's phrases in our discussion.

¹⁶⁹¹ Soames, Scott. *Reference and Description* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005). Soames provides a critical evaluation of the descriptive accounts of proper names traditionally traced back to Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell, and extends to more recent philosophers like Robert Stalnaker and David Chalmers.

¹⁶⁹² Kripke, Saul. *Naming and Necessity* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 302.

¹⁶⁹³ Ibid, p.37.

¹⁶⁹⁴ Ibid, p.40.

¹⁶⁹⁵ Ibid, p.41

¹⁶⁹⁶ Ibid, p.43.

¹⁶⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 44.

¹⁷⁰⁰ Ibid, p.43.

what is signified about the case, the sense, *der Sinn*; that to which or addressed to which this is signified about the case, the addressee; that "through" which or in the name of which this is signified about the case, the addressor. The disposition of a phrase universe consists in the situating of these instances in relation to each other."¹⁷⁰¹ Consequently, Lyotard argues that if "there is someone to signify the referent and someone to understand the phrase that signifies it; the referent can be signified; it exists"¹⁷⁰² within that universe. Phrase events follow rules, of course, because they occur within – are causally linked to – the regimes enacting (bringing forth) the corresponding norms of action and/or evaluations for the course of events. The way phrases present meaningful universes is thereby determined by the regimes governing them. As such, the legitimacy of their mode of presentation – being-there or sense – corresponds to the way such phrase events may be linked to – follow on from – one another. If there is one rule of thumb – common standard or measure determining the reality of referents – it is "incommensurability, in the sense of the heterogeneity of phrase regimens and of the impossibility of subjecting them to a single law... For each of these regimens, there corresponds a mode of presenting a universe, and one mode is not translatable into another."¹⁷⁰³

According to Lyotard, "the referent is presented in the universe of a phrase, and is therefore situated in relation to some sense."¹⁷⁰⁴ Further, it is the relationship between senses that determine their relationship to referents. Concepts are said to lack content – names are really "empty"¹⁷⁰⁵ vessels – and the objects they refer to are thought to be similarly lacking in an independent reality. The referent is presented by *the way* "the name"¹⁷⁰⁶ relates to other concepts (names with their own sense of place and relations), thereby carrying meaning to the objects they refer to through their attachment to phrases linking up to each other. The name "fills the function of linchpin because it is an empty and constant designator"¹⁷⁰⁷... Phrases come to be attached to this name, which not only describes different senses for it... and not only places the name of different instances, but which also obey different regimes and/or genres."¹⁷⁰⁸ Lyotard observes that there can be (known) first or last phrase, and no way of directing (phrasing) our knowledge of all of them. Lyotard calls these "possible modes of linking"¹⁷⁰⁹ the "law of concatenation"¹⁷¹⁰, and urges that *the* rule for the concatenation of phrases "remains to

¹⁷⁰¹ Ibid, p.14.

¹⁷⁰² Ibid, p.16.

¹⁷⁰³ Ibid, p.128.

¹⁷⁰⁴ Ibid, p.42.

¹⁷⁰⁵ Ibid, p.44.

¹⁷⁰⁶ Ibid, p.43.

¹⁷⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 44.

¹⁷⁰⁸ Ibid, p.56.

¹⁷⁰⁹ Ibid, p.136.

¹⁷¹⁰ Lyotard, Jean-Francois. *Libidinal Economy* trans. Ian Hamilton Grant, (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004), p.250.

be found."¹⁷¹¹ While phrases should ideally remain within their circle of determination, this is not what actually happens – and it is not even possible. Lyotard asserts that it is "impossible"¹⁷¹² for there to be no phrase and that it is "necessary to make linkage"¹⁷¹³ between phrases that remain contingent and/or potentially related. Lyotard thereby states the law of concatenation with the following phrase: "to link is necessary, but how to link is not."¹⁷¹⁴ Since a phrase can have no discernible point of origin or directed towards a final destination, it is best thought of as a potential event passing through an open-ended chain. We can never know in advance where it should "take its place"¹⁷¹⁵ or to "what end it will be subordinated"¹⁷¹⁶ only that the possible modes of linking "are ready to take the phrase into account and to inscribe it into the pursuit of certain stakes, to actualise themselves by means of it. In this sense, a phrase that comes along is put into play within a conflict between genres of discourse. This conflict is a differend, since the success (or validation) proper to one genre is not the one proper to others."¹⁷¹⁷ Lyotard urges that the attempt to make sense of a given phrase – to locate what is at stake or subordinate it to some end – remains a strategic move that cannot be controlled by being played by the game of language. When phrases typically occur, it is really language indefinitely playing (directing) the players and/or the contexts of their occurrence. For this reason, Lyotard urges that "genres of discourse are strategies – of no one."¹⁷¹⁸ Genres of discourse remain part of a complex whole and the strategies taken can never be the more than the sum of their moving parts. As "a general rule, an object which is thought under the category of the whole (or of the absolute), is not an object of cognition (whose reality could be subjected to a protocol, etc.)"¹⁷¹⁹ It is therefore "important to distinguish between phrase regimes" and to limit "the confidence of a given tribunal to a given kind of phrase."¹⁷²⁰ The limiting of the given is an attempt to do justice to the phrases in dispute – by delimiting their respective courts of appeal. And it is by placing thought at these limits that the different phrases may be seen to come into conflict and/or question. A "phrase which links and is to be linked is always a pagus, a border zone where genres of discourse enter into conflict over the mode of linking."¹⁷²¹ No "matter what its regimen,

¹⁷¹¹ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988, p.129.

¹⁷¹² *ibid*, p.66.

¹⁷¹³ *Ibid*.

¹⁷¹⁴ *Ibid*.

¹⁷¹⁵ *ibid*, p.136

¹⁷¹⁶ *ibid*.

¹⁷¹⁷ *Ibid*.

¹⁷¹⁸ *Ibid*, 137.

¹⁷¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.5.

¹⁷²⁰ *Ibid*.

¹⁷²¹ *Ibid*, p.151.

every phrase is in principle what is at stake in a differend between genres of discourse. This differend proceeds from the question, which accompanies any phrase, of how to link onto it."¹⁷²²

This obviously begs the questions: why do phrases come into conflict over the question of their linking and what is at stake (in question) when they conflict with each other? There is, of course, no way to answer these questions without presupposing the things at issue – and what becomes the issue within any given situation is the status of the presuppositions themselves (the way conflicting presuppositions are presented and/or situated through their respective phrase regimes and linkages). While Lyotard maintains that the "linkings obey rules that determine the stakes and ends"¹⁷²³, it is the condition of their possibility that remains the real question here – insofar as the differend proceeds from a question accompanying every (possible) phrase and linkage and (possibly) calls into question the legality of a given (over)ruling. Part of the reason is the "abyss"¹⁷²⁴ separating the descriptive from the prescriptive and our tendency to think in terms of narratives to cross the divide between them. Narrative is a crossing (out) insofar as "the genre of discourse within which the heterogeneity of phrase regimes, and even the heterogeneity of genres of discourse, have the easiest time passing unnoticed."¹⁷²⁵ Specifically, "narrative recounts a differend or differends and imposes an end on them or it, a completion which is also its own term."¹⁷²⁶ The problem is that the events of their occurrence invariably displace the question of the legality of a ruling, pushing the injustice called forth by a differend "back to the border."¹⁷²⁷ Consequently, what *is* at stake everywhere is that the question of the mode of a possible linking should never come to an end and always remain open to questioning. Phrases *in* dispute thereby serve a critical function – by highlighting their questionable status and/or the problem of rule-following. To link phrases might be "necessary, but a particular linkage is not. This linkage can be declared pertinent, though, and the phrase that does the stating is a rule for linking."¹⁷²⁸ Lyotard's distinction between presentation and situation may help clarify the pertinence of the links (and rules) in question. The distinction is important because victims of the Holocaust continue to be presented with a situation that still needs to be spoken about – as witnessed by the way that their testimony has been ruled out of bounds. Although phrase regimes may call forth different situations of an initial presentation, phrase events are to be distinguished by their relations and instances. The law of concatenation can itself never decide the legitimacy of the given presentation – it can only situate (legitimate) it in

¹⁷²² Ibid, p. 137-138.

¹⁷²³ Ibid, p.30.

¹⁷²⁴ Ibid, p.128.

¹⁷²⁵ Ibid, p. 151.

¹⁷²⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷²⁷ Ibid, p.152

¹⁷²⁸ Ibid, p.81.

relation to other phrase events. That is to say, phrases may be presented as a given situation – as one situation among many possible situations – but these situations can never be fully presented (phrased). In "order to grasp the presentation entailed by a phrase, another phrase is needed, in which this presentation is presented. The present presentation is not able to be phrased now; it is only able to be phrased as a situation."¹⁷²⁹ Take the phrase 'Fire!'. The phrase could refer to (present) many universes and possible meanings, and there is no way to make sense of it without specifying the context of its occurrence. Suppose an actor yelled "Fire!" on a stage – it is an open question as to whether the actor is alerting other characters in a play or warning members of the audience. Suppose a child uttered the same phrase in the theatre – what are they trying to say and to whom? (they could be either delighted or frightened by the sight of fire, or merely playing with words heard on stage because they like the sound of 'fire!' or the effect the word is having on others). Either way, the same phrase could present different situations – a round of applause from the audience, a clip around the ear from the child's parents or a stampede towards the exits. Given these possibilities, a presentation "is the event of its inapprehensible presence (and) to deal with it is to situate it, to place it in a phrase universe."¹⁷³⁰ Further, "these universes are constituted by the way the instances (not only the sense, but also the referent, the addressor, and the addressee) are situated as well as by their interrelations. The addressor of an exclamative is not situated with regard to the sense in the same way as the addressor of a descriptive. The addressee of a command is not situated with regard to the addressor and to the referent in the same way as the addressee of an Invitation or of a bit of information is."¹⁷³¹ Consequently, "genres of presentation, if there any, are presentable only as genres of situation"¹⁷³² and a "presentation is that there is at least one universe. A situation is that at the heart of a universe presented by a phrase, relations indicated by the form of the phrases that link onto it (through the phrases regimen, which calls forth certain linkings) place the instances in relation to each other."¹⁷³³ In this way, differends may be said to refer to – name – situations brought into questionable relationships through their links to genres of situations. By being placed in a situation that cannot be presented, necessary links become broken or displaced and give rise to disquieting feelings. While it might not be possible to resolve the situation in question, it continues to ask to be put into unknown phrases through their links to the very language calling such rulings into being and/or question.

¹⁷²⁹ Ibid, p.74.

¹⁷³⁰ Ibid, p.61.

¹⁷³¹ Ibid, p.49.

¹⁷³² Ibid, p.71.

¹⁷³³ Ibid.

Critical Discussion

Aims and Objectives

The aim of the following is to critically evaluate Lyotard's understanding of language, and the role it plays in the identification and critique of culture. Following Lyotard's lead, our questioning will primarily occur as a contextual strategy, and the context enabling it remains the language game of inquiry. Given that such a language game presupposes rational motivation and/or justification, the *performative status* of Lyotard's statements remains integral. We shall direct ourselves towards differends produced within Lyotard's own thinking by way of the circle of understanding, and argue that Lyotard cannot circumvent the performative contradiction of his approach to language. Consequently, it will be the circle of understanding that calls the performativity of Lyotard's questioning back into question. Specifically, Lyotard's statements about the events of language are performatively contradictory in that they move against the parts of the complex whole in question – by trying to present a phrase universe (or universes) that transcend and/or act against potentially conflicting situations or contexts. While Lyotard's example of the differend might be thought to give expression to heterogeneous elements, it nonetheless acts as a unitary standard throughout Lyotard's questioning. In this way, the event of Lyotard's understanding may be said to contradictorily move (back) towards the structure of understanding itself – by *transferring a part throughout the whole* and/or *taking the part for the whole*. Nonetheless, Lyotard's contradictory movements remain consistent with the circle of understanding in that they direct us back towards the question of the conditions of their possibility. The question before us, then, is not whether Lyotard remains caught in a circle or contradiction – but the ways in which the circle of understanding itself performs Lyotard's contradictory actions. Unlike (say) Fairbank, we will not be seeking "the revenge of coherence."¹⁷³⁴ The concern is more: what does Lyotard's performative contradiction *consist in* and how may we refer to such contradictory movements? The problem is trying to carefully find our way through what Rasch calls the "minefield of self-referential paradox"¹⁷³⁵, or the

¹⁷³⁴ Fairlamb, Horace. *Critical Conditions: Postmodernity and the Question of Foundations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 76-77. Fairlamb is more interested in critically evaluating Lyotard's postmodern conception of science and he argues that "Lyotard's valorising of paralogy leads to a confusion between the context of theory production and the final authority of theory." Consequently, Lyotard underemphasizes theoretical coherence in the name of the logic of discovery, the dissent-motivated inquiry that pushes the search for coherence further. But this perversion of the motive of science can quickly become pernicious: for instrumental intervention becomes its own justification... the point of science is not to find more dissent, agon, and incoherence. That comes uninvited. Indeed, it is just because dissent and contradiction keep returning that we keep having to seek its coherence "

¹⁷³⁵ Rasch, William. "In Search of the Lyotard Archipelago, or: How to Live with Paradox and Learn to Like It" *New German Critique*, Vol. 61, 1994. pp.74-75.

"paradoxical act"¹⁷³⁶ of navigating the complex whole in question. If each genre of discourse is arguably a separate island and/or ideally remains apart, how is Lyotard's philosophical discourse able to find its way around them and/or maintain (state, prescribe) their separation as a whole? Lyotard not only argues that an interrogation of language should actively identify and separate language from itself, he also prescribes *universalizable* actions across the language in question (such as the transformation of the rules being described and/or calling them into question through competing linguistic acts). The issue is that Lyotard presupposes a universal norm or standard when purporting to question the normative status of (other) norms or standards. The task ahead of us, then, is trying to find our way *between* what Benhabib describes as Lyotard's "criteriological dogmatism"¹⁷³⁷ and Keane calls Lyotard's "logic of occasion...and particularism."¹⁷³⁸ Although Steuerman claims that Lyotard's "move to language"¹⁷³⁹ is a "tour de force"¹⁷⁴⁰, his arguments can only be thought forceful if we allow the "paradox"¹⁷⁴¹ of "reflexivity"¹⁷⁴² to be our tour guide. The problem is whether Lyotard can show us that "logic and cognitive rules"¹⁷⁴³ do not always apply to rational discourse or whether the paradoxical act of arguing against reason must remain within its prescribed boundaries (regimens, rulings). Our answer, of course, is relatively straightforward: such a paradoxical act is only intelligible within the circle calling itself (back) into question. If Lyotard can bring conflicting rules into (a) question, we invariably find ourselves directed back towards the problem of contextualizing Lyotard's directives and movements. Specifically, how are we able to link onto the differend within the circle of understanding, and how does such a linking determine the stakes (purpose, end) of his own questioning? Frank observes that Lyotard's reasoning is performatively contradictory because it "must move in a circle"¹⁷⁴⁴ presupposing the

¹⁷³⁶ Ibid, p. 64. Although Rasch's approach is very different to ours, it is worth quoting the original context. Specifically, "Lyotard's archipelago can be seen as a snapshot catching the postmodernist in a paradoxical act. In making a global claim about the impossibility of global claims, it depicts the special status enjoyed by the one discourse which claims that no discourse has a special status. The task at hand, then, is to go beyond mere negation and an accusatorial stance. Any denial of universality utters a truth that falls prey to self-referential paradox ...and therefore to potential paralysis. To get a glimpse of a universe which thrives on self-reference, one can formulate...a contingent universality, which as the oxymoronic phrase indicates, does not try to avoid paradox but rather, tries to avoid the avoidance of paradox."

¹⁷³⁷ Benhabib, Seyla. "Epistemologies of Postmodernism: A Rejoinder to Jean-Francois Lyotard" in Lambert, Gregg, and Taylor, Victor (eds.) *Jean François Lyotard: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, 2006), p.40.

¹⁷³⁸ Keane, John. "The Modern Democratic Revolution: Reflections on Jean-Francois Lyotard's The Postmodern Condition" in Lambert, Gregg, and Taylor, Victor (eds.) *Jean François Lyotard: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, 2006), p.121.

¹⁷³⁹ Steuerman, Emilia. *The Bounds of Reason: Habermas, Lyotard and Klein on Rationality* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.48.

¹⁷⁴⁰ Ibid, p.40.

¹⁷⁴¹ Ibid, p.39.

¹⁷⁴² Ibid.

¹⁷⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴⁴ Frank, Manfred. *The Boundaries of Agreement* (Aurora: Davies Group Publishers, 2005) p.20.

legitimacy of the rulings being interrogated, and so "presupposes...as a condition of possibility"¹⁷⁴⁵ the validity of questioning (overturning, moving beyond) objects within mutually given intentional horizons.¹⁷⁴⁶ Consequently, Lyotard's statements remain caught in a circle "since it is only at the price of self-contradiction can it expunge the validity claims contained in its constative force."¹⁷⁴⁷ As Readings reminds us, however, "any attempt to pay attention to the performativity of a statement or phrase, precisely to the extent to which it problematizes its constative content, will be a peculiarly Lyotardian move."¹⁷⁴⁸ Our approach to Lyotard shall thereby proceed in three related parts. In the first part, we acknowledge that the language game of inquiry and argumentation is *the way* Lyotard presents the differend. In the second part, we delimit Lyotard's paradoxical approach to the paradox of rule-following. In the final part, we rethink Lyotard's conception of the reality of the referent by questioning the validity of his interpretation of Kripke's argument for rigid designators.

Playing the (Language) Game of Argumentation.

We begin by "situating"¹⁷⁴⁹ Lyotard "within the argumentative genre"¹⁷⁵⁰ and note that Lyotard is way ahead of us. He had previously located his defensive position within the language "game of inquiry"¹⁷⁵¹ and subsequently attempted "to bear witness to the differend"¹⁷⁵² by producing

¹⁷⁴⁵ *ibid*, p.67.

¹⁷⁴⁶ *ibid*, p.89. Frank argues that a "differend without orientation toward possible understanding, or without a view toward an object that is assumed to be the same, cannot take place at all. Thus, it appears that Lyotard's project from the start can only unfold on the level of the consensus theory that it has opposed."

¹⁷⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.67.

¹⁷⁴⁸ Readings, Bill. *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics* (London: Routledge,1991), p.xxii. As we have already seen, Lyotard problematizes such movements because the status of a statement or phrase can only be determined in context – and the question of context is itself determined by what Lyotard calls in *The Postmodern Condition* the "performativity criterion" (the way different modes of presentation can be similarly thought effective and/or informative). As he states, "the performativity of an utterance, be it denotative or prescriptive, increases proportionally to the amount of information about its referent one has at one's disposal", p.47. That is to say, the performativity criterion directs thought (back) towards the question of how contexts of interpretation themselves move towards (perform, integrate) the statements in question. Lyotard restates this point in *The Differend* where he observes it is only when humans can "learn through the feeling of pain which accompanies silence" that they find themselves "summoned by language, not to augment to their profit the quantity of information communicable through existing idioms, but to recognize that what remains to be phrased exceeds what they can presently phrase, and that they must be allowed to institute idioms which do not yet exist", p.13.

¹⁷⁴⁹ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. "A Bizarre Partner" in *Postmodern Fables* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p.124.

¹⁷⁵⁰ *ibid*, pp.124-125.

¹⁷⁵¹ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.15.

¹⁷⁵² Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. xiii.

conviction¹⁷⁵³ through reasons *given and taken* there. Equally telling is that Lyotard refers to the differend in *epistemic terms* – as phrases *in dispute*, or an *argument over* the very things in question. Lyotard argues that a differend is what happens when a dispute is brought "before the tribunal"¹⁷⁵⁴ of reason and is "neutralized...as if there were no damages."¹⁷⁵⁵ Specifically, "I would like to call a *differend* the case where the plaintiff is divested of the means to argue and becomes for that reason a victim."¹⁷⁵⁶ The differend is where parties bringing an action in a court of 'law' find themselves forced from presenting their case in the language game of inquiry and/or argumentation. If the *reasons for arguing* their case are ruled out of bounds, Lyotard's 'argument with argument' concerns the criteria for determining relevant evidence and/or boundaries in the first place. Consequently, Lyotard's defensive manoeuvres purport to use the *force of (an) argument* against the *arguments of force*, and such a provisional tactic arguably gives rise to feelings of powerlessness (or moral disquiet). Nonetheless, our trained philosopher also argues that "stakes must be introduced"¹⁷⁵⁷ in order to be given the means to argue and that "within the hypothesis of a discussion in which the stakes are not the same for each of the two interlocutors, consensus appears impossible to obtain...This corresponds precisely to Wittgenstein's conception of a language game. The procedures for discussion and argumentation are dependent on these stakes"¹⁷⁵⁸ in that the "homogenization of stakes is authorized."¹⁷⁵⁹ While the name of the game might be to agree to disagree, disagreements remain directed towards making the stakes more uniform or similar by "*persuading* the other of my *veracity*. This is to admit but a single procedure, persuasion, and a single set of stakes, veracity."¹⁷⁶⁰ To cut a long narrative short: the goal is to try to win someone over to your position or concede defeat to the other side and move on. We invariably find ourselves presented with a situation calling for the following questions: why does Lyotard also appeal to the "genre of academic discourse (mastery)"¹⁷⁶¹ – when invoking Wittgenstein, Kant and Kripke¹⁷⁶² – to "defend... the differend"¹⁷⁶³ against (other) "adversaries"¹⁷⁶⁴ seeking power over contested conceptual

¹⁷⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵⁴ Ibid, p.9.

¹⁷⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵⁷ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. "A Bizarre Partner" in *Postmodern Fables* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p.129.

¹⁷⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵⁹ Ibid, p.130.

¹⁷⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶¹ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. xiii.

¹⁷⁶² Amongst many other philosophers.

¹⁷⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶⁴ Ibid. Lyotard identifies two main adversaries here – the genres of economic and academic discourse. The contradiction is that his approach consistently appeals to the very academic discourse in question.

terrains? Further, what does he try to establish – prove – through the corresponding arguments? The answer should be obvious: to legitimate his general mode of inquiry. Lyotard plays the language game of argumentation within a prescribed circle of understanding, and the game's stakes remain epistemic insofar as the goal is to reach the 'truth' via an interrogation of logical spaces of reasons.¹⁷⁶⁵ Lyotard might have his reasons, of course, but such reasons are only intelligible (rationally motivated and/or justified) on the continuum making questioning possible and/or necessary. Williams observes that it is therefore "important to stress the mercenary aspects"¹⁷⁶⁶ of Lyotard's defensive manoeuvres.

Lyotard appeals to the works of other philosophers in order to make points which are entirely his own. This means that although his reading of other philosophers may be productive and interesting in the way it brings their work into his perspective, the interpretation is often partial and tendentious. Lyotard's relation to the philosophical tradition is one of productive exploitation not one of objective assessment or careful restoration.¹⁷⁶⁷

Williams also goes on to make another observation that will require further elaboration. While "Lyotard has taken much of his terminology from other philosophers"¹⁷⁶⁸ he "has not made the same careful analytic distinctions"¹⁷⁶⁹ and so "is apt to sketch his point with little regard to the detailed study of what it entails."¹⁷⁷⁰ The concern, however, is not that Lyotard fails to provide similarly systematic analyses. Lyotard provides reasons for arguing against the rationality of entailment itself. Lyotard consistently argues – as a matter of principle or general rule of thumb – against the idea that arguments should have logically necessary and/or widespread consequences.¹⁷⁷¹ The prospect of logically binding – permanent and/or inescapable

¹⁷⁶⁵ Lyotard can be seen playing by the rules when he *presents reasons* for or against a given position, cites *authoritative references* (commanding, generally agreed upon or acceptable sources) and follows their lead to enable his own movements.

¹⁷⁶⁶ Williams, James. *Lyotard: Towards A Postmodern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p. 77

¹⁷⁶⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p.79.

¹⁷⁶⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁷⁰ *ibid.* We have strategically edited another point. Williams claims, for example, that Lyotard has "not gone through the same empirical studies" as other philosophers, and cites Kripke's concept of rigid designator from *Naming and Necessity* as an example. The only problem is that Kripke provides a *possible worlds* argument to make his case for the role of rigid designators – it is more the result of a thought experiment than an empirical study: it involves an argument for an *identity between referents* across possible worlds. We shall return to Kripke's argument for an obvious reason – Lyotard's use of the term rigid designator is so forceful that he bends it completely out of shape.

¹⁷⁷¹ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. xiv. Lyotard locates the arguments of *The Differend* within the "genre of poetics" for this very reason "in the sense" that it is a "discontinuous form of the essay" and primarily consists of a "notebook of sketches" that remain tangentially linked to (say) the dialogues of *Just Gaming* and the report *The Postmodern Condition*.

conclusions – is antithetical to this thinking insofar as such a 'terrifying' approach leads to a totalitarian (phrase) regime. The real concern is that Lyotard's partial and tendentious approach fails to adequately establish or maintain the links between the phrases in question. The performative contradiction is what happens during Lyotard's *acts of appropriation* (selective reasoning, seizing upon philosophical concepts via the joining of disparate parts or movements). We invariably bear witness to a patchwork 'theory', or arguments consisting of miscellaneous and heterogeneous elements. Lyotard's attempt to identify and reinforce the separation of language from itself presupposes the very thing in question – namely, the possibility of language *taken as a whole* (i.e., as constituting the totality of possible linguistic relations and approaches). The consequence is a homogenization and/or quantification of discourses, or an attempt to make qualitatively distinct contexts of inquiry more veracious via such a uniform or similar approach. Lyotard thereby enacts a differend when displacing the original contexts of analyses via the force of his arguments. The question is *not* whether Lyotard exhibits the appropriate care to the concepts providing the links *through* his thinking. Phrases entering into potential dispute come with the territory in that the language game of argumentation remains territorial: it involves defending a position by any means necessary and requires the marshalling of all available forces. Given the difference in stakes between (say) Wittgenstein's and Kripke's arguments, however, Lyotard's defence of the differend directs itself back towards the question of its performativity. Specifically, when appropriating the arguments of other philosophers, Lyotard motions against their phrase events for incommensurate reasons. Lyotard's selective reasoning results in the following irresolvable conflict: the only way we can make an argument for the differend is if it turns on a performative contradiction – i.e., rules out or overrules phrases in dispute.

Witness the way Lyotard seizes upon Wittgenstein. We shall set aside the question of whether Lyotard's "interpretation is so radically wrong that it points by negation"¹⁷⁷² to the appropriateness of the "reduction of the social to discursive practices"¹⁷⁷³ in (potential) conflict. We shall also remain agnostic as to whether "Lyotard's enlistment of Wittgenstein as an ally...is a strange and even inappropriate misinterpretation."¹⁷⁷⁴ It remains an *open question* as to how best appropriate (interpret) Wittgenstein's questioning. We can only do justice to Wittgenstein's thought by reminding ourselves that it remained resolutely on *the way*, and the requirement is

¹⁷⁷² Schatzki, Theodore. *Social Practices: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.134.

¹⁷⁷³ *ibid.*, p.136.

¹⁷⁷⁴ Burbules, Nicholas. "Lyotard on Wittgenstein: The Differend, Language Games and Education" in Standish, Paul and Dhillon, Praadeep (eds.) *Lyotard: Just Education* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p.41.

to follow language's lead within an ever-expanding circle of interpretations.¹⁷⁷⁵ Nonetheless, Wittgenstein attempted to direct his "sketches of landscapes...made in the course of long and involved journeying's"¹⁷⁷⁶ onto the most appropriate (correct) pathways. Wittgenstein consented to the posthumous publication of *Philosophical Investigations* on the grounds that "if my remarks do not bear a stamp which marks them as mine, I do not wish to lay any further claim to them as my property."¹⁷⁷⁷ Given that Wittgenstein's far-reaching and disparate thoughts were widely "misunderstood"¹⁷⁷⁸ and in general "circulation"¹⁷⁷⁹ anyway, the requirement was to put a constraint on interpretations.¹⁷⁸⁰ Although the goal was to "stimulate someone to thoughts of his own,"¹⁷⁸¹ Wittgenstein remained concerned about what was going on and would no doubt be on-going – "more or less mangled or watered down"¹⁷⁸² appropriations of his thinking. Following Wittgenstein's lead, Lyotard's defence of "the civil war of language with itself"¹⁷⁸³ may be thought "misleading"¹⁷⁸⁴ and/or overpowering. Specifically, "Lyotard's one-sided celebration of differences, fragmentation, and dissensus in agnostic language games"¹⁷⁸⁵ is argued so forcefully that it brings him into direct conflict with Wittgenstein. Lyotard readily acknowledges,

¹⁷⁷⁵ Biletzki, Andrei. (Over) *Interpreting Wittgenstein* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003). As we indicated in our discussion of Derrida, Biletzki provides a (critical) overview of the surplus of interpretations

¹⁷⁷⁶ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p.vii.

¹⁷⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p.viii.

¹⁷⁷⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁷⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁸⁰ *ibid.*, vii-viii. A part/whole problematic plays an active role insofar as Wittgenstein's posthumously published investigations remained incomplete at the time of his death, and he was unsatisfied with the overall (or final) result. Specifically, Wittgenstein was troubled by his inability to bring the disparate parts together into an integrated "whole", and he had to satisfy himself with often disjointed "remarks" or sections without a logical sequence. Wittgenstein talks of "several unsuccessful attempts to wield my results together into such a whole." The original goal was that his "thoughts should proceed from one subject to another in a natural order and without breaks." Wittgenstein would have "otherwise given up the idea of publishing my work" if he hadn't felt the need to protect it from other people spreading words about it regardless.

¹⁷⁸¹ *ibid.*, viii.

¹⁷⁸² *ibid.*, viii.

¹⁷⁸³ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.141 and p.142. Lyotard uses the same phrase in two separate places.

¹⁷⁸⁴ Rorty, Richard, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.215. Rorty questions the tenability of Lyotard's interpretation by challenging the suggestion that Wittgenstein set out to show that 'there is no unity of language'. Rorty comments that while "Lyotard takes Wittgenstein to be pointing to unbridgeable divisions between linguistic islets, I see him as recommending the construction of causeways which will, in time, make the archipelago in question continuous with the mainland", p.216. Further, "on my reading, Wittgenstein was not warning against attempts to translate the untranslatable but rather against the unfortunate philosophical habit of seeing different languages as embodying incompatible systems of rules", p.214.

¹⁷⁸⁵ Best, Stephen and Gellner, Douglas. *Postmodern Theory: Critical Investigations* (New York: Guilford Press, 1991), p.175. Best and Gellner go so far as to accuse Lyotard's appropriation of Wittgenstein as "apodictic and dogmatic essentialist positing", *ibid.*, 176.

of course, that he attempts to find his way 'after' Wittgenstein and argues that lineage may legitimate an approach insofar as "what comes after displaces what precedes it."¹⁷⁸⁶ Wittgenstein precedes Lyotard by acknowledging the question of his relations to other philosophers. Finding himself faced with the problem of inaugurating "new movements of thought"¹⁷⁸⁷ Wittgenstein wonders whether he can "only think reproductively" and doubts if he "ever *invented* a line of thought."¹⁷⁸⁸ Nonetheless, philosophy's responsibility is to carry "out the work of clarification" and to do justice to the problems our philosophical forebears have created for us – otherwise thinking threatens to become "just a clever (language) game"¹⁷⁸⁹ *reproducing* itself without rhyme or reason. The difficulty, then, is trying to find the best way to *rephrase* familiar – and familial – philosophical questions and disputes. The problem of translation is therefore already inscribed within philosophical inquiry in that it involves the act of changing words or texts from one idiom into another. Wittgenstein's conception of language illustrates the very nature of such a productive translation process. The "term language game"¹⁷⁹⁰ attempts to transform the way we think about philosophical problems by bringing "into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or a form of life."¹⁷⁹¹ Wittgenstein's speech acts rely on distinctive figures of speech, or the invention of "new similes"¹⁷⁹² to rethink traditional problems. Trying to contextualize a thinker's relationship within the tradition is therefore important because it clarifies the ways philosophers actively link onto one another. Given this philosophical discourse, tradition effectively *reproduces* and *questions* the way distinct thinkers relate to one another: all philosophical thought comes *after*, and displaces whatever preceded it.¹⁷⁹³

¹⁷⁸⁶ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. "Wittgenstein- After" in *Political Writings* trans. Bill Readings and Kevin Paul Geiman, (London: UCL Press, 1993), p. 20.

¹⁷⁸⁷ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Culture and Value* trans. Peter Winch, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p.18-19.

¹⁷⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹⁰ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), No.23, p.11.

¹⁷⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹² Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Culture and Value* trans. Peter Winch, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p.18-19.

¹⁷⁹³ Ibid. Some of the names Wittgenstein cites as forebears include Schopenhauer, Frege and Russell. Lyotard follows Wittgenstein by observing that questioning invariably "tries to find a way" to reproduce and displace the contexts of received thinking, and may thus always be understood to be in a nascent state. An after can never be "fixed. What is certain is that this thought will be taken into account, and one will be accountable to it", "Wittgenstein- After" in *Political Writings* trans. Bill Readings and Kevin Paul Geiman, (London: UCL Press, 1993), p. 20.

Wittgenstein's phrase *language game* remains pivotal throughout Lyotard's questioning in that it turns on it in different ways.¹⁷⁹⁴ Although Lyotard moves beyond Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations, it nonetheless provides the context for Lyotard's overall approach. Lyotard's text is not only phrased in the same way – as tangentially related "sketches"¹⁷⁹⁵ divided into numbered parts – Lyotard's conception of the "number of phrase regimes"¹⁷⁹⁶ goes on to *rephrase* Wittgenstein's "review of the multiplicity of language games."¹⁷⁹⁷ Wittgenstein (indirectly) speaks for both Lyotard and himself when he notes that his "thoughts as *remarks*...travel over a wide of field of thought (that) criss-cross in every direction"¹⁷⁹⁸ insofar as they remain "connected with the very nature of the investigation."¹⁷⁹⁹ Wittgenstein and Lyotard, however, part ways in significant ways. Unlike Lyotard, Wittgenstein sets out to *resolve* phrases in dispute by way of the concept of language games. The concept is brought into being to avoid "the bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language."¹⁸⁰⁰ Wittgenstein does not deny the philosophical importance of running head first towards language's barriers to understanding: a "philosophical problem has the form: I don't know my way about"¹⁸⁰¹ and the requirement is to find our way around. Consequently, what is at stake within Wittgenstein's investigation is the necessity of avoiding getting lost in no-win arguments – the way we argue *about* and *with* language concerns "the civil status of a contradiction, or its status in civil life: there is the philosophical problem."¹⁸⁰² Wittgenstein is therefore concerned about civil strife within language, or its many different regions entering into conflict through their respective borders or hidden pathways. Wittgenstein's inquiry into language games is offered as a more conciliatory position, or as a way of reconciling language's disputes with itself. The goal of Wittgenstein's questioning is not to "refine or complete a system of rules for our words in unheard ways"¹⁸⁰³ but to give "philosophy peace so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* into question."¹⁸⁰⁴ Equally contradictory – and similarly missing from Lyotard's conflicting arguments – is that Wittgenstein provides a *unifying standard* for measuring – identifying and distinguishing – language's many different regions and

¹⁷⁹⁴ We have seen it recur, for example, in Lyotard's examination of justice, conception of historical practice and interrogation of phrases of dispute.

¹⁷⁹⁵ As we've already noted, Lyotard and Wittgenstein both use the phrase *sketches* to describe their most important or thoroughgoing work.

¹⁷⁹⁶ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.xii

¹⁷⁹⁷ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p.11, No.23

¹⁷⁹⁸ *ibid*, p.vii.

¹⁷⁹⁹ *ibid*.

¹⁸⁰⁰ *ibid*, p.48, No.119.

¹⁸⁰¹ *ibid*. p.49, No.123.

¹⁸⁰² *Ibid*, p.50. No.125.

¹⁸⁰³ *Ibid*, No.133.

¹⁸⁰⁴ *Ibid*.

boundaries: that of *family resemblance*. Specifically, the concept of language-games is merely "set up as objects of comparison which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities."¹⁸⁰⁵ Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations can only be thought meaningful if it can have an "object of comparison – as, so to speak, a measuring rod...(since) we want to establish an order in our knowledge of the use of language."¹⁸⁰⁶ Further, "what should interest us is the question, how do we compare these experiences, what criterion of identity *do we fix* for their occurrence?"¹⁸⁰⁷ Wittgenstein proceeds to the concept of language games *by way of analogy*, or establishes an *identity by relation* between two ordered pairings via his actions – i.e., actively *refers* to one thing to identify (fix) the occurrence of something else. Wittgenstein's point of comparison is the way linguistic experiences may be "*related* to one another in many different ways and it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all language."¹⁸⁰⁸ The "proceedings"¹⁸⁰⁹ of a language game may therefore be identified and differentiated in the same way that other games – board games, card games, ball games¹⁸¹⁰, etc. – traditionally are: via an examination of a "complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing."¹⁸¹¹ Given the possibility of distinct relationships and/or similar ancestry, Wittgenstein "can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than 'family resemblances'; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. I shall say: 'games' form a family."¹⁸¹² The analogy of family resemblances, then, becomes critical to understanding the way language games relate to each other. The derivation of the phrase analogy – from the Latin *analogia*, meaning ratio or proportion¹⁸¹³ – can help clarify the relationships in question. Specifically, Wittgenstein's argument from analogy presupposes the possibility of two or more different things *agreeing with each other* in relevant ways. Most importantly, Wittgenstein's argument for the relevance of such an agreement insists on the relation of parts within a complex whole and proposes to measure their *degree of proportionality or commensurability*. Witness the way Wittgenstein's analogy can establish the link between the phrases 'language' and 'games'. Wittgenstein mobilises different "parts of language"¹⁸¹⁴ to draw a (family) resemblance between them, and he does this via a

¹⁸⁰⁵ Ibid, No.130.

¹⁸⁰⁶ Ibid, No.131.

¹⁸⁰⁷ Ibid, No.322.

¹⁸⁰⁸ Ibid, No.65.

¹⁸⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸¹⁰ Ibid. These are Wittgenstein's own examples of seemingly unrelated and distinctive games that may nonetheless be similarly related (specified) via the phrase *game*.

¹⁸¹¹ Ibid, p.32. No.66.

¹⁸¹² Ibid, No.67.

¹⁸¹³ Stevenson, Angus. (ed.) *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. 1, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2007), p.65.

¹⁸¹⁴ Ibid, p.31, No.65.

ruling that permits movement from one region of language to another. As Riberio notes, the "epistemological relevance"¹⁸¹⁵ of such analogical reasoning calls on the very language brought into (a) question. Specifically, the "complex nature of analogy arises from its own nature, or is intrinsically inherent to it. Two entities or states of affairs are compared as they have a property or predicate in common. In structural terms, the link between all of the terms involved entails shifting from the entities compared to that property, or from the later to the entities it refers to."¹⁸¹⁶ Prior to Wittgenstein establishing the link between conceptually distinct phrases, the concepts of 'language' and 'games' would have otherwise been thought in conflict. Put another way, Wittgenstein's argument from analogy presupposes the very thing that Lyotard argues against – the possibility and/or necessity of *translating* seemingly disparate or heterogeneous phrases into a common language (game) or *frame of reference*.¹⁸¹⁷ Although Wittgenstein makes the analogy to question the very notion of essential linguistic features and boundaries, the role it plays there remains integral: to find unity in multiplicity and/or division. Wittgenstein followed language's lead by arguing that the concept of 'language' – like the concept of 'family' – had porous boundaries and the requirement was to move *through them* in order to determine the ways we were "entangled in our own rules"¹⁸¹⁸ and relations. Lyotard's willingness to rule out or downplay Wittgenstein's intrinsic notion of family resemblance brings him into dispute with the genre of discourse enabling his own questioning.¹⁸¹⁹ The (performative) contradiction

¹⁸¹⁵ Ribeiro, Henrique. "Introduction" in Ribeiro, Henrique (ed.) *Systematic Approaches to Analogy By Argument* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), p. 3. Ribeiro is not talking about Wittgenstein here – we have appropriated him for our purposes. Nonetheless, he goes on to raise the problem of the criterion by way of Wittgenstein in another article (see below): the problem being the performative status of argumentative discourse.

¹⁸¹⁶ *ibid*, p.2.

¹⁸¹⁷ Ribeiro, Henrique. "The Role of Analogy in Philosophical Discourse" in Ribeiro, Henrique (ed.) *Systematic Approaches to Analogy By Argument* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), p. 276. Riberio invokes the problem of the criterion when asking two related questions here: is philosophical discourse distinctly argumentative and how may we distinguish the genre of philosophical discourse from other discourses similarly reliant on argumentation? The question is whether such arguments do anything other than reproduce 'philosophy' via a genre of discourse constantly calling itself into question or bringing itself into dispute (via conflicting arguments and irresolvable problems). The problem, then, is determining the rational status of "other forms of discourse similar to the philosophical one, including argumentation theory itself." Specifically, "the question we should be (really) asking, a la Wittgenstein, is whether the theory under which we define argumentative discourse is itself an argumentative discourse, or whether the requirements for that discourse are themselves the requirements for said theory." The related problem, of course, is Wittgenstein problematizes the status of his own arguments – or discourse – when trying to dissolve philosophical problems in ways that may be called into question by other philosophers.

¹⁸¹⁸ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), No.125, p.50.

¹⁸¹⁹ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.123. Lyotard tacitly translates Wittgenstein's language into "our own idiom...(such as) "family of phrases" and so separates Wittgenstein's 'family members' by shipping them off to different 'islands of language'. See also p.9, p.12, p.15, p.28, ("family of cognitive phrases"), p.31 ("phrase family"), p.44 ("family name"), p.83 ("family of idiolects"), p.117 ("the family of cognitive phrases annexes the family of prescriptive phrases"), etc.

is that the conflict between them can be resolved in a Wittgensteinian way: the only way we can make sense of Lyotard's relationship to Wittgenstein is through the very notion that Lyotard displaces – by establishing (and calling into question) their familial relationship. Nonetheless, Wittgenstein's unitary standard of measurement (identification by relation) inadvertently reintroduces the paradox of rule-following. If all families – like games – resemble each other in distinctive ways, it remains an open question as to how (dys)functional they all are or might become.¹⁸²⁰ Family members – like game players – could either agree or disagree over a given course of action, and there was no rule independent way of determining the status of the given relationships and/or rulings.¹⁸²¹

Following the Paradox of Rule-Following Paradoxically

We have observed that Lyotard and Wittgenstein conflict over the question of language. The phrase *language game* might be a standard *frame of reference*, but Wittgenstein and Lyotard *refer to* language in significantly different ways. We shall now observe the way Lyotard follows Wittgenstein's paradox of rule-following. Wittgenstein *interprets away or downplays* the paradox by identifying interpretation with understanding: determining the validity of a given rule becomes incorporated into the way it is already *followed*. Specifically, "there is a way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation"¹⁸²² or has "yet another standing behind it"¹⁸²³: *acting this way* is "exhibited in what we call obeying the rule and going against it in actual cases."¹⁸²⁴ Lyotard, on the other hand, does not similarly assimilate interpretation and understanding: he *plays up* and *reinterprets* the paradox by placing the onus on *acting out*. Lyotard problematizes a rule's validity conditions by arguing that they can only become truly valid when our reasons for feeling and acting move beyond their prescribed limits and can be grasped in different ways (by being *taken aback* or *further away*). The way we would ideally understand a rule is through feelings of (say) anxiety or surprise – and we can only move past such limits by way of conflicting or alternate interpretations (rulings). Consequently, "rules become the main problem"¹⁸²⁵ when the

¹⁸²⁰ Tolstoy, Leo. *Anna Karenina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.1. We are reminded of another analogy here – Tolstoy's claim that "all happy families resemble each other; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."

¹⁸²¹ Although Wittgenstein argued that "the word 'rule' and the word 'agreement' are *related* to one another, they are cousins" (ibid, No.224, p.86), the paradox remains: "no course of action could be determined by a rule because any course of action can be made out to accord with the rule...(and)...if everything can be made out to accord with the rule, then it could also be made out to conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict." (ibid, No.201).

¹⁸²² Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), No.201, p.81.

¹⁸²³ Ibid.

¹⁸²⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸²⁵ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. "Rules and Paradoxes" *Cultural Critique*, No. 5. 1986/7, p.212. Lyotard goes on to reiterate his general position here by providing a summary of his thinking. Specifically,

limits of our understanding actively bring forth the paradox: we understand their limits when they conflict with each other or overrule conflicting interpretations. Lyotard attempts to resolve Wittgenstein's paradox in a paradoxical way – by following the question of the normativity of meaning in a performatively contradictory manner. Rules become *the problem* in the following way: while every course of action must be made to accord with the rules in question, courses of action must also be brought into conflict and/or question. By placing the burden of proof on the content of feelings, however, Lyotard presupposes the way distinct intentional states may *meaningfully relate* to each other. Specifically, Lyotard's conception of affective phrases does two different things simultaneously – it appeals to subjectively and/or privately felt 'rulings' to determine the meaningful content of given feelings whilst presupposing the normative status of said feelings by way of a tacitly agreed upon public standard of moral correctness. Lyotard thereby argues as if the feeling of being (say) surprised or anxious by arguments for Holocaust denial speaks for itself. Although Lyotard's concept of the differend does not identify an *inarticulate affect phrase* with the expression of feeling¹⁸²⁶, a problem nonetheless remains: how can we determine the moral correctness of an emotional response without presupposing the validity of the very language games and/or phrase regimes in question? The problem of the criterion is particularly acute when the differend arguably enacts a *self-evident or unquestioned moral presupposition*. Lyotard evidently ascribes moral content to potentially conflicting or arbitrary feelings and so begs the question as to the moral status of an inarticulate phrase affect. It remains an open question as to whether it is possible to articulate (phrase) the feelings of anxiety or surprise in a morally correct (coherent, consistent) way. Perhaps that is why Lyotard calls on Kant's conception of sublimity to (paradoxically) arbitrate the moral question of phrases in dispute – such feelings arguably provide their own justification when pushing reason beyond its limits. The difficulty, however, is that the two philosophers are arguing at cross-purposes. Lyotard overrules Kant by displacing the question of "the immeasurability of nature"¹⁸²⁷ and the feeling of being overpowered by a "formless object insofar as limitlessness is represented in

"the rule of the philosopher's discourse has always been to find the rule of his own discourse. The philosopher is thus someone who speaks in order to find the rule of what s/he wishes to say, and who by virtue of that fact speaks before knowing the rule, and without knowing the rule. I think that this situation is comparable to that of the artistic avant-gardes...The artist is one who pinpoints in and by his work an aspect of those rules that had remained unquestioned. In this sense, s/he works and has been working as a philosopher", p.214-215.

¹⁸²⁶ Satris, Stephen. *Ethical Emotivism* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987) and Wilks, Colin, *Emotion, Truth and Meaning* (Dordrecht: Springer Academic Publishing, 2002). Satris and Wilks provide relatively recent historical overviews (and defences of) *emotivism* – an ethical theory that can ironically be traced back to early Wittgenstein by way of Ayer, Stevenson and Hare. Emotivism argues, of course, that moral language is not truth-evaluable because they are primarily an expression of positive and/or negative feeling directed towards influencing others positively and/or negatively.

¹⁸²⁷ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Power of Judgment* trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.145.

it."¹⁸²⁸ Kant's concept of the "dynamically sublime"¹⁸²⁹ argues that there is an "*agreeableness* in the cessation of something troublesome"¹⁸³⁰ when reason finally *comes to terms* with the "power that has no dominion over us."¹⁸³¹ Unlike Lyotard's conception of the differend, Kant insists on the superiority of the power of reason in that it has little reason to remain (say) anxious by "our own limitation in the immeasurability of nature and the insufficiency of our capacity to adopt a standard proportionate to it."¹⁸³²

The paradox of rule-following, however, involves delimiting the way rules govern reasons for feeling and acting – i.e., in what way should courses of action accord with rules and/or conflict with them? Finkelstein observes that Wittgenstein's paradox concerns the performative status of prescriptions in that it "has its roots in the thought that there is always a gulf between the statement of a rule – a string of words – and the rule's execution or application."¹⁸³³ The problem is bridging "the gulf between every rule and what it requires"¹⁸³⁴ or trying to "block the infinite regress of interpretations"¹⁸³⁵ determining a given rule's statements: how can an interpretation of rules begin or end without performing the very rules (interpretations) in question? The paradox, then, is that rules remain related to norms of conduct that may be either in accord or

¹⁸²⁸ *ibid*, p.144. As we've already observed, Kant provides examples of what such limitless or unbounded feelings might be referring to. Specifically, "Bold, overhanging, as it were threatening cliffs, thunder clouds towering up into the heavens, bringing with them flashes of lightning and crashes of thunder, volcanoes with their all-destroying violence, hurricanes with the devastation they leave behind, the boundless ocean set into a rage, a lofty waterfall on a mighty river, etc., make our capacity to resist into an insignificant trifle in comparison with their power. But the sight of them only becomes all the more attractive the more fearful it is, as long as we find ourselves in safety, and we gladly call these objects sublime because they elevate the strength of our soul above its usual level, and allow us to discover within ourselves a capacity for resistance of quite another kind, which gives us the courage to measure ourselves against the apparent all-powerfulness of nature", p.144-145.

¹⁸²⁹ *Ibid*, p.143. Although Kant distinguishes between two kinds of sublime feeling – the mathematical and the dynamical – only the latter notion is (tangentially) related to Lyotard's conception.

¹⁸³⁰ *Ibid*, p.144. We've italicized agreeableness here.

¹⁸³¹ *ibid*, p.143.

¹⁸³² *ibid*, p.145. Witness the way the feeling of anxiety is said to give way to the feeling of joyousness. These are obviously qualitatively distinct emotional responses to natural events like thunderstorms or raging oceans, and the requirement was to specify the nature of the relationship between them: in what way may conflicting feelings come to agree with the "ideas of reason" (*ibid*, p.141). Kant argues that the transition from one emotional state to another occurs on rational grounds – via reason's relationship to nature. Specifically, we "express ourselves on the whole incorrectly if we call some object of nature sublime...for how can we designate with an expression of approval that which is apprehended in itself as contrapurposive?" (*ibid*, p.129). Consequently, sublime feelings are *teleological*, or relate to their given purpose within an external and rationally observable natural world. Such a transitive relation presupposes a criterion of correctness determining the paradoxical transition from anxiety to joy – our natural "predisposition to the feeling of (practical) ideas – i.e., to that which is moral" (*ibid*, p.149).

¹⁸³³ Finkelstein, David. "Wittgenstein on Rules and Platonism" in Cray, Alice and Rupert, Read (eds.) *The New Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.62. Finkelstein is not talking about Lyotard here – he is commenting on the paradox that recurs in Wittgenstein.

¹⁸³⁴ *Ibid*.

¹⁸³⁵ *ibid*, p.55.

conflict: by what standard may we evaluate the standard – or reasons – for feeling and acting without presupposing the very norms in question? Put another way: how is it possible to question the normativity of a rule without calling on equally problematic – or questionable – rules and norms in turn? The paradox of the normativity of rules raises distinct but related questions concerning the normative status of all meaningful interpretations and/or reasons for acting. As Araszkievicz observes, the "problem of normativity"¹⁸³⁶ requires us to determine the "very concept of a reason for action"¹⁸³⁷, or the tenability of the "distinction between motivating and justificatory reasons."¹⁸³⁸ If our rules ultimately lie beyond rational motivation and justification, can we ever have reason – good or better reasons – to question the related norms for action?

Wright provides a useful overview of the "dilemma"¹⁸³⁹ by observing that the reality of rule-following raises a "clutter of deeply perplexing questions of constitution and epistemic access."¹⁸⁴⁰ Specifically, "wherever there are rules, there have to be facts about what their requirements are – and facts, moreover, which we are capable of knowing if the rules are ones whose guidance we are capable of receiving and acting on."¹⁸⁴¹ If rules "enjoin determinate mandates, permissions and prohibitions,"¹⁸⁴² the problem is determining the way they might lead us (astray) in *undetermined* situations. Wright goes on to suggest that three interrelated conditions must be met for rules to derive their paradoxical status as rulings.

The objectivity condition: they have to issue their requirements independently and in advance of our appreciation of them...but what kind of fact can it be that, in a context which no one has yet being placed in or considered...a course of action, is already what will be required by a rule?¹⁸⁴³

Lyotard ontologically commits to the *objectivity condition* paradoxically, or as an 'object of an idea' that occurs independently of any given context of thought or action. The paradox is that Lyotard tacitly objectifies such an idea by arguing that the concept of rule-following has a quasi-transcendental status: mandated rules are always already given in language and those following them would ideally break (transform, question) their mandates in turn. Lyotard's paradoxical

¹⁸³⁶ Araszkievicz, Michal (ed.) *Problems of Normativity, Rules and Rule-Following* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015), p.v.

¹⁸³⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸³⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁸³⁹ Wright, Crispin. "Rule-following Without Reasons – Wittgenstein's Quietism and the Constitutive Question" in Preston, John (ed.) *Wittgenstein and Reason* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2008), p.123.

¹⁸⁴⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁴¹ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁴² *ibid.*

¹⁸⁴³ *ibid.*, p.124.

commitment to rule-following thereby moves in two directions simultaneously: towards the possibility of meaningful accord *and* conflict. Specifically, Lyotard acts *as if* the rules are objective in the sense that they issue their requirements in accordance with their directives and movements. Given the paradox of rule-following, it is not truth conditions and/or functions that render rules objective and/or necessary: we can never provide completely truthful statements – complete descriptions – of the conditions under which rules should be followed. Nonetheless, Lyotard argues as if his descriptions of rules exhibit the condition of being objectively true – by purporting to describe the way rules really are and/or should be. It might be true that there are no objective (i.e., external) reasons for rules to prescribe action, but their normative status remains conditional (subject to certain requirements being met and/or qualified by reservations). Rules provide us with reasons for acting in virtue of the 'language' (games, genres) reproduced and regulated *through* the very actions called into being and/or question. The rules of language may therefore be thought 'objective' – necessarily true and binding – in that they remain determined by their own system of governance, or governing authority. Rules remain internally related to the phrase regimes determining them *as rules*, and may be externalized logically (objectified) as an empirical *social phenomenon* (i.e., as an object of inquiry directed towards the question of the justification of norms of conduct and/or the legitimacy of social bonds). Consequently, determining a rule's conditions of possibility turns on the very paradox calling its validity conditions (objectivity, necessity) back into question. Lyotard's law of concatenation exhibits the performatively contradictory condition of given rules being objectively true or legally binding: its statement helps to specify the potentially questionable links between distinct parts within a complex whole. As Lyotard states, "it is necessary to link onto a phrase that happens (be it by a silence, which is a phrase), there is no possibility of not linking onto it...to link is necessary; how to link is contingent."¹⁸⁴⁴ The performative contradiction is readily apparent: is Lyotard's phrasing of *the law* a necessary (objective) truth or is it merely contingently true? In what way can it be linked to every (other) phrase – necessarily or contingently?¹⁸⁴⁵ Lyotard's real objective is questioning the way the law of concatenation (ontologically) commits us to an unjust ruling. Specifically, Faurisson's Holocaust denial is concatenated in such a way as to make it possible to call into question the reality of the referent 'Auschwitz' – by actively denying the tenability of the links between phrases in dispute. If there can be no higher court of appeal – objective standard for adjudicating the (performativity of) competing statements – how can anyone prove the existence of the Holocaust when burying it in silence? If Holocaust victims

¹⁸⁴⁴ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.29.

¹⁸⁴⁵ *ibid*, p.129. Lyotard's ontological commitment to the objectivity condition forces him to paradoxically remind us that we "really are reading a book of philosophy, the phrases in it are concatenated in such a way as to show that that concatenation is not just a matter of course and that the rule for their concatenation remains to be found."

are divested of the means to argue for themselves, the law of concatenation legally permits the dispute to be referred to – transferred and translated – into the language game of the denier. The law cannot itself make a determination one way or another – it merely forces us to acknowledge that anyone vocally disavowing the Holocaust is "playing another genre of discourse, one in which conviction, or the obtainment of a consensus over a defined reality, is not at stake."¹⁸⁴⁶ The paradox is that Lyotard finds such an unconvincing argument partially 'convincing' anyway. Lyotard's philosophical background plays an active role in the "dilemma"¹⁸⁴⁷ presented – he explicitly calls on the rules of logic or *formal* argument to validate the "logical mechanism of the double bind."¹⁸⁴⁸ It is objective – or objectified – rules of inference that give rise to the differend as moral exemplar, where the validity of the argument is determined by its logical *form*, and not its moral or epistemic *content*. Lyotard might be able to fault the logic morally but such a questionable argument is not itself considered faulty on logical grounds.¹⁸⁴⁹ The argument's links to conflicting phrase events are objectively determined (or overruled) by the requirements of language itself, and so become rational to a fault.

The relevancy condition: if a rule is to lead us, it has to be *that* rule rather than any other rule whose guidance we are accepting – there have to be facts about the identity of the specific rule we intend to follow. But what kind of fact could it be that...such-and-such a response, or course of action, is already what will be required by a particular rule?¹⁸⁵⁰

The relevancy condition also figures paradoxically in Lyotard's conception of rule-following. The relevance of rules remains integral insofar as Lyotard seeks to distinguish between the legality of a given determination and the problem of justifying the legitimacy of the relevant rulings. The paradox is the nature of the relationship between general principles exercising legitimate authority over particular areas of activity and the legitimacy of their extensions (the act of

¹⁸⁴⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁴⁷ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.5.

¹⁸⁴⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁴⁹ *ibid.* pp.5-6. Witness the way Lyotard renders the logic of Faurisson's argument – by citing the links between two contradictory statements via the logical operations of exclusion and implication. Specifically, "Either you are the victim of a wrong, or you are not. If you are not, you are deceived (or lying) in testifying that you are. If you are, since you can bear witness to this wrong, it is not a wrong, and you are deceived (or lying) in testifying that you are the victim of a wrong. Let p be: you are the victim of a wrong: not p: you are not; Tp: phrase p is true; Fp: it is false. The argument is: either p or not p; if not-p, then Fp; if p, then not-p, then Fp. The ancients called this argument a dilemma. It contains the mechanism of the double bind as studied by the Palo Alto School, it is a linchpin of Hegelian dialectical logic...This mechanism consists in applying to two contradictory propositions, p and not-p. two logical operators: exclusion (either ... , or) and implication (if then). So, at once {(either p or not-p) and (if p. then not-p)}. It's as if you said both, either it is white, or it is not white: and if it is white, it is not white."

¹⁸⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

extending limits in accordance with relevant rules). Consequently, whatever is said or done necessarily follow already predetermined and circumscribed rules. Such rulings can only take place in yet to be determined – open ended and potentially questionable – situations and contexts. Specifically, they just exercise their authority via given criteria of rationality, and it is in *that way* that rules prescribe and/or select actions. If we are to 'follow' the normative status of meaningful actions, the requirement is to determine the relevance of the rules (norms) and conditions in question. The relevancy condition, however, puts a constraint upon Lyotard's approach in that it produces an irresolvable conflict within Lyotard's own questioning. Such a conflict goes to the heart of the source of the normativity of rule-following, and is perhaps best expressed as the contradiction between being 'played' (directed, governed) by language and 'players' directing (determining the course of, extending) the events of language's relevance. Specifically, it gives rise to a conflict between the performative and the constative, or players who serve (follow) language and/or are supposed to be served (directed) by it. Witness the way Lyotard uses the concept of *socially constituted* rules to delimit the horizon of thought *and* to push thought beyond such horizons. Lyotard's conception of the paradox of rule-following is directed towards enclosing thought with its circle(s) of understanding, ensuring that users play by the very rules they're supposed to question and/or invariably bring into conflict. The paradox is that rules must retain their relevance if they can be relied on to guide and constrain linguistic activities. While he urges a distinction between facts and values, he nonetheless crosses the divide to bridge the perceived gap between the descriptive and prescriptive. Lyotard prescribes conflict and/or questioning as the preeminent linguistic value, or the ultimate fact of the matter determining the moral relevance of the rule-governed practices in question. Lyotard demarcates the question of language according to given criteria of relevance, and urges that there are certain facts about the identity of the rules that require us to identify and reinforce the separation of language from itself. Lyotard thereby argues that the question is trying to determine the relevance of the links between heterogeneous elements: in what way do the rules governing the occurrences of actions become questionable when phrases necessarily link onto and/or conflict with each other? Specifically, the standards of heterogeneity or incommensurability (identification by difference or non-uniformity) presuppose the very relevancy condition in question – the possibility of circumscribing (prescribing and/or evaluating) linguistic activity in *accord with* distinct criteria of relevance. Witness the way the relevancy condition plays an active role in Lyotard's conception of the differend: by calling (back) into question the moral relevance of a 'logical mechanism' asking genocide victims to prove that they were mass murdered.

The epistemology condition: the problem of accounting for our ability to follow the lead of rules and/or question their leadership.¹⁸⁵¹

Lyotard ontologically commits himself to the epistemological condition in a similarly paradoxical way. Such a commitment is the culmination of the role the objectivity and relevancy conditions paradoxically play in Lyotard's conception of rule-following. Lyotard argues that it is the *interplay* between the *predetermined* and the *undetermined* that determines the way we should follow the very rules in question. The epistemology condition problematizes the relation between the objective and relevancy conditions – by actively calling into question the ways they might be objectified and/or determined relevant. On the one hand, Lyotard maintains that the rules of language are already established or decided in advance by governing authorities (language games, phrase regimes). Rules become 'things' (the object of an idea, an observable standard or pattern of behaviour) determining our knowledge of linguistic course of events. Rules thereby *set or impose limits by opening up and delimiting* given linguistic pathways and interactions. Lyotard sets out to follow their lead (directives, contours) by delimiting 'language' in accord with the objectivity and relevancy conditions. That is to say, with respect to the way they issue their requirements independent of anyone actually following them and in terms of their distinctive identity criteria. On the other hand, Lyotard also maintains that the legitimacy of these rules can never be authoritatively (independently, completely) determined or settled one way or another. By following the lead of language, we may invariably come to realize that rules can either constrain the limits of our knowledge and/or push authorized actions beyond acceptable boundaries. Such legal constraints give us the authority to question the way they might remain relevant or objective. The interplay between the predetermined and undetermined therefore makes it possible to transform the way we relate to (follow) the rules guiding and/or justifying linguistic activities. All said and done, *disagreeable feelings* provide epistemic access to the paradox of rule-following – by directly leading thought to the possibility that there are *other ways* in which to interact with rules and their possible extensions. By placing the burden of proof on internal affective states, potentially arbitrary or indeterminate feelings may either conflict with each other or never be in accord. Given that Lyotard presents the differend in epistemic terms, we find us ourselves returning to the paradoxical status of the rules in question. The paradox is that Lyotard knows (rules) in advance that Fausisson's legally permissible argument is morally indefensible, and is selected (directed, followed) for that very reason. Lyotard *presupposes* that feelings of anxiety or surprise are morally correct (justified) responses in that the differend's mode of address would ideally direct everyone to feel similarly. Nonetheless, Lyotard presupposes the very thing in question when asking the differend to make its validity claim: the

¹⁸⁵¹ Ibid.

situation that Lyotard presents may 'speak' in a completely different way to others (lead to conflicting feelings like pleasure or amusement instead).¹⁸⁵² Although Lyotard's phrasing indicates what he thinks we *should* all feel in this situation, he cannot provide a way of determining the epistemic and/or moral status of the very feelings in question. While there might not be a universally valid way to determine the legitimacy of the links between phrase events, it somehow remains possible *and* necessary to question the ways in which phrases may come into conflict or be legitimately linked. The resulting differend therefore acts as a moral corrective to the indeterminacy and/or contingency of linkages in that it presupposes (or entails) a universally valid emotional response anyway – as evident by the fact that the given phrase affect arguably provides its own evidence (testimonial, justification). By Lyotard's reckoning, however, affirmation of a differend can only occur in the form of a negation since his discourse "denies itself the possibility of settling, on the basis of its own rules, the differends it examines."¹⁸⁵³ Lyotard resists reasoning that tends towards totality or integration for this very reason, and privileges phrase-affects in his 'defence' of the differend. The relation between thought and affect remains problematized, and occurs at the border between them. The problem, however, is that the borders appear to be porous in Lyotard's own questioning. As Lyotard's presentation of the differend attests, thought must be able to pass through and 'absorb' the conflicts (contexts, phrase universes) *in* question. The paradox is that Lyotard presupposes the possibility of translating incommensurable features of language into something that also exhibits the act of uniform movement (the act of transferring one rule into another so as to be able to claim that different rules or contexts cannot be transferred or compared on the same conceptual terrain). Lyotard's questioning depends on the part/whole relation that his movements claim to throw into question: it somehow transcends the situation being presented (questioned) in that his thoughts move through and transfer the conflict (and context) in question. Specifically, Lyotard's presentation (phrasing) of the phrases in dispute appears to originate in a performatively contradictory way: through the very act of stating (delimiting and/or contextualizing disparate parts/rulings). If Lyotard can bring these conflicting rules/parts into (a) question, we find ourselves directed back towards the question of contextualizing his overall movements or directives. The question therefore is: how can Lyotard's conception of the differend present a phrase universe that transcends and/or acts against all possible situations and/or contexts of interpretation? We've argued in a performatively contradictory way: by transferring the phrases in dispute into an interpretive context that can be mutually understood and/or agreed (ruled) upon as a differend. Consequently, Lyotard's own questioning moves

¹⁸⁵² We're assuming that an anti-Semite or conspiracy theorist might respond very differently here, and that such contradictory feelings are thought morally justified and/or truth-bearing.

¹⁸⁵³ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.xiv.

against the contexts in question by following different rules of discourse into a context that somehow lies beyond further questioning and/or conflict. Lyotard's presentation of the differend presupposes a context of relevance that is interpreted (presented, situated) on two levels simultaneously – via the possibility of accord between the constative and the performative. Dunn presents the paradox best when he observes that "the terms in which the differend is described revive the cognitive systems which the differend protests."¹⁸⁵⁴ Further, such presentations produce a "series of contradictions that...vitiates the differend's ethic of total resistance and make it an unacknowledged apology for familiar ethical norms."¹⁸⁵⁵ Lyotard's differend therefore can only give expression to such feelings by presupposing "the language of norm and need in which they are (already) expressed."¹⁸⁵⁶

While Lyotard's felt response to Holocaust denial may be thought appropriate (suitable and fitting), the problem is the way such thinking can appropriate (actively bring forth, relate to) objectively relevant feelings. We trace the problem of arbitrariness and/or meaninglessness back to Lyotard's movements against Wittgenstein's family resemblance argument. Specifically, we still need an *identity by relation* to identify and distinguish the 'features' (normative content) of emotional terms and their relationship to linguistic rules.¹⁸⁵⁷ The epistemic problem may therefore be phrased in the following way: how can we know that we are in agreement about the content of our feelings if a differend has rendered us all speechless or we have found ourselves without the words to give them meaningful expression? Although the requirement is to find a way to readdress the privation of meaning through the invention of new phrases, Lyotard overrules Wittgenstein by contradictorily committing himself to the intelligibility of a *private language*.¹⁸⁵⁸ That is to say, where privately felt 'rulings' can somehow publicly state the (moral) case – despite the fact that an affect phrase is inarticulate *and* unarticulated, and

¹⁸⁵⁴ Dunn, Allen. "A Tyranny of Justice: The Ethics of Lyotard's Differend" *Boundary 2*, Vol 20, No. 1. (Spring, 1993), p.197.

¹⁸⁵⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p.205.

¹⁸⁵⁷ Wendling, Beatrice. "Emotions: Various Language Games" in Baider, Fabienne and Cislaru, Georgeta (eds.) *Linguistic Approaches to Emotions in Context* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2014), p.21. Wendling persuasively argues that human emotions may be explicated in terms of family resemblance. Specifically, that the "structure of emotional language has to be thought of as being composed of various *language-games* which, while finding their common origin in our *form of life*, are nevertheless only related by their *family resemblance*...and the place in which meaning is 'prepared' by constraining the possibilities of word use."

¹⁸⁵⁸ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), Nos.243–275, pp.89-96. We are referring, of course, to what has been famously called Wittgenstein's *private language argument*. Specifically, where "the words of this language are to refer to what can be known only to the speaker; to his immediate, private, sensations. So another cannot understand the language." Given that there is considerable controversy as to whether there are one or many different related arguments being advocated here, we shall not concern ourselves with the section's many nuances or the conflicting interpretations.

remains self-referential.¹⁸⁵⁹ As Wittgenstein argued, however, "it is not possible to obey a rule privately"¹⁸⁶⁰ or "give expression to inner experiences – feelings, moods and the rest"¹⁸⁶¹ – without a public "criterion of correctness"¹⁸⁶² to determine their meaning.¹⁸⁶³ According to Wittgenstein, "an inner process stands in need of outward criteria"¹⁸⁶⁴ since "the inner is tied up with the outer logically, not just empirically."¹⁸⁶⁵ We can only meaningfully identify and distinguish the content of our intentional states via a publicly agreed upon standard of correctness, and such standards can only be judged correct(ly) if they remain part of an external and rationally observable world. If we are to follow Wittgenstein correctly here, we need to go further and argue that the differend also stands in need of a criterion of moral relevance or adequacy to determine the correctness of potentially conflicting or arbitrary feelings. If it is possible to determine the meaningfulness (correctness) of rule-governed language, the differend must also stand "in need of a justification which everybody understands"¹⁸⁶⁶ and can agree (rule) on.

The (logical) possibility of rigidly designating the reality of the referent.

We are finally in a position to question Lyotard's conception of the reality of the referent. We do this for two related reasons 1) to bring together our observation of the role the objectivity, relevance and epistemology conditions paradoxically play in Lyotard's conception of the differend and 2) to argue that Lyotard's link to the phrase *rigid designator* produces a conflict incapable of being equitably resolved for lack of a rule applicable to both arguments. Lyotard and Kripke not only argue at cross-purposes, but the concept in question gets lost in translation. Lyotard's rephrasing of a heterogeneous term of reference may therefore be similarly called back into question via the language game of argumentation. The main difference between Lyotard and Kripke is whether the 'ontological argument' can be phrased as true or false. The issue that divides them, then, is the very 'reality' in question, or the way in which thought relates

¹⁸⁵⁹ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. "The Affect Phrase" in Crome, Keith and Williams, James (eds.) *Lyotard Reader and Guide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp.104-105.

¹⁸⁶⁰ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), No.202, p.81.

¹⁸⁶¹ *ibid*, No.243, p.88.

¹⁸⁶² *ibid*, No.258, p.92.

¹⁸⁶³ Wittgenstein seems to anticipate Lyotard here when he observes that "in the end when one is doing philosophy one gets to the point where one would just like to emit an inarticulate sound." Nonetheless, Wittgenstein goes on to say "But such a sound is an expression only as it occurs in a particular language game, which should now be described", No.261, p.93.

¹⁸⁶⁴ *ibid*, No. 580, p.153.

¹⁸⁶⁵ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology Vol. 2* (Oxford: John Wiley and Sons, 1994), p.64.

¹⁸⁶⁶ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p.93, No.261.

to (specifies, conceives) its objects. Our main, concern, however, is not to give an overruled and/or silenced phrase universe its due.¹⁸⁶⁷ It's to permit the possibility of rigidly designating the reality of the referent 'Auschwitz' and the correctness of the corresponding emotional response to the differend.

According to Kripke, the paradox of rule-following indicates that "all language, all concept formation, to be impossible, indeed unintelligible."¹⁸⁶⁸ The "main problem is not, 'How can we show private language – or some other special form of language – to be impossible?'; rather it is, 'How can we show any language at all (public, private or what-have-you) to be possible?'"¹⁸⁶⁹ Kripke goes on to place emphasis on extensionality, or extensional contexts, to secure the (objective) reality of the referent. Kripke provides an outward criterion for internal thought processes to logically link the empirically meaningful content of intentional states and objects to an external (mind-independent) world. Unlike Lyotard, Kripke argues for the possibility of transcending given intentional horizons through recourse to a meta-discourse lying beyond the limits of language. The reality of the referent is approached from within the context of intentionality in that the state (quality, condition) of being actual or real remains contextually bound or related. Specifically, it determines the nature of the (intentional) relation between thought and language by attempting to delineate the tenability of the distinction between intensional and extensional contexts (the realms of meaning and truth respectively).¹⁸⁷⁰ If the

¹⁸⁶⁷ Woodward, Ashley. "Testimony and the Phrase Affect" in Bickis, Heidi and Shields, Rob (eds.) *Rereading Francois-Jean Lyotard: Essays on His Later Works* (London: Routledge, 2016), p.176. Unfortunately, Lyotard's relationship to Kripke has received scant attention within the literature. Although many commentators note the role Kripke's phrase plays within Lyotard's argument, it is simply taken as given or rarely called into question. Take the example of Woodward and note the 2016 publication date. Woodward notes in passing (via a footnote) that since Lyotard's appropriation of Kripke is a "key issue in Lyotard's attempt to establish the differend as an unavoidable structure of language, it deserves far more attention than it is given." Despite this recognition, Woodward – and the other papers collected in *Rereading Francois-Jean Lyotard: Essays on His Later Works* – also neglect to give such a key issue further attention. Woodward does, however, refer readers to one of the few exceptions in the literature to call shenanigans (or possible 'cheating') on Lyotard's part. Specifically, Sedgwick, Peter and Tanesini, Alessandra's "Lyotard and Kripke: Essentialisms in Dispute" *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 1995, pp. 271-278 also dispute the legitimacy of Lyotard's appropriation of Kripke. Since Sedgwick and Tanesini set out to argue that a) Lyotard fails to establish the existence of the differend and b) is guilty of essentialism our approach is significantly different to theirs.

¹⁸⁶⁸ Kripke, Saul. *Wittgenstein On Rules and Private Language: An Elementary Exposition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p.62.

¹⁸⁶⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁷⁰ We have already elucidated the distinction between the intensional and extensional in our previous (Derrida) chapter. The distinction has gone by many names over the years and remains non-rigid due to its theory-ladenness. Suffice to say, let's non-rigidly designate such a philosophical term of reference by capturing its 'essential qualities' via the distinctions between meaning and truth, sense and reference, connotation and denotation, content and referent, concept and object, signifier and signified, propositional attitudes and propositions, intentional states and intentional objects, representation and represented, etc.

concern is the different ways in which thought can refer to (conceive, specify) its objects, Kripke's phrase universe intentionally relates to the question of the condition of its possibility in the following way: to what extent is it possible to refer to a language-independent reality via a linguistic frame of reference? Kripke's arguments rest on two related theses – the essentiality (or necessity) of origins¹⁸⁷¹ and the causal relationship between referring terms and the objects to which they refer.¹⁸⁷² Kripke argues that if it is necessarily true that an object is identical to itself, identity statements between referring terms must similarly obtain by necessity and/or truth. As McDowell observes, what is at stake "is not the object's fitting a specification in the content of the thought but its standing in some suitable contextual relation to the episode of thinking."¹⁸⁷³ The concept of rigid designator attempts to distinguish between intensional and extensional contexts by specifying the way reference must "constitute an extra-intentional relation between language or thought and objects."¹⁸⁷⁴ The intensional and extensional is thereby said to "conform to the rule of rigidity"¹⁸⁷⁵ via a "criteria of trans-world identity."¹⁸⁷⁶ Specifically, the reality of the referent is meaningfully determined and located by specifying the relationship between identical objects across distinct and co-referring (phrase) universes. Kripke's avowed essentialism argues that meaningful concepts *make sense* when they can pick out and refer to the same objects in *all possible worlds*. The concept of rigid designator thereby attributes *essential properties* to objects across counterfactual situations. If language is to designate rigidly, it must be able to satisfy the objectivity, relevancy and epistemology conditions, and it can only do this by following the rule of rigidity in accord with "trans-world identifications."¹⁸⁷⁷

What do I mean by rigid designator? I mean a term that rigidly designates the same object in all possible worlds...(and) do not mean to imply that the object referred to has to exist in all possible worlds... When I use the notion of a rigid designator, I do not imply that the object referred to necessarily exists. All I mean is that in any possible world where the object in question *does* exist, in any situation where the object *would* exist, we use the designator in question to designate that object. In a situation where the

¹⁸⁷¹ Kripke, Saul. *Naming and Necessity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp.114-115.

¹⁸⁷² Ibid, pp. 96-97.

¹⁸⁷³ McDowell, John. *Meaning, Knowledge and Reality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), p.253.

¹⁸⁷⁴ Ibid. McDowell goes on to observe that a nominalist like Rorty "can plausibly stigmatize this as a matter of succumbing to a hopeless 'demand ... for some transcendental standpoint outside our present set of representations from which we can inspect the relations *between* those representations and their object."

¹⁸⁷⁵ Kripke, Saul. *Naming and Necessity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p.10.

¹⁸⁷⁶ Ibid, p.49.

¹⁸⁷⁷ Ibid.

object does not exist, then we should say that the designator has no referent and that the object in question so designated does not exist.¹⁸⁷⁸

The 'rule of rigidity' and 'criteria of trans-world identity' play an integral role in fixing the reality of the referent. As opposed to Lyotard, Kripke's conception of 'reality' is specified in modal terms in that the truth conditions of a 'referent' necessarily occur prior to, and independent of, the linguistic properties of given statements. If and when we make statements about what is possible or necessary, the concept of rigid designator rationally motivates language users to ask: which referent(s) – or referential relations – determines the truth conditions (objective reality) of the statements in question? Unlike Lyotard, Kripke's use of the term ontologically commits itself to the logical possibility of a *multiverse* that encompasses the totality of all possible worlds and existents. As the term *trans-world* itself designates, such a rational determination is only logically possible via a transitive relation: it presupposes the possibility of *translating* and/or *transferring* an identity of meaning between distinct worlds. Kripke's concept of rigid designator is therefore directed towards the question of the condition of its possibility (intelligibility), and delimits *ontological* realms of possibility, impossibility, necessity or contingency. In so doing, it qualifies statements in terms of their enabling and/or identity conditions: in what way can the referent in question be possible, impossible, necessary, or contingent? Kripke's use of the phrase *rigid designator*, then, presupposes identity relations across possible worlds to secure the independent reality of the referent: referring terms are *not* emptied of their meaningful content but filled with possibilities that may be called into question or being. Kripke argues that identity across possible worlds must be grounded by the qualities essential to the objects in question. Such an approach raises an important metaphysical question: if the same objects can (in principle) exist in more than one possible world, what is the nature of the links between them? Phrased another way: how do we determine whether logically distinct objects and/or possible worlds are in accord or conflict? Kripke attempts to fix the objective reality of the referent by establishing causal links to referring terms. Specifically, Kripke distinguishes between modal and essential properties to account for the necessary *identity relations* between worlds (referents).¹⁸⁷⁹ Consequently, Kripke argues that possible worlds must first be identified and distinguished via *stipulation*,¹⁸⁸⁰ and so specifies as a universal condition the need for

¹⁸⁷⁸ Kripke, Saul. "Identity And Necessity" in Munitz, Milton (ed.) *Identity and Individuation* (New York: New York University Press, 1971), pp.145-146.

¹⁸⁷⁹ Although Kripke's essentialism might reject Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblance to fix the identity of the referent, the paradox is that his *branching conception* of possible worlds has similar recourse to a *family tree* (or pedigree chart) analogy. Given that possible worlds must be analogous in counterfactual situations, Kripke presupposes an *identity by relation* when referring to (identifying, distinguishing) meaningful worlds, or the possibility of trans-world identifications via distinctive overlapping and criss-crossing features.

¹⁸⁸⁰ Kripke, Saul. *Naming and Necessity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p.96.

agreement between counterfactual situations. While the appeal to stipulation arguably reintroduces the problem of the criterion, Kripke insists that such a proviso helps us circumvent the spectres of relativism and arbitrariness. Given that reference may be said to obtain by (an) agreement with the reality in question, the requirement is to delimit a qualitative conception of referring terms – i.e., measured by or in relation to the referent's qualities across conceivable worlds. The stipulation neither discovers nor establishes 'reality' – it merely specifies *the way* in which objects are to be meaningfully referred to. The stipulation *does this* by following language's lead and (arguably) secures an *extra-intentional* relation between content and referent in accord with the given directives. In order to determine the modal properties of objects, we therefore don't need to make a ruling about what is really true or false in every possible world – we just need to locate logically conceivable possibilities within the relevant "causal or historical connection."¹⁸⁸¹ Let's cite two different examples of rigid designators – one referring to a "theoretical identity"¹⁸⁸² and another to an infamous historical entity. In both examples, Kripke describes what he calls the *necessary a posteriori*,¹⁸⁸³ or statements of fact that are necessarily true. We shall similarly invoke the necessary a posteriori to fix the (moral) reality of the referent of 'Auschwitz'.

According to Kripke, the theoretical identity statement 'Water is H₂O' indicates that it is possible for the same referent to have two distinct – or co-referring – terms. In the world of everyday experience, water refers to a fluid substance essential for life and is typically identified with reference to distinctive qualities (liquidity, colourlessness, transparency, etc.). We already know this to be true because *water* necessarily refers to the liquid substance bearing (identifying) these essential qualities. It was subsequently discovered, however, that water may also refer to its molecular composition and has been identified with reference to the chemical formula 'two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen'. Kripke argues that if water is H₂O in the actual world, then water is necessarily H₂O in every possible world. The co-referring terms rigidly designate the referent's essential qualities – otherwise anything that might be mistaken for 'water' on (say) Mars cannot be meaningfully identified with it.¹⁸⁸⁴ Kripke is thereby making two related claims – that the "*origin* of an object is essential to it...and the *substance* of which it is

¹⁸⁸¹ Ibid, p.96.

¹⁸⁸² Ibid, p. 140.

¹⁸⁸³ Kripke is, of course, challenging Kant's famous distinction between a priori and a posteriori knowledge, or the distinction between what comes before experience and what must follow experience. Kripke also supplements the concept of the *necessary a posteriori* with the notion of the *contingent a priori* (p.56). Unfortunately, the differences between Kant and Kripke (and Kripke's attempt to elucidate his distinction between contingent and necessary truths) are beyond the purview of this chapter.

¹⁸⁸⁴ Kripke, Saul. *Naming and Necessity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p.128. Kripke cites the distinction between gold and fool's gold as a comparison, and calls the seeming water like substance "fool's water."

made is essential."¹⁸⁸⁵ In the second instance, Kripke's thesis of the necessity (or essentiality) of origins is also invoked to rigidly designate the referent 'Hitler'. Kripke raises the question of whether the person necessarily answering to *that* designation was essentially evil.¹⁸⁸⁶ In modal terms, the question becomes: are Hitler's moral attributes identical to his physical attributes in all possible worlds? Despite his "gut feeling"¹⁸⁸⁷, the answer is "probably not"¹⁸⁸⁸ because it is logically possible (conceivable) that 'Hitler' could have lived a different life and not gone on to commit mass murder. Hitler's moral identity is a matter of contingency and must be distinguished from his physical identity – even if the referring term 'Hitler' may rigidly designate that one and same person across possible worlds.¹⁸⁸⁹ We can imagine situations where the term 'Hitler' could refer to an alternate (effective) history – where 'Hitler' (say) passed the entrance exam of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna¹⁸⁹⁰ or won the Second World War and established the Greater Nazi Reich with the Empire of Japan.¹⁸⁹¹ Either way, Kripke's causal-historical theory of reference tries to fix the reality of the referent 'Hitler' by providing a qualitative criterion of identity – one that specifies the referent's essential qualities across possible worlds. So, how are such "causal or historical"¹⁸⁹² connections established and transmitted via an "initial

¹⁸⁸⁵ Ibid, p.114.

¹⁸⁸⁶ Perhaps what is most interesting here is the way Kripke struggles with his own question – as an observant Jew he would presumably like Hitler to remain answerable in this world and the (possible) world to come (olam haba).

¹⁸⁸⁷ Ibid, p.75

¹⁸⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸⁹ We set aside the question of whether someone's moral identity is determined by nature or environment – or indeed, whether it is possible to separate the natural from the environmental anyway. See, for example, the journal *Twin Research and Human Genetics* for an ongoing inquiry into the problem of determining the heritability of traits within social contexts. Ironically, studies of identical and fraternal twins – separated at birth and/or growing up together – problematizes Kripke's example and calls into question the genetic makeup of moral identities across possible worlds. See Boomsma, Dorret, Busjahn, Andreas, and Peltonen, Leena. "Classical Twin Studies and Beyond" in *Nature Reviews Genetics*, 3 (11), 2002, pp. 872-882 for an overview. We stress, then, the limits of Kripke's argument. The reason that it is possible to refer to Hitler as a morally troubling example because it highlights the problem of separating the essential (necessary) from the accidental (or contingent) within given environments.

¹⁸⁹⁰ Hitler, Adolf. *Mein Kampf* trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1943), pp.28-29. In the second chapter titled "Years of Studying and Suffering in Vienna", Hitler refers to the fact that he failed the general School of Painting's entrance exam on his one and only attempt. Specifically, "I was so convinced of my success that when the news that I had failed to pass was brought to me it struck me like a bolt from the skies", p.28. Nonetheless, a "crestfallen" Hitler was encouraged to apply to the School of Architecture through the preparatory Technical Building School, but he did not meet the requirements to enter that either. A "necessary qualification for entrance into this school was a Leaving Certificate from the Middle School. And this I simply did not have. According to the human measure of things my dream of following an artistic calling seemed beyond the limits of possibility", p.29.

¹⁸⁹¹ Dick, K Phillip. *The Man In the High Castle* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1962). Dick's novel famously explores the possibility of such an alternate history. Dick's 1956 short story "Minority Report" (London: Gollancz, 2002) also appears to be an unacknowledged inspiration for the Baby Hitler Paradox considered below.

¹⁸⁹² Kripke, Saul. *Naming and Necessity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p.96.

baptism"?¹⁸⁹³ Although an original act of naming might figure centrally in identifying a referent, its reality (identity) *precedes and acts upon* such linguistic actions. The reality of the referent is independently fixed in its own way – in relation to itself – and the issue is locating its objective reality within a temporal-causal network. The causal chain is already in motion via the object's pre-existing links to an objectively determined world, and the causal-historical connection between content and referent is mediated *through* social relations and/or rule-governed practices. The ontological status of the referent is therefore *predetermined* in that it necessarily agrees with the reality in question. Baby 'Adolf' didn't come into being or question,¹⁸⁹⁴ for example, when initially referred to: Hitler's essential qualities (genetic makeup, relation to other family members) preceded the act of naming, and such a linguistic action interacted with – was brought about and transmitted – through intervening agencies. Consequently, "an initial 'baptism' takes place. Here the object may be named by ostension, or the reference of the name may be fixed by a description"¹⁸⁹⁵ and "passed from link to link"¹⁸⁹⁶ within an "actual chain of communication."¹⁸⁹⁷ It is our historical position within a causal chain that determines the reality of the referent, and (contra Lyotard) the links between 'reality' and 'referring term' can be neither held "in suspense or in suspension."¹⁸⁹⁸

We are finally in a position to determine the reality of the referent 'Auschwitz'. Our approach will serve a dual purpose – to mitigate against the possibility of counterfactual re-contextualizations of the reality in question and to ensure the normative content – moral correctness – of emotional responses to the differend. We shall be doing this in previously delineated terms – with respect to a normative conception of ourselves as rational beings.¹⁸⁹⁹ That is to say, where a practical conception of our identities remains the question throughout effective history, and our being-

¹⁸⁹³ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁹⁴ We are all familiar with the moral problem posed by the following thought experiment: if you could go back in time and kill Hitler while he was still a baby, would you? The experiment is predicated upon the moral considerations of a counterfactual situation in a possible world – namely, would you murder an innocent baby to prevent mass murder in the future? The ethical problem derives, of course, from a logical paradox: how can we prevent the future from happening when it is already in the past? Equally paradoxical: in what way is it morally justifiable to prevent murder from happening by committing another murder in the first place – particular since the murders in question are yet to happen? The famous question trended on social media on October 23rd, 2015 when *New York Times* magazine did a public poll. *The Age* anonymously reported some illuminating responses on the 24th October, 2015. <http://www.smh.com.au/world/nyt-magazine-asks-readers-whether-theyd-kill-baby-hitler-20151023-gkhggy.html>. According to the chart posted on *New York Times* magazine's Twitter account <https://twitter.com/nytmag/status/657618681204244480>, 42 % of respondents answered 'Yes', 30% answered 'No', and 28% answered 'Not Sure'.

¹⁸⁹⁵ Kripke, Saul. *Naming and Necessity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p.96.

¹⁸⁹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p.93.

¹⁸⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p.169 and p.195.

¹⁸⁹⁹ We delineated this conception, of course, during our Gadamer discussion.

there can only be called into question via the distinction between motivating and justifying reasons. Indeed, only a normative conception of our identities – as beings committed to the question of their rationality - can justify such disconcerting 'feelings' to the differend.

We have argued that Lyotard's conception presupposes the very thing in question – namely, the ontological status of the referent 'Auschwitz'. As opposed to Kripke, Lyotard argues that 'reality' is a linguistic construct and that there is no essential (linguistically prior, inherent or fundamental) ontological connection between 'reality' and 'referring term'. The reality of the referent is therefore reduced to a rhetorical construction or mode of discourse: the referent's ontological status can only be properly determined – rigidly designated – in accordance with the context of its occurrence. The paradox of rule-following ensures that linguistic contexts can never be stabilized – ruled one way or another – and may overrule one another indefinitely. The performative contradiction is readily apparent: when Lyotard claims that 'the ontological argument is false', he is making a truth claim (or argument) about ontology and so presupposes a universe of discourse – objective realm of relations and properties – that can be truthfully (rigidly) referred to in such a meaningful way. While Lyotard's argument might turn on the truth claim that 'nothing can be said about reality that does not presuppose it', his statement nonetheless returns us to our original problem: the rational status (reality) of the presuppositions thrown into question or brought into conflict. Witness the way Lyotard's ontological commitments enable and/or legitimate a questionable argument for Holocaust denial. Part of the problem is the way Lyotard *rationaly accommodates* himself to the possibility of denying the objective reality of the referent. We therefore need to delimit the permissible range of conduct for linguistic interactions – i.e., the way such an argument should be ruled out of bounds or an instance of foul play. Although Faurisson's argument might be rationally motivated in a logical sense – acts in accord with given rules of logic – it cannot be thought rationally justified because it runs counter to other norms of conduct, or what is to count as fair play when playing language games. Lyotard's conception of language actively collaborates with Faurisson by allowing for a "counterfactual history."¹⁹⁰⁰ Nonetheless, the differend may be made rationally accountable via the counter-argument that *the ontological argument is true*. Kripke's concept of rigid designator makes such a linguistic move possible via "counterfactual game playing."¹⁹⁰¹ Specifically, the

¹⁹⁰⁰ Shermer, Michael and Grobman Alex. *Denying History: Who Says the Holocaust Never Happened and Why Do They Say It?* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), p. 263.

¹⁹⁰¹ Ibid, p.267. Although Shermer and Grobman are not talking about Kripke here, we invoke their phrase because of its relevance to the *negation* of history. As Gadamer's concept of effective history intimates, however, we need to distinguish between historical revisionism and any attempt to negate history. The one attempts to revise the historical record in accord with new discoveries or alternate interpretations while the other attempts to rewrite the record via distortions and evasions. See Alain Finkielkraut's *The Future of a Negation: Reflections on the Question of Genocide* trans. Mary Byrd

term 'Auschwitz' rigidly designates because it requires us to pick out the same things in all possible worlds. The referring term can only do this by following the rule of the necessity (or essentiality) of origins – by way of properties essential to 'Auschwitz's' identity as a historical phrase event. Let's identify 'Auschwitz's' essential properties as 'extermination camp through gas chambers'. We'll need to proceed carefully, however, and note a couple of things in advance. Firstly, the reality of these events is *not* dependent upon validation procedures, modes of presentation or intentional states. 'Auschwitz's' truth-value is independent of the question of whether its events can be proven, denied and/or presented. The question of the nature of its 'reality' – being as non-being – remains answerable to (identical with, conditional upon) itself, and the possibility of validating 'Auschwitz's' events occurs *after the fact*. Secondly, 'Auschwitz' is not to be identified with the Holocaust and is (for the sake of argument) merely a theoretical identification or historical signifier. Although it might be true that over a million people were sent to and killed at 'Auschwitz', the term has also come to refer to millions of other people systematically mass murdered elsewhere.¹⁹⁰² The phrases 'Auschwitz' and the 'Holocaust' might have become synonymous – or synonyms – but they cannot be identified with each other out of respect for millions of civilians killed elsewhere. The problem of distinctive features bears witness to the fact that 'Auschwitz' was distinguished *in relation to* its ancestry – where the line of descent is an essential part of its identity. Specifically, historians distinguish between 'Auschwitz One' and 'Auschwitz-Birkenau', and it is the latter place that is identified with the inconceivable in a causal chain. 'Auschwitz's' *identification with* this subsequent development, however, merely reiterates the role the necessity of origins plays in our argument:¹⁹⁰³ its physical existence became identical to death, and the concept of genocide was literally built into its foundations.¹⁹⁰⁴ It is by way of stipulative definition that historians may identify the gas chambers with the essence of genocidal practices – and by extension – as being essential to (or identical with) the Holocaust. Thus, the claims that the chemical composition of Zyklon B and/or the physical nature of the camp remains essential to 'Auschwitz' follows on from rule-governed ways

Kelly (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998) for an illuminating discussion of the distinction between revisionism and negationism.

¹⁹⁰² These other places include, of course, Chełmno, Bełżec, Sobibór, Treblinka, Majdanek and Trostenets. We also do an injustice to many of the murder victims by subsuming them all under the category of Jew. The Holocaust might traditionally be referred to as the genocide of Jews, but its many millions include non-Jewish victims, and we must resist the tendency to pass over their deaths in silence.

¹⁹⁰³ 'Auschwitz 1' was built in 1940 and primarily functioned as an internment camp for political prisoners. 'Auschwitz-Birkenau' was built in 1941 to literally accommodate the Nazi's desire for the mass murder of civilians.

¹⁹⁰⁴ Kripke, Saul. *Naming and Necessity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 47-51. Kripke discusses the identity of a wooden table, and notes that while the 'table' might be made of wood we need to distinguish between tables that appear to be identical to each other. Kripke's point is that if indistinguishable tables are made from different blocks of wood, they cannot be identified with each other – substance and/or ancestry are part of its identity.

of acting: the theoretical identification occurs in accord with the "causal (historical) chain"¹⁹⁰⁵ regulating and/or linking the referring term 'Auschwitz' to an objective reality that includes gas chambers and crematoriums. While it might be logically possible – conceivable – to ask whether the referent 'Hitler' should be identified with mass murder in all possible worlds, the same cannot be said for 'Auschwitz'. Hitler could have conceivably gone on to be an artist, but 'Auschwitz' came into being – was conceived – for this very reason. Given that 'Auschwitz' rigidly designates genocide in the real world, it must rigidly designate genocide in all possible worlds (phrase universes). The differend offends our moral sensibilities for the same reason. The reason being: the differend must ontologically commit itself to the value of truth if it is to call forth and justify our moral being. While Faurisson's argument might be rationally motivated, the differend cannot be rationally justified: it is a direct affront to reality. By acting with reason against reason, Faurisson's argument is not interested in persuasive argument and adds insult to jury by attempting to dissuade others from taking the pursuit of truth and/or rationality seriously.¹⁹⁰⁶ The differend might provide a reason, but the *reason given* is without rational justification and disconcerts accordingly.¹⁹⁰⁷ In devaluing the value of truth – or rule-governed evaluations of statements as truth-bearers – the differend negates reality when displacing the burden of proof onto victims lying beyond the rule of reason.

¹⁹⁰⁵ Ibid, p.139.

¹⁹⁰⁶ Sartre, Paul-Jean. *Anti-Semite and Jew: An Exploration of the Etiology of Hate* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), pp.13-14. According to Sartre, "the anti-Semite is impervious to reason and to experience...(and)...likes to play with discourse for, by giving ridiculous reasons, they discredit the seriousness of their interlocutors. They delight in acting in bad faith, since they seek not to persuade by sound argument but to intimidate and disconcert."

¹⁹⁰⁷ The differend therefore stirs up negative emotions on related (or rational) grounds.

Chapter 5: **Habermas and the Rational Reconstruction of** **Understanding.**

Aims and Objectives: The aim of this chapter is to move beyond Lyotard's conception of language. We now turn toward Habermas's conception of the relation between critical thought and the linguisticity of understanding. The goal is to bring forth Habermas's attempt to rethink the relationship between the hermeneutical circle and traditional practice. We shall primarily direct ourselves towards Habermas's *rational reconstruction* of a pre-theoretical rule consciousness, and the role rules actively play in the language game of argumentation. Habermas offers a methodological approach to the problem of the historicity of understanding, and locates this problematic within the performative status of rule-following. Habermas approaches effective history via the performative attitude of linguistic actors, and emphasizes the possibility of reaching mutual understanding through rational criticism and agreement. Habermas argues in favour of a conception of the universality of reason as always already given in the linguisticity of understanding. Habermas argues that it is the rules of language that makes linguistic actions move back and forth in the circle of understanding. By proceeding in this way, rule-governed interactions remain inherently questionable (possible and/or necessary) and acquire a critical dimension. Habermas thereby proceeds from the following ontological standard: *to be is to be directed towards (potentially competing) rulings in action contexts*. Our overview of Habermas's procedural approach will follow his lead in three interdependent parts. In the first part, we outline Habermas's overall approach and situate his way-making movements within the context of effective history. In the second part, we explore the way Habermas lays the foundations for *universal pragmatics*, and determines the conditions of possibility for reaching a rational understanding across contexts of interpretation. In the third part, we explore Habermas's theory of communicative action, or attempt to provide a critical theory of linguistic interactions.

Situating Habermas Within the Tradition In Question.

We begin by acknowledging Habermas's relation to the question of the historicity of understanding. Following Habermas, we shall understand this question as the problem of how to critically evaluate a historically effected consciousness.¹⁹⁰⁸ We acknowledge this *intentional*

¹⁹⁰⁸ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p. xxxiv. If we recall, Gadamer's concept urges that

relation in advance because Habermas takes the problem of competing interpretations as a guiding question. Habermas is primarily concerned with the performative status of linguistic acts within effective history, and so directs himself towards the problem of legitimating linguistic practices and actions. In adopting Gadamer's "paradigm of mutual understanding"¹⁹⁰⁹ Habermas emphasizes "the performative attitude of participants in interaction, who coordinate their plans for action by coming to an understanding about something in the world."¹⁹¹⁰ Habermas attempts to move beyond Gadamer by way of Wittgenstein, and argues that it is our ability to follow rules that may be called back into question. Habermas purports to be able to circumnavigate the circle of understanding by providing a *rational reconstruction* of the "intuitive rule consciousness"¹⁹¹¹ of language users and so brings into our historically effected consciousness "those concepts and rules that underlie experience insofar as it can be couched in elementary propositions. The analysis focuses on general, indispensable, conceptual pre-conditions that make (linguistic) experience possible."¹⁹¹² Habermas's rational reconstruction may be said to "acquire a critical function"¹⁹¹³ in that it "explicates the conditions for the validity of utterances."¹⁹¹⁴ According to Habermas, mutual understanding and agreement occur when we know what makes our linguistic acts "acceptable"¹⁹¹⁵, and we may know how to accept such actions because they "interpret themselves" through their "self-referential structure."¹⁹¹⁶ The circle of understanding is where "the identity and validity of rules are systematically interconnected"¹⁹¹⁷ and the "identity of the rule in the multiplicity of its realizations"¹⁹¹⁸ remains conditional upon "the intersubjectivity of its validity."¹⁹¹⁹ Habermas thereby provides a

"understanding is at once the consciousness effected in the course of history and determined by history, and the very consciousness of being thus effected and determined."

¹⁹⁰⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. "An Alternative Way Out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communicative Versus Subject Centred Reason" in *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987), p.296,

¹⁹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁹¹¹ Habermas, Jürgen. "What Is Universal Pragmatics?" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998) p.33.

¹⁹¹² Habermas, Jürgen. "Philosophy as Stand In and Interpreter" in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p.6.

¹⁹¹³ Habermas, Jürgen. "Reconstruction and Interpretation in the Social Sciences" in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p.32.

¹⁹¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁹¹⁵ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society* trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p.297.

¹⁹¹⁶ Habermas, Jürgen. "Actions, Speech Acts, Linguistically Mediated Interactions and Lifeworld" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p. 217.

¹⁹¹⁷ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2, Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p.18.

¹⁹¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹¹⁹ *ibid.*

consensus criterion for truth, or situations that may be accepted as true in accord with the possibility of rational agreement. Specifically, the "rational structure of action orientated towards reaching understanding is reflected in the presupposition that actors must make if they are to engage in this practice at all. The necessity of this must"¹⁹²⁰ should be interpreted in "a Wittgensteinian...sense"¹⁹²¹ and corresponds to the way linguistic forms of life regulate themselves. Given the fact such regulations are "inescapable" there is an "inevitability stemming from the conceptual connections of a (learnt) system of...rule-governed behaviour."¹⁹²² The "language game of argumentation"¹⁹²³ is privileged over all other language games insofar as it provides *the way* to question and/or evaluate the "public space of reasons"¹⁹²⁴ in accord with "criticizable validity claims."¹⁹²⁵ Every rule-governed linguistic practice and action is criticizable in the sense that their *reason for being there* remains open to intersubjective questioning and assessment: the public space of reasons may *thereby* become *fair game* throughout effective history. Particularly critical is the role certain – specific, inevitable, irrevocable – *presuppositions* actively play in Habermas's rational reconstruction of an intuitive rule consciousness. While Habermas recognizes that the historicity of understanding remains context-dependent, the possibility of reaching mutual understanding through agreement is supposedly *not* context-bound. Habermas argues that there are universal and necessary presuppositions directing all linguistic interactions throughout history, and these "idealizing presuppositions"¹⁹²⁶ validate the circle of understanding's directives and movements. Specifically, Habermas's rational reconstruction purports to "reproduce pre-theoretical knowledge...in an essentialist sense"¹⁹²⁷, and "if true...corresponds precisely to the rules that are operatively effective in the object domain – that is, to the rules that actually determine the production of"¹⁹²⁸ the linguistic interactions in question. Given the inevitable contradiction between linguistic ideal and historical reality, delimiting the domain of objects – rules and their possible extensions – becomes the critical question. Habermas argues that the possibility of rational discourse or disagreement

¹⁹²⁰ Habermas, Jürgen. "From Kant's Ideas of Pure Reason to the Idealizing Presuppositions of Communicative Action" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), pp.85-86.

¹⁹²¹ Ibid, p.86.

¹⁹²² Ibid.

¹⁹²³ Ibid, p.106.

¹⁹²⁴ Habermas, Jürgen. "Freedom and Determinism" in *Between Naturalism and Religion* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), p.175.

¹⁹²⁵ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston, Beacon Press, 1984), p.119.

¹⁹²⁶ Habermas, Jürgen. *Between Facts and Norms* trans. William Rehg (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996), p.230.

¹⁹²⁷ Habermas, Jürgen. "What Is Universal Pragmatics?" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998) p.37.

¹⁹²⁸ Ibid.

"begins with the counterfactual assumption that universal agreement is possible"¹⁹²⁹ and maintains that "communicatively acting individuals must commit themselves to pragmatic presuppositions of a counterfactual sort."¹⁹³⁰ Habermas thereby rules that "a set of unavoidable idealizations forms the counterfactual basis of an actual practice of reaching understanding, a practice that can critically turn against its own results and thus *transcend* itself. Thus the tension between idea and reality breaks into the very facticity of linguistically structured forms of life."¹⁹³¹ Habermas's rational reconstruction, then, is ontologically committed to the ideal of the universality of reason acting over and above particular linguistic contexts and actions: the historicity of understanding is *reason in action* and "the transcendent moment of *universal* validity bursts every provinciality asunder, the obligatory moment of accepted validity claims renders them carriers of *context-bound* everyday practice. Inasmuch as communicative agents reciprocally raise validity claims with their speech acts, they are relying on the potential of unassailable grounds. Hence a moment of *unconditionality* is built into *factual* processes of mutual understanding."¹⁹³² Habermas understands the historicity of understanding to be a problem insofar as there can be no getting around the interpretive nature of historical thought or practice. Indeed, any interpretation can only occur within the "context of effective history"¹⁹³³, which simultaneously acts as "the locus of continuing tradition"¹⁹³⁴ and critical thought bringing traditional thought (back) into question. Following Gadamer, Habermas urges that "the effective history of cultural traditions and formation processes unfolds... in the medium of questions and answers."¹⁹³⁵ It is only within the "horizon"¹⁹³⁶ of a given understanding that the objects of thought can be meaningfully presented and/or situated (i.e., rationally determined and questioned). Consequently, access "through the understanding of meaning of itself makes the rationality problematic unavoidable."¹⁹³⁷ While the question of "immanent rationality"¹⁹³⁸ "always require an interpretation that is rational in approach"¹⁹³⁹, the "very situation that gives rise to the

¹⁹²⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. *Knowledge and Human Interests* trans. Jeremy Shapiro (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p.185.

¹⁹³⁰ Habermas, Jürgen. *Between Facts and Norms* trans. William Rehg (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996), p.4.

¹⁹³¹ *ibid.*

¹⁹³² Habermas, Jürgen. "Communicative Versus Subject Centered Reason" in *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), p.322.

¹⁹³³ Habermas, Jürgen. "Modernity's Consciousness of Time" in *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), p.13.

¹⁹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹³⁵ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Future of Human Nature* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), p.72.

¹⁹³⁶ Habermas, Jürgen. "Modernity's Consciousness of Time" in *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), p.13.

¹⁹³⁷ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society* trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p.106.

¹⁹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.132.

¹⁹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.106.

problem of understanding meaning can also be regarded as the key to its solution."¹⁹⁴⁰ Habermas presents this situation as "the philosophical discourse of modernity"¹⁹⁴¹, and situates it within the problem of history needing "to create its normativity out of itself."¹⁹⁴² The problem of the criterion thereby finds expression in the understanding that historical practice cannot simply derive "the criteria by which it takes its orientation from the models supplied by another epoch."¹⁹⁴³ The experience of history therefore provides its own narrative or interpretive framework in which to ask (and answer) questions. Modernity can never take the issue of its normativity as a given – it must always direct thought back to the problem of historicity of understanding itself. While Habermas's thought must obviously be distinguished from the thinkers that have preceded him in our movement around the circle (Heidegger, Gadamer, Derrida and Lyotard respectively), they have nonetheless all found themselves circling around the question of the reciprocal relationship between thought and language. The question of their intentional relation has remained integral because there can be no breaking out of the circle – thought is obliged to question the ways it remains directed upon the objects of its own understanding. Following Heidegger's ways of thinking, we have seen that this thought occurs within the context of an interpretation urging that we always already find ourselves moving within an understanding of being,¹⁹⁴⁴ and such movement determines how we are directed towards a meaningful world disclosed in language. Specifically, the historicity of understanding can only be presented (rendered meaningful) within the horizon of the language in which it is situated and/or projected. Habermas, however, is critical of Heidegger's attempt to undermine the role of rational thought within the circle of understanding. Heidegger's "critique of reason in terms of the history of Being"¹⁹⁴⁵ is thought to render the problem of truth meaningless. Heidegger's preoccupation with the ontological difference is said to pay little "attention to the difference between reason and understanding" and so "levels reason to the understanding."¹⁹⁴⁶ Given Heidegger's attempt to understand what cannot be understood (Being) in language, thought is directed towards "the interpretation of a meaning"¹⁹⁴⁷ that circumvents the possibility of rational scrutiny and evaluation. The "propositionally contentless speech about Being has... the sense of demanding resignation to fate. Its practical-political side consists in... a diffuse readiness to

¹⁹⁴⁰ Ibid, p.120.

¹⁹⁴¹ Habermas, Jürgen. "Preface" in *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987), p.xix.

¹⁹⁴² Ibid, p.7.

¹⁹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴⁴ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997).

¹⁹⁴⁵ Habermas, Jürgen. "The Undermining of Western Rationalism Through the Critique of Metaphysics: Martin Heidegger" in *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987), p.154.

¹⁹⁴⁶ Ibid, p.133.

¹⁹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 145.

obey in relation to an auratic but indeterminate authority."¹⁹⁴⁸ Heidegger's speech acts "attunes and trains its addressees in their dealings with pseudo-sacral powers."¹⁹⁴⁹ Given this movement, Heidegger "fails to see that the horizon of the understanding of meaning brought to bear on beings is not prior to, but rather subordinate to, the question of truth."¹⁹⁵⁰

Habermas initially turns towards Gadamer to expand upon the horizon of meaning brought to bear on the understanding of beings. Habermas's primary goal is to bridge the divide between 'truth' and 'method' via the "universalist promise of reason,"¹⁹⁵¹ and he makes his approach through the possibility of "the intersubjective recognition of criticizable validity claims."¹⁹⁵² Habermas argues that Gadamer's appeal to authoritative (traditional) knowledge is a historical move against reason because "the background consensus of established traditions and language games can be a consciousness forged out of compulsion"¹⁹⁵³ and/or potentially illegitimate power plays. Given this problematic, there must be at least one rational criterion for distinguishing (moving back and forth between) reason and understanding. If hermeneutics is to justify its claim to universal truth, it must also question the horizon of its meaning – and it can only question the being of its questioning via methodological considerations. Specifically, hermeneutical understanding "is conducive to a critical confirmation of the truth only to the extent that it subordinates itself to a regulative principle which requires universal communicative agreement within an unlimited community of interpretation."¹⁹⁵⁴ The normative status of modernity should therefore remain an open question, or as being in a nascent state – as a "post"¹⁹⁵⁵ set up to mark the direction and status of reason's movements within effective history. This brings us, then, to a question that Habermas – like Lyotard – finds himself directed towards: the question of what is at stake when trying to legitimate knowledge claims in historical practice. Specifically, *where* does legitimacy reside when following the rules of language games and/or necessarily calling one another's linguistic actions (back) into question? Although Habermas criticizes Gadamer for downplaying the role of power relations in language, he does not want to claim (like Lyotard) that "knowledge and power are simply two sides of the same question: who

¹⁹⁴⁸ Ibid, 140.

¹⁹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵⁰ Ibid, p154.

¹⁹⁵¹ Habermas, Jürgen. "Hermeneutic and Analytic Philosophy: Two Complementary Versions of the Linguistic Turn" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), p.72.

¹⁹⁵² Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston, Beacon Press, 1984), p.119.

¹⁹⁵³ Habermas, Jürgen. "On Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality" in Kurt Muller-Vollmer (ed.) *The Hermeneutic Reader* (Continuum, New York, 1994), p.317.

¹⁹⁵⁴ Ibid, p.314.

¹⁹⁵⁵ Habermas, Jürgen. "The Horizon of Modernity Is Shifting" in *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays* trans. William Mark Hohengarten (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992), pp.3-5.

decides what knowledge is, and who knows what needs to be decided?"¹⁹⁵⁶ Habermas actively resists reducing the force of an argument to arguments of force,¹⁹⁵⁷ and argues in favour of the possibility of being rationally "motivated solely by the unforced force of the better argument."¹⁹⁵⁸ Habermas understands the problem of legitimation in terms of the uncoerced power of reason and argues that rational force is embedded in the structure of linguistic interactions opening themselves up to the possibility of criticizable validity claims. Consequently, we may talk of the "transcending force of universalistic validity claims"¹⁹⁵⁹ and historical (or a historicized) reason remains capable of resolving the crisis of its legitimation when preserving "at least one rational criterion" to "explain the corruption of *all* rational criteria."¹⁹⁶⁰ Indeed, any attempt to reduce the circle of understanding to the authority of tradition fails to do "justice to the rational content of cultural modernity."¹⁹⁶¹ A historically effected consciousness can only *become* thus critical (i.e., determine the rationality of the reasons given and taken there) if it remains directed towards "the idea of reason derived from the tradition"¹⁹⁶² in question. Habermas calls this rational criterion "the principle of universalization as a rule of argumentation,"¹⁹⁶³ and it presupposes a normative conception of our practical identities. Specifically, it concerns the coordination of "plans of action consensually, with the agreement reached at any point being evaluated in terms of the intersubjective recognition of validity claims"¹⁹⁶⁴ to make "the continuation of their interaction possible."¹⁹⁶⁵

¹⁹⁵⁶ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.8-9.

¹⁹⁵⁷ Lyotard, of course, interprets the historicity of understanding as "incredulity to metanarratives", p.xxiv and goes on to claim that "consensus is only a particular state of discussion, not its end... For this reason, it seems neither possible nor even prudent to follow Habermas in orienting our treatment of the problem of legitimating in the direction of a search for a universal consensus." According to Lyotard's interpretation of language, "the principle of consensus as a criterion of validation" is itself invalid because "the legitimacy of any statement" and "the regularization of the moves permitted in all language games", does not require universal communicative agreement within an unlimited community of interpretation, *ibid*, pp.65-66.

¹⁹⁵⁸ Habermas, Jürgen. *Between Facts and Norms* trans. William Rehg (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996), p.306.

¹⁹⁵⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. "Communicative Versus Subject Centered Reason" in *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), p.321.

¹⁹⁶⁰ Habermas, Jürgen. "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment: Horkheimer and Adorno" in *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987), p.127.

¹⁹⁶¹ *Ibid*, p.113.

¹⁹⁶² Habermas, Jürgen. "Introduction" in *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays* trans. William Mark Hohengarten (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992), p.vii. We quote the translator's introduction here.

¹⁹⁶³ Habermas, Jürgen. "Discourse Ethics: Notes on a Program of Philosophical Justification" in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p.57.

¹⁹⁶⁴ *ibid*, p. 58.

¹⁹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p.59.

The concept of effective history may be similarly invoked to determine the rationality of Habermas's reasoning. As Freundlieb observes, Habermas "continues to be one of the most important and influential thinkers today."¹⁹⁶⁶ Habermas remains 'effective' insofar as his project had "made lasting contributions"¹⁹⁶⁷ in a range of cultural practices and/or intellectual disciplines. Further, Habermas's thought presents a "continuing reflection on the way in which the work of critique itself may be articulated and grounded."¹⁹⁶⁸ The question remains, of course, as to how effective Habermas's thought *should be*. Habermas would be the first to argue that historical importance (cultural standing) and influence (authority) are to be distinguished from the concepts of truth and validity. Habermas's institutional or normative status as a contemporary thinker begs the original question of effective history. Witness the way Fish argues that "any positive reference to Habermas in the course of argument is enough to invalidate it."¹⁹⁶⁹ Our cultural critic – a proponent of the *relativistic* concept of interpretive communities¹⁹⁷⁰ – denies that the very situation giving rise to the problem of understanding meaning can also be regarded as the key to its solution. Fish urges that "the insight of historicity – of the *fashioned* or constructed nature of all forms of thought and organization – is too powerful a weapon for those who appropriate it to attack the projects of others; for it turns against them when they attempt to place their own project on a (universally pragmatic) footing."¹⁹⁷¹ Habermas is understood to have placed himself in the awkward position of "acknowledging as inescapable the condition of historicity, but claiming nevertheless to have escaped it."¹⁹⁷² In other words, Habermas's attempt to ground critical interpretations of historical thought or practice become self-contradictory and merely reinstates the problem of legitimating the historicity of understanding. Lyotard argues that "the problem of legitimation"¹⁹⁷³ cannot move in the "direction of a search for universal consensus...(or) a dialogue of argumentation"¹⁹⁷⁴ since it is not "possible for all speakers to come to an agreement on which rules or meta-

¹⁹⁶⁶ Freundlieb, Dieter, Hudson, Wayne and Rundell, John. "Reasoning, Language and Intersubjectivity" in Freundlieb, Dieter, Hudson, Wayne and Rundell (eds.) *Critical Theory After Habermas* (Brill, Leiden- Boston, 2004), p.1.

¹⁹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶⁹ Fish, Stanley. *The Trouble with Principle*. (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1999), p.122.

¹⁹⁷⁰ Fish, Stanley. *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

¹⁹⁷¹ Fish, Stanley, "Critical Self-Consciousness, or, Can We Know What We're Doing?" in *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 455.

¹⁹⁷² Ibid, p.456.

¹⁹⁷³ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.65.

¹⁹⁷⁴ Ibid.

prescriptions are universally valid for language games."¹⁹⁷⁵ Consequently, the "principle of consensus as a criterion of validation"¹⁹⁷⁶ is itself invalid because the "legitimacy of any statement"¹⁹⁷⁷ and the "regularisation of the moves permitted in all language games"¹⁹⁷⁸ is precisely the problem of (effective) history. Dews offers a more sympathetic interpretation and notes that Habermas has "tried, in different ways, to pull off what looks like an impossible balancing act. On the one hand, he has sought to be thoroughly post-metaphysical" by renouncing "the claim to provide an interpretation of the world as a whole. Yet on the other hand, he has struggled to hold onto the (more traditional) notion of the inner relation between reason and history."¹⁹⁷⁹ If effective history – or the totality of reciprocal effects – determines the way reason acts, the performative status of Habermas's own speech acts can only be properly understood (critically evaluated) in relation to the complex whole calling itself back into question.¹⁹⁸⁰

Witness the way the problem of the relation between part and whole has invariably found its way into interpretations of Habermas. Despite its (relative) effectiveness in history, Habermas has observed that he has frequently been misunderstood and laments that his writing has failed to "awaken the hermeneutic willingness requisite for its reception."¹⁹⁸¹ Habermas's inability to reach complete or satisfactory understanding obviously throws into question the performative status of his own questioning. Piecemeal understanding and/or conflicting interpretations raise the question of the relation between the "partiality *for* reason"¹⁹⁸² (being rationally motivated) and the partiality *of* reasoning (motivated rationality, being prejudiced).¹⁹⁸³ Steinhoff argues that modernity's predisposition towards dissensus are all the evidence we need that Habermas's

¹⁹⁷⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p.60

¹⁹⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p.66.

¹⁹⁷⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁷⁹ Dews, Peter (ed.) *Habermas: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p.1.

¹⁹⁸⁰ Giddens, Anthony. *Social Theory and Modern Sociology* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1987), p.242. Giddens complains that the relation between part and whole is enacted – and problematized – by the purview of Habermas's own questioning: is the whole greater or less than the sum of its parts? Often "where one would like to see *evidence* presented to support a view that is proposed, a table is offered instead – as if the way to overcome objections is to pulverize them into conceptual fragments." Habermas's "puritanical formalism" and tendency to write in "the grand manner" acts as if *that* is the way we can determine the truth or validity of his own reasoning. Although it is "impossible not to be impressed with the encyclopedic range" of Habermas's thought and "marvel at the treasure trove of the critical commentary on others" interpreters have to "do a lot of work trying to puzzle out the relation between some of the main arguments."

¹⁹⁸¹ Habermas, Jürgen. "A Reply to My Critics" in in Thompson, John and Held, David (eds.) *Habermas: Critical Debates* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), p.219.

¹⁹⁸² Dews, Peter (ed.) *Habermas: Autonomy and Solidarity – Interviews with Jürgen Habermas* (London: Verso, 1986), p.51. According to Habermas, "the partiality for reason has a different status than any other commitment."

¹⁹⁸³ We shall return to the distinction between rational motivation and motivated rationality, a distinction brought into question by Gadamer's rational conception of prejudice.

"theory of communicative action fails as a theory and a diagnosis of the era and fails as a defence of modernity as well."¹⁹⁸⁴ Habermas's failure to awaken such a hermeneutic willingness is attributed to the fact that there is "no criteria and means"¹⁹⁸⁵ provided by modernity to regulate different interpretive frameworks and communities – if only because "reason and argumentation are still not sufficient to guarantee rational agreement between rational people in normative questions."¹⁹⁸⁶ Rational procedures "cannot provide us with any objective or universally intersubjective criterion of normative validity" when interpreting "the norms it propagates."¹⁹⁸⁷ Benhabib counters, however, "the fact that the theory of communicative action"¹⁹⁸⁸ cannot resolve the problem of its own legitimacy or provide an "answer to all these questions is not an argument *against* it, but *for* it... it is no argument against such a theory that it does not answer all the questions it raises. The issue is: does it succeed in generating future research hypotheses which are fruitful and subject to refutations?"¹⁹⁸⁹ Either way, the relation between reason and history thereby threatens to raise the spectres of relativism and circularity. As Lafont notes, the "problem is that the attempt to place the constitution of meaning under the control of universal validity claims runs into an in-principle difficulty: for something to be true...it must first of all be meaningful. For only when something is already meaningful, only when speakers are already in agreement about the interpretive framework in which to consider that about which an understanding is sought, can they question the truth."¹⁹⁹⁰ The problem of the constitution of meaning threatens to present a vicious circle – namely, situations resulting "in the impossibility of isolating the acceptability conditions of speech acts from the background knowledge that determines these conditions and thus makes possible the understanding of speech acts."¹⁹⁹¹ Habermas attempts to resolve this difficulty with respect to the "performative attitude we have to take up if we want to reach an understanding with one another."¹⁹⁹² Such an intentional relation "demands an orientation toward reciprocally raised, criticizable validity claims"¹⁹⁹³ that

¹⁹⁸⁴ Steinhoff, Uwe. *The Philosophy of Jürgen Habermas: A Critical Introduction* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2009), p.240.

¹⁹⁸⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁸⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁸⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁸⁸ Benhabib, Sylvia. *Critique, Norm and Utopia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p.252

¹⁹⁸⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁹⁰ Lafont, Cristina. *The Linguistic Turn In Hermeneutic Philosophy* trans. Jose Medina, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), p.223.

¹⁹⁹¹ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁹² Habermas, Jürgen. "Between Metaphysics and the Critique of Reason" in *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays* trans. William Mark Hohengarten (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992), p.144.

¹⁹⁹³ Habermas, Jürgen. "The Turn to Pragmatics" in *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays* trans. William Mark Hohengarten (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992), p.80.

occurs "against the background of others who are potentially present"¹⁹⁹⁴ and/or in potential agreement. From "the possibility of reaching understanding linguistically, we can read off a concept of situated reason that is given voice in validity claims that are both context-dependent and transcendent: 'Reason is, in this sense, both immanent (not to be found outside concrete language games and institutions) and transcendent (a regulative idea that we can use to criticize the conduct of all activities and institutions)'."¹⁹⁹⁵ The relation between part and whole may therefore be thought complex if and when we can recognize "the unity of reason only remains perceptible in the diversity of its voices."¹⁹⁹⁶ By orienting ourselves towards criticizable validity claims, the regulative idea of reason lends "unity and organization to the situation interpretations that participants negotiate with each other."¹⁹⁹⁷ Habermas's thought has undergone various changes and refinements in this way.¹⁹⁹⁸ Habermas's questioning is motivated by the search for truth, and has sought the *unity of reason* via *divisible reasons* called into being and/or question. The relation between a historically determined reason and a rationally unfolding (or ideally regulated) history is therefore mutually attuned and reciprocally related *in language*.

Habermas's concept of communicative action has remained integral to this pursuit of rationality in effective history, and recurs across many different texts communicating the linguistic activities in question. As Cooke notes, communicative "rationality refers primarily to the use of knowledge in language and action"¹⁹⁹⁹ and reflects a "mode of dealing with validity claims"²⁰⁰⁰ that have their basis in the "formal specifications of the structural characteristics of possible forms of life."²⁰⁰¹ Given this condition of possibility, Habermas's linguistic interactions are as influenced as they are influential. They take their lead from Gadamer's conception of the historicity of understanding and Wittgenstein's interpretation of language, and push our historically effected consciousness in a different direction – towards an understanding of forms of life that cannot be reduced to context-specific rulings. Such activities are directly tied to the practice and/or rules

¹⁹⁹⁴ Habermas, Jürgen. "A Return To Metaphysics?" in *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays* trans. William Mark Hohengarten (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992), p.24

¹⁹⁹⁵ Ibid, p.139. Habermas is quoting Hilary Putnam with approval here.

¹⁹⁹⁶ Ibid, p.117.

¹⁹⁹⁷ Ibid, p.143.

¹⁹⁹⁸ Habermas, Jürgen. *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003). Note, for example, Habermas's ongoing attempt to develop and refine a concept of truth through the process of arguing with others. Habermas subsequently acknowledges his need to move from a "discursive concept of truth", to a "pragmatic epistemological realism", pp. 37 and 7 respectively. That is to say, Habermas has been "convinced" by his critics to rethink the very concept at the heart of his thinking, p.37. Such rethinking attempts to downplay the role of rational consensus in favour of an objective world that makes consensus (and the ideal of rationality) possible in the first place.

¹⁹⁹⁹ Cooke, Maeve. *Language and Reason: A Study Of Habermas's Pragmatics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), p.38

²⁰⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰⁰¹ Ibid.

of argumentation, where reason arguably determines the effectiveness (ruling, validity) of linguistic interactions brought into potential conflict or question. Consequently, Habermas's thinking remains a part of the effective history in question, and seeks to transform the context of Gadamer's and Wittgenstein's questioning.²⁰⁰² The question, of course, is whether Habermas's appropriations can themselves be thought effective (valid). In reconstructing the rules of language through arguments with others, Habermas purports to follow the rules of discourse when seeking to reach an understanding through communicative actions. Habermas's attempt to (re)formulate the rational presuppositions of communicative acts itself presupposes performative attitudes potentially brought into conflict or question – it involves adopting an intentional stance towards the rules of argumentation and is orientated towards the possibility of securing their own validity conditions. Specifically, Habermas's reasoning has proceeded via a critical engagement with other thinkers similarly motivated by the search for normativity and/or truth within a contested space of reasons. Habermas's interpretations have attempted to bridge the divide between traditions of thought, and include debates with philosophers as disparate as Gadamer²⁰⁰³, Foucault²⁰⁰⁴, Derrida²⁰⁰⁵, Rawls²⁰⁰⁶, Putnam²⁰⁰⁷ and Searle.²⁰⁰⁸ Habermas's performative attitude remains faced with the problem of *its* rational status in effective history. We thereby find ourselves presented with a questionable situation in re-turn: to what extent can the project of reconstruction be consistent (or cohere) with the effects

²⁰⁰² We don't mean to imply that Habermas's thought should primarily be understood as a recontextualizing of Gadamer and Wittgenstein. As *The Theory of Communicative Action* readily confirms, Habermas appropriates – and critically engages with – a range of thinkers and disciplines too numerous to single out. To call this text (amongst others) primarily philosophical is to fail to do justice to its breadth and depth. Nonetheless, our concern remains the philosophical import of Habermas's thinking.

²⁰⁰³ Habermas, Jürgen. *On The Logic of the Social Sciences* trans Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Jerry A. Stark (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), pgs. 143-170.

²⁰⁰⁴ Habermas, Jürgen. "Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present" in Hoy, David (ed.) *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1986). Habermas also critically engages with Foucault in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. See the lectures "The Critique of Reason as an Unmasking of the Human Sciences" and "Some Questions Concerning the Theory of Power", pp. 238-293.

²⁰⁰⁵ Borradori, Giovanna. *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). Habermas also critically engages with Derrida in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. See the lectures "Beyond a Temporalized Philosophy of Origins: Jacques Derrida's Critique of Phonocentrism" and "On Levelling the Genre Distinction between Philosophy and Literature", pp. 161-210.

²⁰⁰⁶ Habermas, Jürgen. "Discourse Ethics: Notes on a Program of Philosophical Justification" in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Nicholson Weber (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1990), p. 43-116. Also see Habermas's "Reconciliation Through the Public Use of Reason: Remarks on John Rawls's Political Liberalism" *The Journal of Philosophy* 92, 3 (March 1995): 109-131.

²⁰⁰⁷ Habermas, Jürgen. "Norms and Values: On Hilary Putnam's Kantian Pragmatism" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), pp. 213-235.

²⁰⁰⁸ Habermas, Jürgen. "Comments on John Searle: Meaning, Communication and Representation" in LePore, Ernest and Van Gulick, Robert (eds.) *John Searle and his Critics* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 17-31.

of history? This situation remains a question insofar as Habermas's communicative actions remain directed towards the possibility (or anticipation of) completion. Such a projection is effectively the reason Habermas (like anyone else) argues in effective history: attempting to decide the rationality of reason is arguably incompatible with a context invariably mobilized against (contesting) its reasons for being-there. While Habermas attempts to contextualize and historicize reason, the questions remain: to what extent – or in what ways – may Habermas's own knowledge of language be contextualized and/or thought reasonable? Following Habermas's lead, we approach these questions in two related parts and determine their relationship to one another within the complex whole in question. In the first part, we follow Habermas as he questions the hermeneutic claim to universality, and provides an answer in the form of a corrective – that of universal pragmatics. In the second part, we follow Habermas towards a theory of communicative action, or the argument that rational criticism becomes necessary (possible and/or questionable) via the universal rules of language.

Universal (or formal) Pragmatics – the conditions of understanding.

Habermas follows Gadamer by taking the question of the universality of understanding as his starting point. He purports to depart from Gadamer when calling for a more "critically self-aware hermeneutics" that "links understanding to the principle of rational discourse"²⁰⁰⁹ and ideally culminating in a "theoretical reconstruction"²⁰¹⁰ of language. As we have already seen, Gadamer claims that "Being that can be understood is language. The hermeneutic phenomenon here projects its own universality back onto the ontological constitution of what is understood, determining it in a universal sense as language and determining its own relation to beings as interpretation."²⁰¹¹ Habermas interprets Gadamer's inference from the universality of understanding to the universality of language as an illegitimate move. Part of the problem is Gadamer's conception of effective history begs the original question. Specifically, how can the medium of language mediate (distinguish and move) between a true and a false historically effected consciousness? Conversely, Habermas is also concerned about the possibility that language is the very medium in which the difference between truth and falsehood can be concealed. Habermas is critical of Gadamer's conception of the historicity of understanding because it is understood to reduce the normativity of rational standards to the authority of linguistic tradition (inherited patterns of thought, practices of given standing, etc.). According to

²⁰⁰⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. "On Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality" in Muller-Vollmer, Kurt (ed.) *The Hermeneutic Reader* (Continuum, New York, 1994), p.314.

²⁰¹⁰ Ibid, p.312.

²⁰¹¹ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.470.

Habermas, it is the institutional nature of tradition that needs to be "called into question"²⁰¹² – if only because the historicity of understanding can act against the interest of reason. Nonetheless, history's partiality for reason remains the way thought can identify and reflect upon its own practices. Consequently, Gadamer's dialectic of question and answer "fails to recognize the power of reflection that unfolds" in the understanding, one that critically questions "the tradition from which it proceeds and to which it returns."²⁰¹³ Gadamer's unquestioning appropriation of tradition is thought to be inappropriate for a reason moving against the principle of reason itself. Tradition's "claim to truth"²⁰¹⁴ must not correspond to "agreement about tradition itself"²⁰¹⁵ and the "antithesis between authority and reason" can never "be rescinded hermeneutically."²⁰¹⁶ Indeed, "reason, as the principle of rational discourse, is the rock on which existing authorities exist, not the one on which they are founded."²⁰¹⁷ On Habermas's interpretation, "the tradition is objective in relation to us in the sense that we cannot confront it with a claim to the truth on principle...Gadamer infers the ontological precedence of linguistic tradition over criticism of all sorts: we can, it follows, bring criticism to bear only on given individual traditions, since we ourselves are part of the encompassing traditional context of a language."²⁰¹⁸ Such an identification "leads to the ontologization of language and to the hypostatization of the traditional context."²⁰¹⁹ According to Habermas, we need to identify and reflect upon the circle of understanding itself – by moving within a horizon enabling rationally justified and criticizable questioning. Specifically, the interest of reason "requires that the hermeneutic approach limit itself. It requires a system of reference that transcends the context of tradition as such. Only then can the tradition be criticized. But how is such a system of reference to be legitimated in turn except through the appropriation of tradition?"²⁰²⁰

Habermas provides an answer by way of a "formal analysis"²⁰²¹ of a self-referential system thought to simultaneously transcend and move within the context/s of tradition. He calls this

²⁰¹² Habermas, Jürgen. "On Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality" in Muller-Vollmer, Kurt (ed.) *The Hermeneutic Reader* (Continuum, New York, 1994), p.313.

²⁰¹³ Habermas, Jürgen. *On The Logic of the Social Sciences* trans Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Jerry A. Stark (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), p.168.

²⁰¹⁴ Habermas, Jürgen. "On Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality" in Muller-Vollmer, Kurt (ed.) *The Hermeneutic Reader* (Continuum, New York, 1994), p.316.

²⁰¹⁵ Ibid.

²⁰¹⁶ Ibid.

²⁰¹⁷ Ibid.

²⁰¹⁸ Ibid.

²⁰¹⁹ Ibid, p.314.

²⁰²⁰ Habermas, Jürgen. *On The Logic of the Social Sciences* trans Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Jerry A. Stark (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), p.170.

²⁰²¹ Habermas, Jürgen. "What is Universal Pragmatics?" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p. 21. We only provide a general outline of Habermas's proposed reconstruction. Habermas subsequently refines many of the details

analysis "universal pragmatics"²⁰²² and says that its immediate goal is to "identify and reconstruct universal conditions of mutual understanding."²⁰²³ Given this proposed reconstruction, Habermas's speech actions remain directed towards the "general presuppositions of communicative action...aimed at reaching understanding" through the "validity basis of speech acts."²⁰²⁴ According to Habermas, "the principle task of speech act theory is to clarify the performative status of linguistic utterances"²⁰²⁵, and such clarification can be done with respect to their "double structure"²⁰²⁶, or "inherent reflexivity."²⁰²⁷ That is to say, concerning their propositional content (what is said *about* the world) and their illocutionary force (what is done *with* said actions). The inherent reflexivity of the system of reference formally analysed is said to "make explicit the self-referentiality that is already contained in every speech act."²⁰²⁸ The true "object of understanding"²⁰²⁹ is neither the content of speech acts or the intention of speakers "in specific situations but rather the *intuitive* rule consciousness that a competent speaker has of his own language."²⁰³⁰ A rational reconstruction attempts to make itself conscious of "the rules according to which the lexicon of language is constructed."²⁰³¹ The validity basis of speech acts is said to be already *built into* the rationality of linguistic interactions, and "the task of reconstructive understanding"²⁰³² is to translate intuitive (or "pre-theoretical"²⁰³³) knowledge into a formal (or conscious) critical theory. Habermas's attempt to reconstruct the universally valid basis of speech acts therefore presupposes an important distinction between intersecting *levels* of knowledge and/or rule consciousness. Habermas's claims to reconstruct an intuitive rule consciousness into "categorical knowledge"²⁰³⁴, and the reconstruction is said to depend on the "operation of conceptual explication"²⁰³⁵ validating the raising of "universal validity claims"²⁰³⁶ when "performing any speech act."²⁰³⁷ Following Ryle, Habermas distinguishes between *know how* (a tacit ability or understanding of rules) and *know that* (explicit

in his theory of communicative action. Consequently, what is presented here is primarily concerned with the overall trajectory of his way-making movements.

²⁰²² Ibid.

²⁰²³ Ibid.

²⁰²⁴ Ibid.

²⁰²⁵ Ibid, p.56.

²⁰²⁶ Ibid, p.63.

²⁰²⁷ Ibid, p.64.

²⁰²⁸ Ibid.

²⁰²⁹ Ibid, p.33.

²⁰³⁰ Ibid, p.33.

²⁰³¹ Ibid.

²⁰³² Ibid.

²⁰³³ Ibid.

²⁰³⁴ Ibid.

²⁰³⁵ Ibid.

²⁰³⁶ Ibid, p. 22.

²⁰³⁷ Ibid.

knowledge about how such an understanding occurs).²⁰³⁸ More specifically, it is where someone "knows how to use the system of rules of his language and understands their context-specific application, he has a pretheoretical knowledge of this rule system which is at least sufficient to enable him to produce the utterance in question...The interpreter, in turn, who not only shares but wants to understand this implicit knowledge of the competent speaker, must transform this know-how into explicit knowledge, that is, into a second level know-that."²⁰³⁹ Within the context of a rational reconstruction, the requirement is locate understanding within an in "between."²⁰⁴⁰ According to Habermas, understanding is only possible if thought can *move between* the linguistic poles of social accord and discord. Such a possibility turns on the pivot of intersubjectivity, or the constitution of publicly shared (communicable) meaning and norms. Accordingly, "reaching an understanding is the process of bringing about an agreement on the presupposed basis of validity claims that are mutually reciprocated"²⁰⁴¹ and determined. If and when something is thrown into question or generally misunderstood, the possibility of real communication breaks down and cannot continue. The "task of mutual interpretation, then, is to achieve a new definition of the situation that all participants can share" and this can only occur when "participants presuppose that they know what mutual recognition of reciprocally related validity claims means."²⁰⁴² The question of the self-referentiality of language – and its relation to context – remains integral. Language's self-referentiality makes it possible to validate problematic knowledge claims through the process of reasoning and/or giving (questioning and evaluation) of competing reasons. Habermas's goal is to stabilize context so as to *rationaly ground* (contextualize) the performativity of language. The meaning of linguistic interactions may therefore be rationally grounded (validated) *over and above* given statements. That is to say, if contexts may trans/form the meaning of statements, they can nonetheless be stated in a *context-independent* form. Specifically, "a performative expression is either available or, if necessary, can be obtained through a specification of possible expressions or newly introduced."²⁰⁴³

²⁰³⁸ Although Habermas purports to be following Gilbert Ryle's 1949 text *Concept of the Mind* (Philadelphia: R.P. Pryne, 2015), Ryle's famed distinction appears to have its basis in Heidegger's distinction between ready-to-hand and present-to-hand. We shall not pursue this point beyond acknowledging that Ryle had reviewed Heidegger's *Being and Time* in *Mind* Vol. 38, No.151, 1929, pp.355-370.

²⁰³⁹ Ibid, p.33.

²⁰⁴⁰ Ibid, p.23.

²⁰⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁰⁴² Ibid, p.24.

²⁰⁴³ Ibid, p.62.

Habermas thereby identifies and reconstructs four universal conditions of possible mutual understanding.²⁰⁴⁴ These four validity claims are said to be presuppositions built into speech acts – they already presuppose a claim to appropriateness (interpreted as something adequate or relevant to meaningful expression), and are appropriated (may be taken as a given) accordingly. Specifically, the claim to *comprehensibility*, a claim to *truth*, a claim to *normative rightness*, and a claim to the *truthfulness* of speakers. These conditions are understood to be universal insofar as claims to validity can be raised and validated with respect to every possible speech act. A speech act is said to be *comprehensible* when meaningfully expressed (understood and acted upon) via the grammatical rules of language. Speech acts are also said to have *truth-values* insofar as the expressed content is intended to share knowledge about an objective world. And they must be expressed *truthfully* in that whatever is done occurs with sincerity. Finally, the chosen (speech) action is performed against a shared normative background (with respect to established norms and regulations). Understanding therefore becomes conditional upon the validation of potential speech acts. The question of implicitly raised validity claims is correspondingly used to ground three kinds of related speech acts: the *constative*, the *regulative* and the *expressive*. Specifically, the constative refers to the possibility of making true or false statements about the world, and involves giving grounds for their presupposed truth-value. The expressive refers to the possibility of showing subjective thoughts or feelings through linguistic actions, and presupposes truthfully expressing them *in action*. The regulative refers to speech acts regulated against a given normative context, and involves acting in accord with accepted and/or understood norms. Habermas stresses that the raising of distinct validity claims typically occurs simultaneously and may not be formally expressed (thematized) as such. To cite the example of requesting a glass of water. It is possible to contest the validity of the request in relation to the context occurrence. Specifically, the request (while comprehensible) might be thought invalid because of its normative rightness (a student asking a teacher during a lecture) and/or it might be invalidated with respect to its true intent (student trying to disrupt the teacher's lecture) and/or it might be falsified because of the legitimacy of the request (there are no glasses of water within the immediate vicinity). Given this model of reality, Habermas purports to be able to link the validity basis of speech acts to the "rational foundation of illocutionary force",²⁰⁴⁵ or the way rational thinkers are obliged to enter into a relationship with (act upon) one another. If someone were to make an assertion, for example, they are trying to reach an understanding "in such a way that the latter can take up an

²⁰⁴⁴ Although Habermas initially identifies four conditions, three tend to figure centrally insofar as the first (the claim to comprehensibility) makes the others possible/meaningful. Throughout his subsequent writing, Habermas therefore prefers to focus on three claims to validity and links these claims to a threefold relation to the (life)world.

²⁰⁴⁵ Ibid, p.81.

interpersonal relation"²⁰⁴⁶ with them against a background of shared presuppositions. To "be understood in a given situation, every utterance must at least implicitly establish and give expression to a certain relation between the speaker and her counterpart. We can say that the illocutionary force of a speech act consists in fixing the communicative function of the content uttered...and that the hearer can understand and accept the content uttered by the speaker in the sense indicated."²⁰⁴⁷

If the goal of speech act theory is to clarify the performative status of utterances, Habermas claims that such clarification occurs in relation to their double structure, or inherent reflexivity. According to Habermas, speech acts are reflexive in the sense that their propositional and illocutionary parts occur on two levels simultaneously. That is to say, by acting upon speech actors *through* the establishing of relations (illocutionary force) and trying to reach an understanding *about* the world (propositional content) accordingly. In this way, speech acts make an offer that can either be accepted or rejected by potential respondents. The (illocutionary) point of Habermas's reconstruction is to try and determine the way linguistic interactions acts may become culturally acceptable in institutional (organized and administered) settings. Speech acts therefore have the performative status of a cultural 'institution' – they are an established activity that has been brought about and regulated for a specific purpose, and they actively institute (bring about) interactions for rationally motivated reasons. Specifically, where the "reciprocal binding and bonding relationship has a rational basis"²⁰⁴⁸ and the corresponding validity claims can bring about mutual understanding across institutional settings. Habermas distinguishes between two institutional settings – the *institutionally bound* and *institutionally unbound*. The distinction is meant to capture a difference between the specification of contextual conditions and the way their actions may be thought binding across contexts. With "institutionally bound speech acts, specific institutions can always be specified. With institutionally unbound, only general contextual conditions can be specified – conditions that typically must be met for a corresponding act to succeed...To explain what acts of betting and christening mean, I must refer to the institutions of betting or christening. By contrast, commands or advice or questions do not represent institutions but types of speech acts that can fit very different institutions."²⁰⁴⁹ In the first instance, the institution of christening remains bound by very specific conditions and the corresponding action can be specified via the context of occurrence. In the second instance, the speech act of (say) questioning is not bounded per se: it can only be specified (contextualized, institutionalized) in relation to norms of action and

²⁰⁴⁶ Ibid, p.56.

²⁰⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁴⁸ Ibid, p.85.

²⁰⁴⁹ Ibid. p.56.

may transcend the given context of occurrence. Habermas's analysis emphasizes the institutionally unbound because the *question* of their performative status remains indeterminate and open to questioning.

We've observed Habermas identify and reconstruct the conditions of possible understanding. Habermas does this by specifying the general presuppositions of speech acts, and the role they actively play in reaching agreement through an understanding. Specifically, by determining the validity basis of speech acts and their orientation towards rational understanding. These idealizing presuppositions include the raising of truth, normative and/or sincerity conditions across contexts of interpretation. We now turn to Habermas's attempt to specify the conditions of possible understanding against the background of tacit – and potentially questionable – knowledge claims. Habermas raises the question of the legitimation of social institutions and specifies the conditions for questioning the legitimacy of the norms of cultural modernity. The normative issue – as Habermas understands it – involves the *colonization of the lifeworld by systems* and he attempts to legitimate the meaning of the lifeworld through the question of communicative acts. Habermas thereby attempts to rethink the way context/s determine the relation between meaningful actions and the rational validity of a given understanding.²⁰⁵⁰

The Theory of Communicative Action.

Habermas follows tradition by distinguishing between the natural and historical–hermeneutic sciences, and urges that this "continuing dualism ... finds expression in the coexistence of two distinct frames of reference."²⁰⁵¹ Despite the different theoretical frameworks, Habermas's

²⁰⁵⁰ It is worth noting that Habermas does this within the context of understanding (delimiting) cultural thought or practice. Specifically, Habermas problematizes the logic of the social sciences, or the way meaningful practices can be understood (delimited) according to alternate – or competing – knowledge claims. Habermas not only recognizes that a theory of culture is one practice (interpretation) amongst others, he attempts to provide the most meaningful (truthful) horizon for these (potentially) competing interpretations. In this way, Habermas's interpretation purports to be able to offer a critique of cultural thought or practice – through the question of the validation of the interpretation of (other) interpretations. While the *status* of other cultural theories might provide the context for his own actions, we will need to delimit our interpretation of Habermas by bringing forth the question of the status of his theory of communicative action. Suffice to say, the problem of context occurs within his interpretation of the relation between meaningful actions and valid speech acts. The task ahead of us, then, is to explore the way Habermas attempts to delimit (contextualize) his own interpretation, and determine its relation to the performative status of the conditions of possible understanding.

²⁰⁵¹ Habermas, Jürgen. *On The Logic of the Social Sciences* trans Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Jerry A. Stark (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), p. 1-2. Although the German publication of this text predates Habermas's *The Theory of Communicative Action*, it nonetheless paves the way to it. Habermas indicates as much in the preface, p. xxxix. We cite it here to indicate the continuity of his thought, and note that Habermas's conception of a dualism between sciences (following Dilthey, amongst others) continues in *The Theory of Communicative Action*. It is also worth noting the

primary concern is the way "competing approaches have been developed"²⁰⁵² in the one frame of reference – and that the "approaches of general theories cannot be applied in the same way as the objectified natural processes."²⁰⁵³ Habermas wants to *reframe* the hermeneutic sciences in "action theoretic terms"²⁰⁵⁴ via the question of "interpreting meaning."²⁰⁵⁵ Given this understanding, it should be possible to provide a framework in which to present and situate (interpret) respective knowledge claims. The question of their presentation and/or situation is understood to be meaningful if we can critically evaluate what is said and done in effective history. Habermas's goal, then, is to urge a "relative legitimacy"²⁰⁵⁶ to competing "theoretical approaches"²⁰⁵⁷ within the cultural sciences since their object of inquiry – "meaningful cultural entities handed down by tradition"²⁰⁵⁸ – must "bear the tension of divergent approaches"²⁰⁵⁹ and conflicting claims to validity. According to Habermas's own approach, the question of relative legitimacy can only occur within a framework that allows for claims to universality – namely, one that directs itself towards the "problem of rationality" by "way of interpretive understanding."²⁰⁶⁰ In this way, we can have a "critical"²⁰⁶¹ hermeneutics, one that provides a rational framework which "does not relate to established lines of research as competitor...it attempts to explain the specific limitations and relative rights of these approaches."²⁰⁶² Consequently, "rationality has less to do with the possession of knowledge than with how speaking and acting subjects acquire and use knowledge"²⁰⁶³ when reaching an understanding. Specifically, "rationality is understood to be a disposition...expressed in modes of behaviour for which there are good reasons or grounds"²⁰⁶⁴ and may be evaluated (acted upon) accordingly. According to Habermas, "we understand a speech act when we know what makes it acceptable. From the standpoint of the speaker, the conditions of acceptability are identical to the conditions for his illocutionary

contrast between Lyotard, who claims that (effective) history has given rise to a different conception of the sciences – specifically, where the natural and cultural sciences may now be subsumed under the hermeneutic (or self-interpreting) concept of *narrative*.

²⁰⁵² Ibid, p.2.

²⁰⁵³ Ibid.

²⁰⁵⁴ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2, Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p.374.

²⁰⁵⁵ Habermas, Jürgen. *On The Logic of the Social Sciences* trans Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Jerry A. Stark (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), p.1.

²⁰⁵⁶ Ibid, p.3.

²⁰⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁵⁸ Ibid, p.1.

²⁰⁵⁹ Ibid, p.3.

²⁰⁶⁰ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society* trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p.7.

²⁰⁶¹ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2, Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p.375.

²⁰⁶² Ibid.

²⁰⁶³ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society* trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p.8.

²⁰⁶⁴ Ibid, p.22.

success."²⁰⁶⁵ Given this characterization, speech acts interpret themselves in that they identify the conditions in which they can be accepted. Their self-referential structure permits respondents to adopt a *performative attitude* towards the way/s knowledge is acquired and/or used. Understanding occurs when a respondent may "take a yes position on the claim raised by the speaker"²⁰⁶⁶, and so understands the context of their occurrence (reason for being, general contextual conditions, etc.). The theory of communicative action therefore attempts to broaden the horizon of the meaning of practical reasoning. Such meaningful interactions admit of a "wider concept of rationality": that of "rationally motivated conviction" brought about via the "force of argumentative speech."²⁰⁶⁷ As Habermas claims "every action orientated to reaching an understanding can be conceived as part of a cooperative process of interpretation aiming at situation definitions that are intersubjectively recognized."²⁰⁶⁸ Indeed, these 'situations' provide (or help define) the contexts in which understanding becomes possible and/or problematic. Habermas invariably came to the understanding that what constitutes good reasons or grounds can never occur independently of contexts of interpretation. The "neutralizing (of) context"²⁰⁶⁹ works against the very notion of moving within a horizon of meaning and/or trying to reach a different understanding. Consequently, we also need to introduce "validity claims that are not directed toward truth conditions or tailored to the relationship of language to the objective world."²⁰⁷⁰ Instead, what is required is a context that allows for the constitution of meaning – and the question of our being *in* the world would itself be constitutive of the problematic of understanding. The question of being in the world directs thought to the "circular process that takes place between ...the linguistically prior interpretive knowledge that discloses the world for a linguistic community" and the way our "knowledge of the world is acquired and expanded" through questioning of "antecedent interpretive knowledge."²⁰⁷¹ Given our being-there, there can be no ground zero and/or there may always be better (or competing) reasons for thinking and acting in a world effectively disclosed throughout history. Indeed, it is for this reason that we have the problematic of reason, and Habermas's argument is forced to introduce "the concept of lifeworld as the correlate of the processes of reaching understanding."²⁰⁷²

²⁰⁶⁵ Ibid, p.297.

²⁰⁶⁶ Ibid, p.298

²⁰⁶⁷ Ibid, p.22. Habermas's knowledge claims (actions) must be situated and evaluated accordingly – they also have less to do with what he claims to know than how he has acquired and uses such knowledge.

²⁰⁶⁸ Ibid, pp.69-70. We italicize *every*.

²⁰⁶⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. "Reply to My Critics" in Thompson, John and Held, David (eds.) *Habermas: Critical Debates* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), p.271.

²⁰⁷⁰ Ibid, p.75.

²⁰⁷¹ Habermas, Jürgen. "Some Further Clarifications of the Concept of Communicative Rationality" in Cooke, Maeve, (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p.336.

²⁰⁷² Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p.70.

Specifically, there already always is a "context forming lifeworld that serves as a resource for processes of reaching understanding."²⁰⁷³ The lifeworld situates interpretations by presenting "contexts of relevance"²⁰⁷⁴ through an "action situation"²⁰⁷⁵ and "moveable horizon."²⁰⁷⁶ A context of relevance not only defines and "stores the interpretive work of preceding generations"²⁰⁷⁷, it acts upon historically situated beings in such a way that they will invariably find themselves questioning the normative content (direction, relevance) of said actions. It is against this "background knowledge" that speech actors "draw their interpretations"²⁰⁷⁸ and/or may inform potential contexts of relevance when bringing certain presuppositions to the foreground. Habermas's correlate of the lifeworld is supplemented by what he calls the *three worlds* to which speech actions relate, or the "relatively foregrounded knowledge"²⁰⁷⁹ of contexts of relevance. These three worlds – that of the objective, subjective and intersubjective world – actively bring forth *the way* rational subjects relate to their background knowledge as an intentional horizon. Rational subjects "already find themselves within the context of a lifeworld that makes their communicative actions possible, just as it is in turn maintained through the medium of these processes of reaching understanding. This background, which is presupposed in communicative action, constitutes a totality that is implicit and comes along prereflexively – one that crumbles the moment it is thematized; it only remains a totality in the form of implicit, intuitively presupposed background knowledge"²⁰⁸⁰ that may be *partially* called into question and consciously thematized. Consequently, the "formal reference system of the three worlds" permits access to the lifeworld "through the medium of interpretive efforts, in the sense of a cooperative negotiation of situation definitions."²⁰⁸¹ The lifeworld – and corresponding three world relations – form a complex whole insofar as they provide a linguistic worldview (interpretive framework) and mediate interactions within potentially moveable horizons of

²⁰⁷³ Habermas, Jürgen. "Reply To My Critics" in Thompson, John and Held, David (eds.) *Habermas: Critical Debates* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), p.271.

²⁰⁷⁴ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2, Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p.124-125.

²⁰⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷⁷ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society* trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p.71.

²⁰⁷⁸ Habermas, Jürgen. "Reply To My Critics" in Thompson, John and Held, David (eds.) *Habermas: Critical Debates* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), p.271.

²⁰⁷⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. "Actions, Speech Acts, Linguistically Mediated Interactions and Lifeworld" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p. 241.

²⁰⁸⁰ Habermas, Jürgen. "Between Metaphysics and the Critique of Reason" in *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays* trans. William Mark Hohengarten (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992), p.142.

²⁰⁸¹ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society* trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p.69.

meaning and/or validity. What is "at issue here is a situation specific horizontal knowledge and a topic-dependent contextual knowledge."²⁰⁸² The lifeworld might provide background knowledge, but the three worlds involve a frontal relation to whatever is presupposed within "cultural systems of interpretation."²⁰⁸³ The three world relations thereby give expression to (foreground) the possibility of raising validity claims across contexts of relevance in the lifeworld. Specifically, when reaching an understanding, there is an *objective world* of meaning that we can all understand or refer to (the clock is on the wall), a *subjective world* referring to the inner state of speech actors (I'm running late!), and an *intersubjective world* of norms regulating said actions (clocks are used to tell time instead of as Frisbees). According to Habermas, rational agents "always come to an understanding in the horizon of a lifeworld. Their lifeworld is formed from more or less diffuse, always unproblematic, background convictions...and situation definitions...The world concepts and corresponding validity claims provide the formal scaffolding with which those acting communicatively order problematic contexts of situations, that is, those requiring agreement, in their lifeworld, which is presupposed as unproblematic."²⁰⁸⁴ The only problem is that such a "linguistic worldview"²⁰⁸⁵ threatens to be "reified as the world order"²⁰⁸⁶ and may not be seen as an "interpretive system open to criticism."²⁰⁸⁷

Habermas directs us, then, to the problem of reification, or the objectification of linguistic worldviews in effective history. Reification is where an interpretive system is misunderstood as an objective reality and/or loses its performative status as a 'mere' interpretation open to questioning and/or criticism. To quote Bourdieu from another context, reification involves mistaking "the model of reality for the reality of the model."²⁰⁸⁸ While there have been different ways in the which the world has been reified throughout history, Habermas's primary concern is rationalization, or the interpretation of modernity through standards of rationality placing emphasis on systematic organization and efficiency. Given the "loss of (true) meaning and freedom,"²⁰⁸⁹ Habermas remains faced with the problem: where can legitimacy reside in a world effectively subject to rationalization as reification? Specifically, he attempts to identify and

²⁰⁸² Habermas, Jürgen. "Actions, Speech Acts, Linguistically Mediated Interactions and Lifeworld" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p.242.

²⁰⁸³ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society* trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p.71.

²⁰⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p.70.

²⁰⁸⁵ *ibid*.

²⁰⁸⁶ *ibid*.

²⁰⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p.71.

²⁰⁸⁸ Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p.39.

²⁰⁸⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2, Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), pp.330-331.

reconstruct the conditions of a (more) legitimate understanding, and he does this through his conception of communicative rationality. Habermas identifies the legitimation crisis of society as "the colonization of lifeworld"²⁰⁹⁰ by systems, and he attempts to restore legitimacy to the lifeworld through the problematic of communicative action.

Habermas adopts a two-level theoretical model of society, and the question is the way these two levels interact with each other in effective history. Following the tradition Habermas actively questions, these may be called the *action-theoretic* and *system-theoretic* models of reality. Habermas's goal is to situate them within a more complex model of reality. Habermas attempts to account for the way social practices become systematically differentiated from each other as society simultaneously tends towards standardization and integration. The critical problem is allowing for the possibility of reaching an understanding across cultural interpretations – i.e., enable standards of rationality and contexts of relevance not reducible to a given system or rationale. A critical theory needs to "conceive of societies *simultaneously* as systems and lifeworlds."²⁰⁹¹ Habermas urges that the "distinction between a *social integration* of society, which takes effect in action orientations, and a *systemic integration*, which reaches through and beyond action orientations, calls for a corresponding differentiation in the concept of society itself."²⁰⁹² The model of system/lifeworld is therefore an attempt to locate distinct social relations and practices within the context of effective history, and determines how *reification as rationalization* effectively colonizes (occupies and rules over) other contexts of relevance. Specifically, reification is where economic and legal systems colonize the "culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns."²⁰⁹³ Indeed, rationalization threatens to affect the transmission and reproduction of the lifeworld by enclosing it within a vicious circle. When the lifeworld is mediated through the dollar sign or is increasingly subject to bureaucratization, reason potentially loses its capacity for questioning and/or self-criticism. The problem is not rationalization per se, but the fact that it exhibits "countertendencies"²⁰⁹⁴ to "action orientations"²⁰⁹⁵ and "value generalization."²⁰⁹⁶ The tension between action theoretical and system theoretical models of the world is thought to be particularly critical here. Specifically, "value generalization is a necessary condition for releasing the rationality potential immanent in communicative action. This fact by itself would entitle us to understand the development of law and morality, from which value generalization originates, as an aspect of the rationalization of

²⁰⁹⁰ Ibid, p.331.

²⁰⁹¹ Ibid, p.118.

²⁰⁹² Ibid, p.117.

²⁰⁹³ Ibid, p.124.

²⁰⁹⁴ Ibid, p.179

²⁰⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁹⁶ Ibid,

the lifeworld."²⁰⁹⁷ The difficulty, of course, is that the generalization of social values acts against the rationality of communicative actions – by "steering"²⁰⁹⁸ the circle of understanding in the direction of rationalized standards.

Habermas distinguishes between two typologies of action that (broadly speaking) can be mapped onto a distinction between rational action and social rationalization. The question of their rationality turns on the way reason coordinates actions within the lifeworld, and the issue is whether the reasons for acting intersect and/or can determine their respective performative status there. While the distinct typologies roughly correspond to a distinction between reaching an understanding through speech acts and the act of organizing something through a given rationale, both actions reside within the lifeworld and occur within the medium of language. Habermas therefore proposes two-fold reasons for acting, and the question is the way their reasoning may be distinguished and/or related to each other in a rationalized society. Specifically, Habermas primarily distinguishes between *communicative* and *strategic* actions by way of their "respective mechanism for action coordination."²⁰⁹⁹ Strategic actions are typically "interpreted in utilitarian terms; the actor is supposed to choose and calculate means and ends from the standpoint of maximizing utility and expectations of utility."²¹⁰⁰ The strategy is to use other actors to achieve specified goals by way of "egocentric calculations of success"²¹⁰¹ – to bring about situations whose value is determined in accordance with self-interest and means-end rationality. Communicative action, on the other hand, is where individuals have objectives other than the maximizing of utility. Instead, individuals pursue activities "under the condition that they can harmonize their plans of action on the basis of common situation definitions" and "through acts of reaching understanding."²¹⁰² And it is only possible to reach an understanding through "the binding and bonding energies of *language itself*."²¹⁰³ Given this distinction, the mechanisms for coordinating actions can be distinguished thus: that of "reaching understanding, which motivates convictions, and that of exertion of influence, which induces behaviour."²¹⁰⁴ Although strategic action presupposes communicative action – speech acts are

²⁰⁹⁷ Ibid, p.180.

²⁰⁹⁸ Ibid, p.183.

²⁰⁹⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. "Actions, Speech Acts, Linguistically Mediated Interactions and Lifeworld" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p. 221.

²¹⁰⁰ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p.85.

²¹⁰¹ Ibid, p.286.

²¹⁰² Ibid.

²¹⁰³ Habermas, Jürgen. "Actions, Speech Acts, Linguistically Mediated Interactions and Lifeworld" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 221.

²¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 221-222.

typically used to bring about desired situations – communicative actions are not to be identified with situational (context specific) standards of rationality. Communicative rationality transcends given situations or contexts by questioning the standards of reasoning and/or reasons for acting – i.e., communicative acts may question whether strategic actions are truly reasonable and/or should be thought valuable (pursued). The relation is one of part to whole, and the question of the rationality of reason can only occur within the context of a belief system subject to rational questioning and/or criticism. It is where the totality of our beliefs and actions may be "thematized"²¹⁰⁵ by way of "validity claims"²¹⁰⁶ "traced back to (the) three basic modes"²¹⁰⁷ corresponding to three-world relations: that of the constative (speaking truthfully), expressive (speaking sincerely) or regulative (speaking rightfully). The question of what makes speech acts acceptable (valid) becomes intelligible (defensible, criticizable) in relation to other beliefs and/or reasons for acting in the world. Specifically, speakers could ideally appeal to "potential reasons that could be brought to bear for it. The reasons interpret the validity conditions and to this extent are themselves part of the conditions that make an utterance acceptable."²¹⁰⁸ Given the relation between part and whole, one might think that Habermas is predisposed towards a coherence theory of truth. Specifically, where meaning and validity are parts tending towards internal coherence and consistency (integration) – i.e., meaningfully occur with respect to other beliefs and/or (potential) reasons for acting. The theory of communicative action, however, locates the question of truth elsewhere: within a community of interpreters seeking consensus via the possibility of rational discourse (potential discord directed towards mutual understanding and agreement). The reason for this displacement is readily apparent: rationalization attempts to make potentially questionable beliefs cohere while rational discourse permits us to question *the way* the parts may or may not remain coherent (answerable for themselves). Habermas therefore offers a consensus theory of truth directed towards a concept of reason that *remains* in (potential) disagreement with itself. Such a *dialectical conception of reason* problematizes the very notion of a rational consensus by arguing that rational discord is reason acting in accord with its directives – and it is the *language game* of argumentation that determines the performative status of agreements via the dialectic of question and answer. Communicative "rationality is embedded in language games in which the participants take a position on criticizable validity claims."²¹⁰⁹ Habermas approaches the lifeworld's meaningful content as both

²¹⁰⁵ Habermas, Jürgen. "Toward a Critique of The Theory of Meaning" in *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*, trans. William Mark Hohengarten (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992), p.77.

²¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*

²¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

²¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. "Some Further Clarifications of the Concept of Communicative Rationality" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p.329.

the problem and solution to colonization – its potentiality for meaning permits rational actors to question the agreements reached in (an) understanding. Specifically, Habermas urges that the truth-bearer (acceptability conditions) of speech acts is related to the possibility of rationally motivated agreements "binding and bonding"²¹¹⁰ language users. The relation between meaning and validity can only properly obtain when we can understand what makes our speech acts acceptable, and such a relation is only possible when we can determine (agree upon) the reasons for rationally accepting such actions. The question of their performative status can only take place within a context of relevance, and what makes a context particularly relevant (meaningful) is when interpreters can make them universally relevant (valid). This is where the three world relations – and corresponding validity claims – come into play in the language game of argumentation. That is to say, where objective, intersubjective and/or subjective relations may be related to conditions of truth, normativity and/or sincerity. The three validity claims – that of "propositional truth, normative rightness and subjective truthfulness"²¹¹¹ give expression to the "threefold relation to the world of communicative agents."²¹¹² In this way, the reciprocal binding and bonding relationship acquires a rational basis throughout effective history – and so may determine *the question* of the rationality of our *being-there*. Competing validity claims may therefore *become* subject to rational critique because they presuppose a shared world (historicity of understanding) that can be built up and held in being and/or broken down and thrown into question. Speech situations effectively become ideal in history – directed by idealizing presuppositions – insofar as they interpret conditions of validity by way of "achieving understanding in language."²¹¹³ The possibility of such an achievement "suggests a rationally motivated agreement...measured against criticizable validity claims"²¹¹⁴ that remain "counterfactual."²¹¹⁵ Specifically, where knowledge claims remain subject to the possibility of reversals in direction in the circle of understanding. While our interpretations "aim beyond contingent and local contexts" the phenomenon of understanding nonetheless remains "rooted in the facticity of everyday practices."²¹¹⁶ Habermas's questioning thereby gives expression to an "ideal speech situation"²¹¹⁷ defined – and situated – by the dialectic of question and answer. Such a situational definition can only meaningfully occur through the "ritualized competition for

²¹¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹¹ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p.75.

²¹¹² Ibid, p.96.

²¹¹³ Ibid, p.75.

²¹¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹¹⁵ Habermas, Jürgen. "Realism After The Linguistic Turn" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), p.18.

²¹¹⁶ Ibid, pp.17-18.

²¹¹⁷ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p.26.

the better arguments."²¹¹⁸ The ritual of argumentation ideally "motivates"²¹¹⁹ rational thinkers to accept the "forceless force of the better argument"²¹²⁰, or a "single right answer"²¹²¹ in the form of the most acceptable interpretation that remains open to questioning.

Critical Discussion (part 1)

Aims and Objectives

The aim of the following is to bring Habermas into indirect dialogue with Lyotard. We attempt this roundabout discussion by bringing the *double bind* of the differend into conflict with the *double structure* of speech acts. The paradox of rule-following remains integral, and turns on the problem of the sources of normativity and its relation to our practical identities within the language game of argumentation. Specifically, if the conception of ourselves as normative beings rationally motivates and/or justifies our actions, the critical question is: where does the rationality (normativity) of reason lie? Put another way: what is the rule for following a rule when it is the very normativity of rules that bring our linguistic interactions into question and/or conflict? As Bogen observes, the problem is whether Habermas's "theoretical fetishization of a vocabulary of rules"²¹²² can coherently lead to a critical theory of society: if rules already govern conduct within prescribed areas of linguistic actions, in what way can socially acceptable rules direct us towards transforming the very practices in question? We are therefore faced with the problem of "the incoherence of 'rules' as a privileged theoretical construct"²¹²³ from the outset. Pleasants goes further by asking if a theory primarily concerned with justifying the practice of rule-following can answer "the question of *how* exactly, and in virtue of *what*, critical theory is supposed to achieve its much-vaunted criticality."²¹²⁴ Part of the problem is that Habermas's procedural approach sets out to theoretically justify what we (allegedly) *already know* on an intuitive level anyway: critical theory thereby threatens to become "purely theoretical contemplation in lieu of substantive social critique"²¹²⁵ and transformative action. Particularly questionable is whether "the 'problem' of theoretical grounding"²¹²⁶ can ever be a "real, practical

²¹¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹¹⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. "Freedom and Determinism" in *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008) p.157.

²¹²⁰ Ibid.

²¹²¹ Habermas, Jürgen. "Habermas Responds His Critics" in Rosenfeld, Michel and Arato, Andrew (eds.) *Habermas on Law and Democracy: Critical Exchanges* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p.394.

²¹²² Bogen, David. *Order Without Rules: Critical Theory and the Logic of Conversation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), p.1.

²¹²³ Ibid.

²¹²⁴ Pleasants, Nigel. *Wittgenstein and the Idea of a Critical Social Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p.150.

²¹²⁵ Ibid, p.173.

²¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 170.

problem...(instead of) a purely academic one; the point of a critical theory is surely not, or not *just*, to persuade other professional theorists, but rather to persuade"²¹²⁷ 'practitioners' of all persuasions to act against the very rules in question."²¹²⁸ Following Lyotard's lead, we may therefore ask "is legitimacy to be found in consensus obtained through discussion, as Habermas thinks?"²¹²⁹ or do we also require "a theory of (language) games which accepts agonistics as a founding principle"?²¹³⁰ We have already seen that Lyotard consistently argues in accord with the "civil war of language with itself"²¹³¹ and urges that "the war is not without rules, but the rules allow and encourage the greatest possible flexibility of utterance."²¹³² It is important to stress in advance, however, that Lyotard will now lead from behind and merely provides a way to contextualize warring impulses within Habermas's own linguistic actions. Our objective is to identify a differend within Habermas's conception of language. We shall turn Habermas's criticism of performative contradiction against him and argue that the performative attitude is performatively contradictory – if only because it is the circle of understanding that performs (motivates and/or justifies) reason's disagreement(s) with itself. As we've argued elsewhere,²¹³³ the language game of argumentation is self-defeating in that it remains in a conflicted state or constant (re)play. The space of reasons is invariably displaced throughout effective history, and the (alleged) force of the better argument becomes fair game (a legitimate target, inevitable object of attack) in turn.²¹³⁴ The possibility of general agreement and/or seasonal changes in 'intellectual fashion statements' ²¹³⁵ merely reintroduces the problem of the criterion and its

²¹²⁷ Ibid.

²¹²⁸ By "practitioners" of all persuasions we mean people coming from (intersecting) walks/forms of life or different backgrounds, experiences and/or personal beliefs.

²¹²⁹ Ibid, p.xxii.

²¹³⁰ Ibid, p.16.

²¹³¹ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.141.

²¹³² Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.17.

²¹³³ See our Gadamer discussion.

²¹³⁴ Witness the way the problem of the One over many (the relation between structure and event and/or the universal and particular) has recurred in Heidegger, Gadamer, Derrida, Lyotard and Habermas. We have, of course, being instantiating this problematic via the problem of the criterion throughout our entire approach.

²¹³⁵ Pappas, Nickolas. *The Philosopher's New Clothes: The Theaetetus, the Academy, and Philosophy's Turn Against Fashion* (New York: Routledge, 2016). Although Pappas is not interested in the permanent and irreducible tension between the constative and the performative, he notes that the history of philosophy (amongst other intellectual activities) is predicated upon the problem of *wrestling* with other thinkers over the very ideal of the rationality of reason. Competing philosophical statements therefore remain subject to changing "fashions" (styles of thinking, schools of thought) as philosophy wrestles with *other* traditional manners and/or actions. Witness the way the concept of language game and/or the performative have since become fashionable, and occurs as a mode of action within contemporary philosophical discourse. As Pappas argues, the *Theaetetus* "contains, as...no other work of Plato's does, signs and remnants of Plato's movement toward the institutionalization of philosophy" and competing "philosophical schools" of thought. The *Theaetetus* is notable for the way the "dialogue's participants refer to its setting in a gymnasium" and draws "a

relation to dissenting arguments (styles of reasoning, patterns of thinking, etc.). Following Derrida, we shall call such an inherently questionable situation "the problematic of the performative"²¹³⁶ and reiterate that "the tension between the constative and performative modes of language is permanent and irreducible."²¹³⁷ Specifically, Habermas's "performative idealization"²¹³⁸ contradictorily presupposes the intelligibility of a determinate context of interpretation, or an idealized speech situation moving counter to the circle in question. The problem is whether it is possible to perform appropriate (acceptable) definitions of a situation that may be appropriated (accepted) in turn. Unlike Frank, then, we shall not "take a position in a non-existent debate – a debate about dissent and consensus, which should have ideally taken place."²¹³⁹ Adopting such a position presupposes the very thing at issue – namely, that it would be ideal to resolve the dispute between conflicting criteria for legitimating social relations and practices. Despite Lyotard's criticism of Habermas's "principle of consensus as a criterion of validation,"²¹⁴⁰ Habermas does not attempt to reach mutual understanding through agreement²¹⁴¹ – a situation that Lyotard ironically took exception to.²¹⁴² Thomassen,

comparison between philosophical dialectic and naked wrestling" (p.74). Consequently, the historical "reality of the philosopher" is represented by "the philosophical appearance: what you might have to look like to resemble a philosopher" (pp.15-6). Given that philosophers have to lay themselves bare by (contradictorily) clothing themselves in competing arguments, Pappas explores "the athletic metaphors that Plato uses for philosophy", of "philosophizing (seen) as the extension and completion of physical exercise rather than as its rival", of "competitive struggle (as) the feature common to wrestling and philosophical exchange" (pp.76-7). In other words, the history of philosophy is the history of its entanglements and trying to disentangle ourselves from one another's "naked" embrace. "To speak of dress is to speak of fashion, and the question now for philosophers becomes how they might present themselves given the fact of fashion. How will they avoid fashionable dress", given their well-known "hostility toward fashion" that leads philosophers to "think of fashion as the antipodes to their profession," *ibid*, p.113.

²¹³⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Signature Event Context" in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p. 13.

²¹³⁷ Martin, Jay. "The Debate Over Performative Contradiction: Habermas Versus the Poststructuralists" in Honneth, Axel, McCarthy, Thomas, Offe, Claus and Wellmer, Albrecht (eds.) *Philosophical Interventions in the Unfinished Project of Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992), p. 262.

²¹³⁸ Wellmer, Albrecht. "Truth, Contingency and Modernity" in *Endgames: The Irreconcilable Nature of Modernity* trans. David Midgley, (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p.143.

²¹³⁹ Frank, Manfred. *The Boundaries of Agreement*, (Aurora: Davies Group Publishers, 2005), p.i.

²¹⁴⁰ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.60.

²¹⁴¹ Habermas, Jürgen. *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987). Although Habermas does not specifically discuss Lyotard's thinking, he nonetheless alludes to the publication of the key text of "postmodernity" in the preface, xix. And while Habermas does not discuss Lyotard's report in the resulting lectures, it appears to guide his overall approach to "postmodern" thinkers such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida and Foucault (amongst others). See, for example, the lecture "The Entry into Postmodernity: Nietzsche as a Turning Point", pp.83-106.

²¹⁴² Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005). In the essay subsequently appended to Lyotard's report ("Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?"), Lyotard situates himself within a tradition "initiated" by Wittgenstein (amongst other thinkers). He

nonetheless, argues as if the exception proves the rule and positions himself in the non-existent debate. Thomassen attempts (without irony) to reach general agreement or accord via the truth claim that the very concept of "rational conception is aporetic"²¹⁴³ and such a conflicting situation "should lead us to rethink the status of rational consensus and the relationship between consensus and dissent."²¹⁴⁴ Instead, it is "disagreements and difference (that) are the condition of possibility of rational discourse."²¹⁴⁵ Further, "consensus and dissent not only seem to imply one another, but also mutually contradict one another – hence the aporia."²¹⁴⁶ While Frank urges that Lyotard's attempt to divide reason against itself is a "performative contradiction" that shakes the "foundation of his (own) argument,"²¹⁴⁷ Thomassen counters that Habermas cannot resolve the problem of a reason already divided against (arguing with) itself and that the "notion of rational consensus is itself performatively contradictory."²¹⁴⁸

In the following, we bring together three interdependent parts to give expression to a complex whole. In the first part, we examine Habermas's appropriation of Wittgenstein's conception of understanding and its relation to rule-following. In the second part, we work our way towards a double bind within Habermas's understanding of the double structure of language. In the third part, we shall examine the way such a conflict throws into question the relation between the partiality *for* reason (rational motivation) and the partiality *of* reason (motivated rationality).

also goes on to complain that while "a few other thinkers (French or other)" have continued this tradition, they have not had "the honour to be read by Professor Habermas – which at least saves them from getting a poor grade for their neoconservatism", p.73 in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. We say ironically because Lyotard was, of course, critical of the very notion of rational discourse. Habermas arguably generalizes from one 'postmodern' thinker to another in his philosophical discourse of modernity anyway, discussing Lyotard's position on language through (say) his discussion of Derrida. Specifically, where he interprets a qualitatively distinct thinker as a paradigm example of the postmodern condition – a condition generally understood in terms of "neo-conservatism and aesthetically inspired anarchism" (p.5). Habermas accuses postmodernism of being neoconservative because of the allegedly conservative tendency to make aesthetic experience a cornerstone of critique – i.e., where aesthetic judgment (such as feelings of the sublime or concepts of intertextuality) determine the limits of rationality. If Habermas is guilty of treating heterogeneous thinkers equally here, such an unjust approach plays into Lyotard's own argument regarding the incommensurability of language games. The irony, then, is that Lyotard attempted to engage Habermas (amongst other potential addressee's) in a dialogue about the limits of rational discourse – and found himself in a double bind when Habermas talked past him. Lyotard's catch 22 situation may be said to exhibit the logic of the differend from the word go. Lyotard originally presented his case in opposition to Habermas, and the resulting (or sought after) conflict invariably produced the very situation ideally avoided in the first place – namely, a differend seeking resolution through rational discussion and agreement.

²¹⁴³ Thomassen, Lasse. *Deconstructing Habermas* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p.17.

²¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*

²¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p.27.

²¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p.29.

²¹⁴⁷ Frank, Manfred. *The Boundaries of Agreement* (Aurora: Davies Group Publishers, 2005), pp.20-21.

²¹⁴⁸ Thomassen, Lasse. *Deconstructing Habermas* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p.31.

The difficulty is to realize the groundlessness of our believing... At the foundation of well founded belief lies belief that is not founded.²¹⁴⁹

On the validity of Habermas's rational reconstruction and its relation to Gadamer.

We begin by calling into question Habermas's interpretation of Wittgenstein. Like Lyotard, Habermas 'enlists Wittgenstein as an unlikely ally'²¹⁵⁰ when interrogating the performativity of rule-following. Habermas, however, 'follows' Wittgenstein from the opposite direction – towards the possibility of rationality reconstructing an *allegedly* intuitive rule consciousness. We say allegedly because Habermas rationally reconstructs what Braver calls the "groundless grounds"²¹⁵¹ of rule-following, or the "original finitude"²¹⁵² of rule-governed linguistic practices. Wittgenstein thereby becomes an ally for the *opposing team*: instead of arguing in favour of rules that legitimate dissensus and breakdowns in understanding, Habermas argues for rules directed towards the legitimation of consensus and mutual understanding. Consequently, Habermas *moves against* Wittgenstein in order to *move beyond* Gadamer's conception of a historically effected consciousness. In so doing, however, Habermas returns to a traditional concept of rule-following as originating in "a transcendent ground,"²¹⁵³ and so reinstitutes the very presuppositions that Wittgenstein's questioning sought to lay bare. Our primary concern, then, is the conflict being played out within Habermas's overall approach, where he purports to provide quasi "*transcendental* arguments...aimed at demonstrating that the presuppositions of relevant practices are inescapable, that is, that they cannot be cast aside."²¹⁵⁴ Habermas's rational reconstruction is, of course, intended as a corrective to hermeneutics' claim to universality in that it seeks to justify a given understanding via universal – and criticizable –

²¹⁴⁹ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *On Certainty* trans. Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969), No.166 and No.253 respectively.

²¹⁵⁰ We are obviously paraphrasing Burbules, Nicholas, "Lyotard on Wittgenstein: The Differend, Language Games and Education" in Standish, Paul and Dhillon, Praadeep (eds.) *Lyotard: Just Education* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p.41.

²¹⁵¹ Braver, Lee. *Groundless Grounds: A Study of Wittgenstein and Heidegger* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2012), p. 194. Braver's phrase is obviously a paraphrase of the Wittgenstein quotes that begin this section. Although Braver does not acknowledge Habermas's rational reconstruction, he would regard it with either puzzlement or bemusement.

²¹⁵² *Ibid*, p.223. Braver is paraphrasing Heidegger's notion of temporal finitude here, or the idea that our relation to linguistic practices exists finitely – by moving within an understanding of being that is already given to us and may break down at any time.

²¹⁵³ *Ibid*, p.174.

²¹⁵⁴ Habermas, Jürgen. "Reconstruction and Interpretation in the Social Sciences" in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p.32.

validity claims. Habermas turns to Wittgenstein to examine the conditions of possibility for following a rule-governed understanding. There is no escaping the fact, however, that Habermas's rational reconstruction objectifies what Baker calls "the idea of a rule functioning as a transcendent standard of correctness."²¹⁵⁵ Baker describes such an idealizing presupposition as "the myth of language as a calculus of meaning-rules."²¹⁵⁶ Baker reminds us that Wittgenstein's avowed goal was to demystify language by making "transparently ridiculous the idea of a hidden or unconscious following of a rule"²¹⁵⁷ and so "reduce to absurdity the thesis that the intelligent use of language is grounded in following, unbeknownst to ourselves, a complex set of uniform meaning-rules."²¹⁵⁸ As we've already seen, Habermas locates the source of the normativity of rules in the idealizing presuppositions of linguistic practices insofar as the rules of language games would *ideally* remain self-directing and/or correcting. That is to say, it is the normativity of rules that *uniformly make* or *set right* the practices in question – by acting as a corrective and/or counteracting unacceptable (incorrect) linguistic actions. Habermas invokes Wittgenstein's alleged 'necessity of the must' acting behind such actions,²¹⁵⁹ or the way we become rationally bound by an imperative requirement when reaching an understanding. An ideal of rationality is therefore said to be always already *built into* linguistic practices for a *hypothetical reason*: rational reconstructions are based on a working hypothesis regarding a rule's ideality (conceivability, practicality), and the normativity of rules act as a starting point for subsequent philosophical investigations. In providing a transcendent ground for the correctness of our reasons for acting rationally, the performativity of our practical identities may become subject to rational scrutiny and evaluation in re-turn. Habermas summarises the "hypothetical status"²¹⁶⁰ of rationally reconstructing the circle in the following way.

I am referring to rational reconstructions of the know-how of subjects who are capable of speech and action, who are credited with the capacity to produce valid utterances, and who consider themselves capable of distinguishing, at least intuitively, between valid and invalid expressions. This is the domain

²¹⁵⁵ Baker, Gordon. "Following Wittgenstein: Some Signposts For Philosophical Investigations" in Holtzman, Steven and Leich, Cristopher (eds.) *Wittgenstein: To Follow a Rule* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 54. Although Baker is not talking about Habermas here, he could be.

²¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁵⁷ Ibid, pp.42-43

²¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p.43.

²¹⁵⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. "From Kant's Ideas of Pure Reason to the Idealizing Presuppositions of Communicative Action" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), pp.85-86. If we recall, Habermas claimed that the "rational structure of action orientated towards reaching understanding is reflected in the presupposition that actors must make if they are to engage in this practice at all. The necessity of this must" should be interpreted in "a Wittgensteinian... sense"²¹⁵⁹ and corresponds to the way linguistic forms of life regulate themselves.

²¹⁶⁰ Habermas, Jürgen. "Reconstruction and Interpretation in the Social Sciences" in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p.32.

of disciplines like logic and metamathematics, epistemology and the philosophy of science, linguistics and the philosophy of language, ethics and action theory, aesthetics, argumentation theory, and so on. Common to all these disciplines is the goal of providing an account of the pretheoretical knowledge and the intuitive command of rule systems that underlie the production and evaluation of such symbolic expressions and achievements as correct inferences; good arguments; accurate descriptions, explanations, and predications; grammatically correct sentences; successful speech acts; effective instrumental action; appropriate evaluations; authentic self-presentations; etc. Insofar as rational reconstructions explicate the conditions for the validity of utterances, they also explain deviant cases, and through this indirect legislative authority they acquire a *critical* function as well. Insofar as they extend the differentiations between individual claims to validity beyond traditional boundaries, they can even establish *new* analytic standards and thus assume a *constructive* role. And insofar as *we succeed* in analysing very general conditions of validity, rational reconstructions can claim to *be* describing universals and thus to represent a *theoretical* knowledge capable of competing with other such knowledge.²¹⁶¹

Note the way Habermas levels the playing field. The concept of a critical reason is located within the rationality of 'players' across all fields of endeavour, ensuring that everyone can play by the same set of rules. Anyone capable of speech and action is also (potentially) capable of critically evaluating the language games in question. All linguistic interactions therefore become subject to the same standards of rational evaluation because their validity conditions – reasons for being-there – remain open to questioning and justification. Habermas's rational reconstruction purports to provide a rational basis for rule-following in that every action turns on the way rules make such actions possible and/or justified. The paradox of rule-following plays an active role in determining a practice's legal standing because they may direct us to ask: to what extent – or by what standard – may courses of action be made to accord and/or conflict with the rules in question? Habermas thereby attempts to bring Wittgenstein and Gadamer together in the following way. On the one hand, the intelligibility (possibility, legitimacy) of a 'hidden or unconscious following of a rule' is brought into the open by the notion of an intuitive rule consciousness that may be rationally reconstructed and questioned. The concept of rule-following is invoked to rationally ground the way we *enter into* an agreement through a tacit understanding of language. On the other hand, the only way we can come to rational agreement is through a historically effected consciousness subjecting itself to the activity of mutual understanding and questioning. In this way, it becomes possible to meaningfully evaluate linguistic actions brought into conflict and/or question. Reversals in direction become possible when courses of action are actively brought forth via universally valid standards of rationality

²¹⁶¹ *ibid*, pp.32-33.

(rulings) attempting to 'course correct'. Either way, such an approach is a complete reversal of Wittgenstein's conception of rule-following.

While it is true that Wittgenstein emphasizes the role of agreement in a given understanding, our reasons for acting in accord is not the result of a negotiated settlement or legally binding arrangement. According to Wittgenstein, agreements in courses of action invariably lie *beyond reason*. It would therefore be inconceivable to rationally reconstruct rule-governed actions from the ground up. All said and done, the act of following a rule occurs without rational assent or grasp and cannot be rationally justified without falling into an "abyss."²¹⁶² Rules might underlie all our activities – motivate and/or justify our actions – but our reasons for being in accord remains an "ungrounded way of acting."²¹⁶³ This is, of course, the paradox of rule-following: courses of action could have conceivably gone either way, and the paradox is being able to find and occupy such an arbitrarily determined *common ground* anyway. Given that rules remain arbitrary and/or indeterminate, their performative status can only be determined by "blindly"²¹⁶⁴ following one another's lead. That is to say, "without thinking,"²¹⁶⁵ "without reflecting"²¹⁶⁶ and "without reasons"²¹⁶⁷ because it is our *actions* that agree with each other. Contrary to Habermas, then, it is outward actions – and not our *consciousness* – that is mutually attuned and reciprocally related. Reason cannot play an active part because their reason for being-there invariably falls by the wayside.²¹⁶⁸ Such an approach calls into question Habermas's conception of Wittgenstein's 'necessity of the must' underlying linguistic actions. We do not *enter into* an agreement but have found ourselves *already there* (in agreement without rational assent or consent). If we all required to *act as one*, the only reason is that acting in accord is what (the)

²¹⁶² Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *On Certainty* trans. Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969), No.370, p.48. According to Wittgenstein, the "absence of doubt belongs to the essence of the language-game, that the question "How do I know ..." drags out the language-game, or else does away with it."

²¹⁶³ Ibid, No.110, p.17.

²¹⁶⁴ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), No.219, p.85.

²¹⁶⁵ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1998), No.60, p.422.

²¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁶⁷ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), No.211, p.84.

²¹⁶⁸ See, for example, No.241, p.88, "So you are saying that human agreement decides what is false and what is true? -- It is what human beings say that is false and true; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life." Alternatively, see also, Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *On Certainty*, trans. Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969), No.204 and No.205 respectively, p.28, where he argues "Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end – but the end is not certain propositions' striking us immediately as true, i.e., it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our *acting*, which lies at the bottom of the language-game... If the true is what is grounded, then the ground is not *true* nor yet false." See, further, No. 559, p.73e " You must bear in mind that the language-game is so to say something unpredictable. I mean: it is not based on grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable). It is there – like our life."

one does.²¹⁶⁹ Wittgenstein's conception of rule-following also raises questions about the blind leading the blind. Specifically, can we ever really know what we are doing or where we are going without being led astray? Furthermore, can we ever have reason to act otherwise or be able to avoid falling into the abyss? These questions bring us to the role a historically effected consciousness plays in both stabilizing and orienting a given understanding. We raise these questions to bring forth the contradiction within Habermas's conception of *immanent transcendence*, or *transcendence from within* language games that remain open to questioning. Habermas follows Gadamer by emphasizing a detranscendentalized use of reason within the linguistically of understanding. Nonetheless, Habermas's rational reconstruction insists that the familiar "task of situating reason"²¹⁷⁰ calls for a universal reason's context-transcending actions across linguistic practices. Habermas defines our well-known situation as a conflict of interpretations within the historicity of understanding – and the conflict itself is defined in terms of common or related features sharing a family resemblance. Specifically, the encounter between competing arguments is "a domestic dispute over which side accomplishes the detranscendentalization in the right way: whether the traces of a transcending reason vanish in the sand of historicism and contextualism or whether a reason embodied in historical contexts preserves the power for immanent transcendence."²¹⁷¹ Habermas follows Gadamer by adopting the "paradigm of mutual understanding"²¹⁷² and argues that "the effective history of cultural traditions and formation processes unfolds... in the medium of questions and answers."²¹⁷³ Given the historicity of understanding, "contemporary rationality debates circle around the concepts of truth and justification"²¹⁷⁴ and the problem is that there is no getting around a

²¹⁶⁹ We are not amongst the first to note the parallel between Heidegger and Wittgenstein. Hubert Dreyfus, for example, attempts to render Heidegger's concept of The They/The One more intelligible via Wittgenstein's conception of rule-following in *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division 1* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), pp.141-159. We have also recently cited Lee Braver's *Groundless Grounds: A Study of Wittgenstein and Heidegger* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2012). See also David Egan's "The Authenticity of the Ordinary" in Egan, David, Reynolds, Stephen and Wendland, Aaron (eds.) *Wittgenstein and Heidegger* (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp.66-82.

²¹⁷⁰ Habermas, Jürgen. "From Kant's Ideas of Pure Reason to the Idealizing Presuppositions of Communicative Action" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p.84.

²¹⁷¹ *ibid.* Habermas cites many family members in this traditional dispute, including Dilthey, Heidegger, Peirce, Dewey, Wittgenstein, Foucault and Derrida.

²¹⁷² Habermas, Jürgen. "An Alternative Way Out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communicative Versus Subject Centred Reason" in *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987), p.296,

²¹⁷³ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Future of Human Nature* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), p.72.

²¹⁷⁴ Habermas, Jürgen. "Richard Rorty's Pragmatic Turn" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p. 356. According to Habermas, "we can explain what a fact is only with the help of the truth of the statement of the fact, and we can only explain what is real only in terms of what is true...since the truth of beliefs or sentences can in turn be justified only with the help of other beliefs and sentences, we cannot break free from the magic circle of language", p.357.

"circular process"²¹⁷⁵ when trying to determine the rationality of the relevant intentional horizon. Habermas attempts to resolve the problem of circularity, of course, by situating questioning within the context of the circle's directives and movements. Since we "cannot compare linguistic expressions with a piece of uninterpreted reality – that is with a reference that eludes our linguistically bound inspection"²¹⁷⁶, we must refer to "the linguistically disclosed horizon of our lifeworld."²¹⁷⁷ Consequently, Habermas's questioning directs thought to the way the circle of understanding attempts to answer (justify) the dialectic of question and answer. For interpretations to remain directed towards universally valid claims, they must already always be understood to be meaningful and/or truthful. Contexts of interpretation invariably raise the question of the circle's rational force insofar as there always remains a question of the validity of "unquestioned"²¹⁷⁸ presuppositions. Habermas moves beyond Gadamer, however, by actively questioning reason's role – or effectiveness – within effective history.

Gadamer's prejudice in favour of the legitimacy of prejudices (or prejudgments) validated by tradition is in conflict with the power of reflection, which proves itself in its ability to reject the claims of traditions. Substantiality disintegrates in reflection, because the latter not only confirms but also breaks dogmatic forces. Authority and knowledge do not converge. Certainly, knowledge is rooted in actual tradition; it remains bound to contingent conditions. But reflection does not wear itself out on the facticity of traditional norms without leaving a trace. It is condemned to operate after the fact; but, operating in retrospect, it unleashes retroactive power.²¹⁷⁹

Note the way Habermas wants to distinguish between the 'power of reflection' and the 'legitimacy of the prejudices validated by tradition'. Habermas's rational reconstruction of linguistic interactions purports to be able to do this on methodological grounds. The aim is to render truthful – or truth-evaluable – Gadamer's distinction between 'the true prejudices, by which we understand' from the 'false prejudices, by which we misunderstand'.²¹⁸⁰ Following Gadamer's lead, Habermas attempts to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes effect in history, and (like Gadamer) Habermas wants to "solve the question of critique"²¹⁸¹ on the ground of "reasons."²¹⁸² : determining the truth-value and/or validity of our *being-there*

²¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 363.

²¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 357

²¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 359.

²¹⁷⁸ Ibid, p.358.

²¹⁷⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. *On The Logic of the Social Sciences* trans Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Jerry A. Stark (Cambridge: The MIT Press,1988), p.170.

²¹⁸⁰ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), pp.288-289.

²¹⁸¹ Ibid, p.291.

²¹⁸² Ibid, p. 280.

remains the "undeniable task of critical reason to overcome."²¹⁸³ Unlike Gadamer, however, Habermas actively resists the idea that authority and knowledge should be *confused* with each other. The critical presupposition is the retroactive operation of a universal reason always already in effect via reason's capacity to reach mutual understanding through negotiated settlements and legally binding arrangements. We immediately see, however, a performative contradiction concerning the power of reason and its relation to effective history – reason threatens to incapacitate its movements and directives by enclosing itself within the very circle in question. Habermas's concept of communicative rationality requires conflicting interpretations to be meaningfully resolved via a self-legislating community making statements (determinations, decisions) in accord with a discursively reached consensus. Such a 'legislature' is constituted through judgments and sentences handed down by the supreme court of rational discourse. Habermas's "legislative authority"²¹⁸⁴ therefore already presupposes the legitimacy of the authority of the power of a universal reason acting over and above particular individuals capable of rationality. Given this authority, there can be no higher court of appeal than the "*anticipation* of an ideal speech situation"²¹⁸⁵ and its "defining feature...is that any consensus attainable under its (idealized) conditions can count per se as a rational consensus."²¹⁸⁶ Reason's "orientation towards truth"²¹⁸⁷ – as a socially binding and/or bonding force – effectively *reinstates* tradition's claim upon us in that it appeals to established authorities – rule-governed practices, the rationality of traditional norms – to authorize its actions. All said and done, how is it possible to distinguish between knowledge and authority when a consensus criterion of truth authorizes us to agree on the legitimacy of the prejudices in question? As Gadamer reminds us, it is the "tyranny of hidden prejudices"²¹⁸⁸ that is the critical question, particularly since the power of reflection invariably emerges in the "distorting mirror"²¹⁸⁹ of a historically effected consciousness. And as Lyotard might concur, a situated reason acting on its own behalf threatens to become tyrannical – or prejudiced towards its power – when it does not know its place and hides behind universal truth-claims. Equally questionable is the way Habermas

²¹⁸³ *ibid.*, p.277.

²¹⁸⁴ Habermas, Jürgen. "Reconstruction and Interpretation in the Social Sciences" in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p.33.

²¹⁸⁵ Habermas, Jürgen. "Truth and Society: The Discursive Redemption of Factual Claims to Validity" in *On The Pragmatics of Social Interaction: Preliminary Studies in the Theory of Communicative Action* trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), p.97.

²¹⁸⁶ *ibid.*

²¹⁸⁷ Habermas, Jürgen. "From Kant's Ideas of Pure Reason to the Idealizing Presuppositions of Communicative Action" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p.91.

²¹⁸⁸ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.270.

²¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p.276.

reconceives Gadamer's conception of the *anticipation of completeness*.²¹⁹⁰ Habermas replaces a situated reason's (misguided) directive with the notion of an "unavoidable anticipation of an ideal speech situation"²¹⁹¹ that acts as both "normative foundation"²¹⁹² and guiding (illocutionary) force. The "formal anticipation of idealized conversation"²¹⁹³ becomes our ultimate historical guide insofar as it acts as a "prefiguration of a (complete) form of life"²¹⁹⁴ and "guarantees the 'ultimate' underlying counterfactual mutual agreement"²¹⁹⁵ already understood to be in effect. Habermas's ideal speech situation, then, is effectively in conflict with effective history: it presupposes the possibility of moving within a horizon of interpretation that can be 'fixed' (determined, known, completed) in advance. Habermas's conception of the dialectic of question and answer doesn't so much presuppose reversals in direction but a directive moving all understanding 'forward' (a situated reason approaching the front end of history). Habermas thereby directs us towards the ideal of enclosing ourselves within a final – or ultimate – horizon of interpretation. Habermas's *projected horizon of interpretation* is not something that constantly changes or moves with interpreters but effectively changes their relationship to effective history: it anticipates a situation (or ideal) when everyone is in mutual agreement via an attempt to "theoretically effect a closure"²¹⁹⁶ in the historicity of understanding. Such a situation, however, renders reason completely ineffectual: tradition justifiably reinstates its claim upon us in a dogmatic way if it can no longer give us any reason to ask further questions. Habermas's critical theory, then, contradictorily anticipates a speech situation where the lifeworld has completely been colonized by an expansive reason's imperialistic ideals – by legitimately seeking to expand its rule over all other linguistic interactions and practices. In its anticipated 'domestication' of possible linguistic disputes, critical reason effectively becomes tractable and docile when interpreters have finally surrendered themselves to the force of the better arguments (an

²¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*, pp.293-294. Gadamer argues that the "fore-conception of completeness is obviously a formal condition of all understanding. It states that only what really constitutes a unity of meaning is intelligible. So when we read a text we always assume its completeness, and only when this assumption proves mistaken – i.e., the text is not intelligible – do we begin to suspect the text and try to discover how it can be remedied. The fore-conception of completeness that guides all understanding is, then, always determined by a specific content." Further, the "prejudice of completeness not only implies this formal element – that a text should always express its meaning – but also that what it says should be the complete truth."

²¹⁹¹ Habermas, Jürgen. "Truth and Society" in *On The Pragmatics of Social Interaction: Preliminary Studies in the Theory of Communicative Action* trans. Barbara Fultner (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001), p.102.

²¹⁹² *ibid.*

²¹⁹³ *ibid.*

²¹⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p.103.

²¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p.102.

²¹⁹⁶ Peters, Michael. "Lyotard, Marxism and Education: The Problem of Knowledge Capitalism" in Marshall, James (ed.) *Poststructuralism, Philosophy, Pedagogy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004), p.52. We quote Peters slightly out of context here – he is commenting on Rorty's attempt to explain the difference between Habermas and Lyotard.

unquestioning condition made theoretically possible by ultimately being in complete agreement).

We are now in a position to approach Habermas's concept of the double structure of language through Lyotard's conception of the double bind. We thereby bring forth a differend within Habermas's interpretation of the relation between part and whole. While our concept of the differend is interpreted as a situational definition, it shall nonetheless become a conflict situation that cannot be meaningfully defined (resolved) within the historicity of understanding. We shall argue that the relation between part and whole remains questionable – the normative content of modernity can never be answered in a rational way. The main problem is the performative status of Habermas's concept of an ideal speech situation. Our guiding question will therefore be: to what extent can an idealized situation regulate the rationality of situational definitions? Indeed, it would seem that Habermas's interpretation of the ideal speech situation becomes a situation that can never be mutually understood (rationally defined) or adequately contextualized.

The Double Structure of Language: Finding Ourselves In A (Double) Bind.

According to Habermas's conception of language, it is possible to identify and reconstruct universal conditions of mutual understanding. These conditions are understood in normative terms, and interpreted as the idealizing presuppositions of *truth*, *rightness* and *truthfulness* across three interdependent *worlds* (objective, intersubjective and subjective worlds of experience). Universal conditions of understanding ideally obtain across contexts of interpretation and direct speech acts towards situations that could be defined in accord with universal standards of rationality. Specifically, where interpretation "means the search for a mutual agreement about a situation definition"²¹⁹⁷ and refers to what is generally understood "as the society's normative reality."²¹⁹⁸ Habermas thereby purports to be able to determine the performative status of linguistic acts through a determination of their double structure. Habermas distinguishes between levels of understanding in the following way.

I would distinguish (i) the level of intersubjectivity on which speaker and hearer, through illocutionary acts, establish the relations that permit them to come to an understanding with one another, and (ii) the

²¹⁹⁷ Habermas, Jürgen. "Intentions Conventions and Linguistic Interactions" in *On The Pragmatics of Social Interaction: Preliminary Studies in the Theory of Communicative Action* trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), p.127.

²¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*

level of propositional content about which they wish to reach understanding in the communicative function specified in (i).²¹⁹⁹

A basic feature of language is connected with this double structure of speech, namely, its inherent reflexivity. The standardized possibilities for directly and indirectly mentioning speech merely make explicit a self-reference that is already contained in every speech act. In filling out the double structure of speech, participants in dialogue communicate on two levels simultaneously. They combine communication of a content with "metacommunication" communication about the sense in which the communicated content is used.²²⁰⁰

Note the way Habermas adopts – and redefines – the paradigm of mutual understanding. Habermas follows Gadamer by insisting on the linguisticity of understanding, or the way language speaks through a historically effected consciousness. Such a paradigm, however, can only become truthful (or truth-evaluable) via the linguistically disclosed horizon of shared "lifeworld contexts in which processes of reaching understanding are already embedded."²²⁰¹ Habermas moves beyond Gadamer by locating the rational structure of understanding within reason's capacity to critically question and/or overturn the linguistically disclosed horizons of the lifeworld. The raising of criticizable validity claims ensures that we can identify and reflect upon the historicity of understanding, or the way the *space of reasons* and *linguistic actions* meaningfully interact throughout history. When truth-claims invariably come into question or conflict, rational discourse course corrects itself insofar as communication "necessarily begins with the counterfactual assumption that universal agreement is (still) possible."²²⁰² We *thereby* all remain oriented towards the possibility of reaching *the truth* of given (definitions of) situations when the rationality of our *being-there* may be called (back) into question. Habermas offers a theory of the 'logic' of linguistic actions within effective history – and the theory itself acts as a critical measure for evaluating the performativity of speech acts within the "lifeworld context of shared cultural knowledge, valid norms and accountable motivations."²²⁰³ Given Habermas's conception of the public space of reasons, the distinction between motivating and justifying reasons may be dis/placed accordingly. That is to say, the problem is critically evaluating the relationship between the reasons communicative rationality invariably acts upon and the

²¹⁹⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. "What Is Universal Pragmatics?" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p.64.

²²⁰⁰ *ibid.*

²²⁰¹ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2, Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p.183.

²²⁰² Habermas, Jürgen. *Knowledge and Human Interests* trans. Jeremy Shapiro (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), p.185. We've inserted the still in brackets here.

²²⁰³ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2, Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p.183.

reasons that ultimately justify said actions. Although the historicity of understanding might motivate all our social interactions – by acting upon us for a given reason and/or bringing said actions into question or conflict – the requirement is being able to justify particular reasons for acting via universal standards of rationality. Consequently, motivating and justifying reasons may re-turn towards each other and rationality direct the circle of understanding through the act of adjudicating competing truth-claims. By orienting ourselves towards criticizable validity claims, the regulative idea of an ideal speech situation integrates the relation between motivating and justifying reasons in accord with language's double structure, or inherent reflexivity – specifically, where competing situational definitions direct us towards rationally motivated agreements.

Given Habermas's definition of the (hermeneutical) situation, we must attempt to determine the performative status of the ideal speech situation. If we recall, the question of a situated reason's performative status can only take place within a *context of relevance*, and what makes a context particularly relevant (meaningful) is when conflicting interpretations attempt to make themselves universally relevant (valid, true) via mutual understanding and agreement. Habermas thereby claims that we can determine the status of competing validity claims – the rationality of our being-there – by referring to the way/s interpreters can justify their interpretations under ideal (speaking) conditions. The question, then, is: to what extent can the ideal speech situation regulate the performativity of linguistic interactions within the historicity of understanding? Such a question can only be meaningful (valid) if Habermas's performative idealization can itself be validated in some way – i.e., directed towards a universally valid (relevant) truth claim. As we shall see, Habermas's regulative idea can never transcend the context of its occurrence and remains groundless – Habermas's *statements* about such a regulative ideal is itself context-bound and/or determined. Habermas's performative contradiction is the result of a conceptual sleight of hand that originates in a *quasi-transcendental* approach to language that *ultimately* lies beyond questioning and rational argumentation.²²⁰⁴ Habermas's linguistic performance – or "conjuring trick"²²⁰⁵ – turns traditionally accepted ways of behaving into universally valid rules whose truth-value (or validity) *must* simply be *taken as given* (necessarily binding and/or bonding). Consequently, Habermas attempts to theoretically legitimate what Sellars calls the

²²⁰⁴ We shall return to (and develop) the parallel between Derrida and Habermas in the final chapter.

²²⁰⁵ Pleasants, Nigel. *Wittgenstein and the Idea of a Critical Social Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p.170.

*myth of the given*²²⁰⁶, or a "false view of what is given"²²⁰⁷ as always already true in experience.²²⁰⁸ Habermas's questioning is therefore caught in a performative contradiction, and gives rise to a differend within his own conception of language as transcendence from within linguistic practices. Habermas's definition of the ideal speech situation invariably throws into question its own contextual relevance and/or the rationality of situational definitions. The question now becomes: how – or from where – can Habermas's regulative idea itself be situated and/or defined?

Habermas anticipates such a question, and is aware of the problem of defining the contextual relevance of the "form of life we anticipate in the concept of the ideal speech situation."²²⁰⁹ He understands that "the expression ideal speech situation... suggests an end state that must be strived for in the sense of a regulative ideal."²²¹⁰ The possibility of a definitive understanding "cannot be represented as a meaningful goal because it would engender paradoxes (an ultimate language, a final interpretation, non-revisable knowledge, etc.)."²²¹¹ Wellmer and Bennington independently give expression to such a contradictory situation. Wellmer observes, for example, that the idea of a definitive or complete interpretation renders the concept of effective history

²²⁰⁶ Sellars, Willard. *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p.68-69. Sellars clarifies the myth in the following way. "One of the forms taken by the Myth of the Given is the idea that there is, indeed *must be*, a structure of particular matter of fact such that (a) each fact can not only be non-inferentially known to be the case, but presupposes no other knowledge either of particular matter of fact, or of general truths; and (b) such that the non-inferential knowledge of facts belonging to this structure constitutes the ultimate court of appeals for all factual claims -- particular and general -- about the world. It is important to note that I characterized the knowledge of fact belonging to this stratum as not only non-inferential, but as presupposing no knowledge of other matter of fact, whether particular or general. It might be thought that this is a redundancy, that knowledge (not belief or conviction, but knowledge) which logically presupposes knowledge of other facts *must be* inferential. This, however, as I hope to show, is itself an episode in the Myth."

²²⁰⁷ Montague, Michelle. *The Given: Experience and its Content* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p.1.

²²⁰⁸ Sellars, Willard. *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p.180. According to Sellars, the myth rests on a logical confusion. Specifically, any attempt to sort out and prioritize our presuppositions – rise to a higher level of knowledge – presupposes justified true beliefs at a more basic (or immediately given) level. However, concept formation "involves a long history of acquiring *piecemeal* habits of response to various objects in various circumstances" (p.45) and "instead of coming to have a concept of something because we have noticed that sort of thing, to have the ability to notice a sort of thing is already to have the concept of that sort of thing and cannot account for it" (p.87).

²²⁰⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. "Truth and Society" in *On The Pragmatics of Social Interaction: Preliminary Studies in the Theory of Communicative Action* trans. Barbara Fultner (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001), p.103.

²²¹⁰ Habermas, Jürgen. "Habermas Responds His Critics" in Rosenfeld, Michel and Arato, Andrew (eds.) *Habermas on Law and Democracy: Critical Exchanges* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p.418.

²²¹¹ Ibid.

meaningless since "what is meant as a situation of ideal communication"²²¹² and mutual understanding "turns out as a situation beyond the necessity of communication."²²¹³ The "ultimate ideal language would be a language beyond language"²²¹⁴ and so beyond the necessity to reach mutual understanding *through* language. Habermas's conception of the ideal speech situation as a regulative idea effectively deregulates the turn of events in that it can neither control or direct effective history according to its own prescribed rules or directives. Specifically, insofar as such an idea "includes the negation of the conditions of finite human communication, it also implies the negation of the natural and historical conditions of human life, of finite human existence."²²¹⁵ Such an idea "remains paradoxical even if it is only understood as a regulative idea... because it belongs to the meaning of this idea that it commits us to work towards its realization. The paradox in this is that we would be committed to strive toward the realization of an ideal whose realization would be the end of history. The goal is the end; ideal communication would be the death of communication."²²¹⁶ Bennington interprets the situation similarly in that he understands that there can only be communication "to the extent that we do not, in fact, agree...so if we want to communicate, we also have to want to not quite understand each other."²²¹⁷ Consequently, Habermas's concept of a rationally motivated consensus by way of the force of the better argument is irrationally motivated and self-defeating. Reason "cannot rationally prescribe its own demise in consensus...to the extent that it prescribes consensus, it is complicit with the coercion that forever prevents that consensus be rational."²²¹⁸ Bennington urges that such "appeals to reason and consensus in fact function coercively by trying to deny the non-rational origin of rationality or the non-consensual ground of consensus."²²¹⁹ Habermas, of course, interprets the situation differently: truth as consensus is already *built into* the very definition of thinking and acting rationally. Pragmatically speaking, he observes that while we can never determine the transcendental status of presuppositions operating within speech acts, the question of their universal validity is simply something we *have* to take as given and/or true. Our actions "continue to have a transcendental necessity,

²²¹² Wellmer, Albrecht. "Metaphysics At The Moment of Its Fall" in *Endgames: The Irreconcilable Nature of Modernity: Essays and Lectures*, trans. David Midgley (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2000), p.199.

²²¹³ *ibid.*

²²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²²¹⁵ Wellmer, Albrecht. "The Debate About Truth: Pragmatism Without Regulative Ideas" in Freundlieb, Dieter, Hudson, Wayne and Rundell, John (eds.) *Critical Theory After Habermas* (Boston: Brill -Leiden, 2004), p.193

²²¹⁶ *ibid.* p.193.

²²¹⁷ Bennington, Geoffrey, "Ex-Communication" in *Deconstruction Is Not What You Think* (Geoffrey Bennington EBooks, 2008), p.50.

²²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.52.

²²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

from which we *have* to set forth"²²²⁰ when communicating rationally. Nonetheless, a situated reason remains context-bound in that rational thinkers remain in a historical bind, since the idealizations of a "communicative reason (are) at once claimed and denied"²²²¹ throughout effective history. Habermas's *dialectic of reason* is predicated upon the recognition that a situated reason *must* presuppose the transcendental status of context-specific actions *anyway*. A historicised reason has no choice but to *act otherwise* even though speech acts can never be in a position to determine their performative status (contextual relevance, rational acceptability) throughout effective history. Transcendence is implicitly claimed in the very act of stating while the statements themselves may be invariably contradicted (reverse their direction). Habermas explicitly states that the context-transcending status of validity claims is an "essentialist misunderstanding"²²²² that may be compared to a "transcendental illusion."²²²³ Such a situation necessarily remains an integral part of the context/s anticipated in the ideal speech situation. Despite their illusory status, we still need to "do justice to the meaning of context-transcending validity claims."²²²⁴ Furthermore, we may reach an understanding about the performative status of the ideal speech situation is if we distinguish "between ideal" (concept) "and reality" ²²²⁵ (or object). The way Habermas attempts to do justice to the ideal of justifying our truth-claims nonetheless remains contradictory and puts him in a double bind : claims to universal validity can only meaningfully occur by way of a "methodological fiction."²²²⁶ This returns us to our guiding question. Specifically, how – or from where – can Habermas's regulative idea itself be situated and/or defined? We ask this question within the horizon of Habermas' own questioning for a reason: the concept of an ideal speech situation appears to conceive of a situation that cannot be mutually reached (understood) or meaningfully contextualized. We already understand that such a situation – or the way Habermas attempts to define it – *refers* to idealized conditions of justification. Habermas's questioning attempts to clarify the circumstances under which a rationally motivated discourse *ideally regulates* the event(s) of understanding. Habermas's definition of the hermeneutical situation purports to follow the rules of argumentation and receives its directives from within the very circle calling itself (back) into

²²²⁰ Habermas, Jürgen. "An Alternative Way Out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communicative Versus Subject-Centered Reason" *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), p.325.

²²²¹ Ibid.

²²²² Habermas, Jürgen. *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. William Rehg (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p.323.

²²²³ Habermas, Jürgen. "Truth and Society" in *On The Pragmatics of Social Interaction: Preliminary Studies in the Theory of Communicative Action* trans. Barbara Fultner (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001), p.103.

²²²⁴ Habermas, Jürgen. *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* trans. William Rehg (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p.323.

²²²⁵ Ibid.

²²²⁶ Ibid.

question. If Habermas's speech acts are to have any meaning (validity), the requirement is to determine the performative status of the 'methodological fiction' contextualizing the being of his own questioning. We must situate Habermas's questioning, of course, within a performative context and follow his lead by placing the emphasis on language's purported reciprocal binding and/or bonding relationships. That is, with respect to the way/s an ideal speech situation can be validated (questioned). Given that the ideal speech situation remains a methodological fiction – a concept without a real object or objective – there is clearly a question about its propositional content (or lack of), and how such privation can still have illocutionary force (can really be effective in history). Such a question directs us back towards the problem of the criterion and raises the spectre of a legitimization crisis. According to Habermas's own definition of the situation, "the ideal speech situation is neither an empirical phenomenon nor simply a construct, but a reciprocal operation unavoidable in discourse...it is a (methodological) fiction that is operatively effective in communication. I would therefore prefer to speak of an anticipation of the ideal speech situation."²²²⁷

The question, then, is how is it possible to 'anticipate' a situation best understood as a 'methodological fiction' and effectively directing reason towards the realm of 'make believe' anyway? Specifically, why *must* we act as *if* it were true (or valid) to ensure the truth-value (or validity) of *other* potentially questionable beliefs and actions?²²²⁸ Note that Habermas claims to be speaking about an ideal regulating (other) rule-governed speech actions. The idea that truth-values are conceptually connected and/or rule-governed by a working fiction remains questionable. To anticipate Lyotard's interpretation of Wittgenstein here: it is to judge the rules of one language game with the rules of another language game. At the very least, it raises questions about the epistemological and/or ontological status of seemingly distinct genres of discourse and their respective entities. It might be objected, of course, that Habermas's reference to 'fictitious' concepts and situations is not to be taken literally here – that the idea of a working fiction is not to be literally compared to works of fiction. The relationship between overlapping concepts is one of family resemblance and not identity. The real idea, of course, is that the concept of truth remains a *work in progress*, or is really a situation to be imagined

²²²⁷ Habermas, Jürgen. *Legitimation Crisis* trans. Thomas McCarthy (London: Heinemann, 1976), pp. xvii-xviii.

²²²⁸ Habermas, Jürgen. "From Kant's Ideas of Pure Reason to the Idealizing Presuppositions of Communicative Action" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), pp.85-86. If we recall, Habermas argues that the "rational structure of action orientated towards reaching understanding is reflected in the presupposition that actors must make if they are to engage in this practice at all. The necessity of this must" should be interpreted in "a Wittgensteinian... sense" and corresponds to the way linguistic "forms of life" regulate themselves. Given the fact such regulations are "inescapable" there is an "inevitability stemming from the conceptual connections of a (learnt) system of...rule-governed behaviour."

(projected) under idealized conditions of justification. Nonetheless, such a working definition brings us closer to the problem of 'truth' understood as consensus and rational acceptability. The main problem is Habermas's inability to reconcile the contradiction between a reconstruction of universal conditions of mutual understanding and a context trans/forming lifeworld enabling meaningful horizons of interpretation.

We've observed Habermas interpreting the validity of knowledge claims via their meaning conditions. For a speech act to be understood as universally valid – rationally binding and/or bonding across contexts of interpretation – it must have already been interpreted as meaningful within a linguistically disclosed lifeworld. Habermas distinguishes between *background* and *foreground* knowledge to bring forth a conception of rationality defined in terms of "good reasons or grounds"²²²⁹ that "admit of objective evaluation."²²³⁰ Specifically, competing validity claims are said to occur in relation to the *three worlds* in which interpreters remain situated and must orientate themselves (the objective, intersubjective and subjective worlds of experience). Given that these interrelated worlds are the ground on which a situated reason necessarily moves, Habermas defines communicative rationality as (ideally) directing itself towards "the unconstrained, unifying, consensus bringing force of argumentative speech, in which different participants overcome their merely subjective views and, owing to the mutuality of rationally motivated conviction, assure themselves of both the unity of the objective world and the intersubjectivity of their lifeworld."²²³¹ The problem, however, is delineating the relationship between 'reasons' and 'grounds' within the "context of effective history"²²³²: if our reasons for acting have a rational basis, on what grounds may our actions be called into question or brought into conflict (be objectively criticized and/or evaluated)? Habermas readily acknowledges our entanglement in "the intuitively present, in this sense familiar and transparent, and at the same time vast and incalculable *web of presuppositions* that have to be satisfied if an actual utterance is to be at all meaningful, i.e., valid or invalid."²²³³ According to Habermas's definition of the situation, the performative status of conflicting interpretations can only make sense within a context of relevance and movable horizons of interpretation. Specifically, the lifeworld contextualizes interpretations by presenting contexts of relevance and action situations. The corresponding meaningfulness – i.e., validity – of speech acts therefore re-turns to the historicity

²²²⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p.22.

²²³⁰ *ibid.*

²²³¹ *ibid.*, p.10.

²²³² Habermas, Jürgen. "Modernity's Consciousness of Time" in *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), p.13.

²²³³ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 2, Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p.131.

of understanding. Given this hermeneutic situation, the problem is how to best interpret (present, situate) the relation between the circle of understanding and moveable (or trans/forming) horizons of interpretation. Habermas's regulative idea of the ideal speech situation purports to be able to resolve the problem of situational definitions that remain open to questioning – it envisages the possibility of the most definitive interpretation and/or answers to questions. If interpretations can only occur within the context of effective history, however, the question asks itself: how can a cultural tradition be rationally determined (presented and/or situated) across contexts of interpretation? We encounter an irresolvable tension within Habermas's own answer to this question. The tension is to be found within a definition directing itself towards the possibility of *the* most valid interpretations – i.e., uniformly correct answer transcending all possible situations and contexts. On the one hand, Habermas's formal concepts of world attempt to stabilize context in order to make it relatively 'ineffective' (i.e., counterbalance the destabilizing and/or distorting effects of a given cultural tradition). In this way, it becomes theoretically possible to universalize the conditions of mutual understanding across contexts of interpretation. On the other hand, Habermas's conception of the lifeworld mobilizes context in order to account for an interpretation's relationship to history (i.e., the way context conditions the historicity of understanding). Following Gadamer, Habermas presents the effectivity of history within the understanding, and so *relativizes* interpretation to interpretive situations and contexts. Unlike Gadamer, however, Habermas understands hermeneutics' claim to universality to be only possible (meaningful) if we can counterbalance the effects of history via a performative idealization. The historicity of understanding is itself interpreted (presented, situated) via an idealizing context and/or presupposition – that of an ideal speech situation.

Habermas's definition of the situation finds itself presented with a problem that moves the horizon of his questioning in a performatively contradictory direction: the attempt to universalize situational definitions re-turns us to problem of context specificity and/or boundaries. If the status of interpretations remain relative to effective history, how is it possible to direct (rationally determine, integrate, etc.) the context of their occurrences? Part of the problem is that the idea of a context-transcendent reason remains at odds with the reality of a situated (or context specific) rationality. The notion of an ideal speech situation presupposes that interpreters *should* ideally be able to determine what is rationally acceptable over and above culturally distinct situations and linguistically disclosed worldviews. As Parekh observes, however, the view that "universal principles could be based on the best arguments in an ideal speech situation...is

logically incoherent."²²³⁴ Habermas's contradictory performative idealization presupposes a "culturally neutral speech"²²³⁵ that acts against the way language effectively discloses and trans/forms the historical world. Indeed, the idea that the one and same language (or speech situation) could be "equally hospitable to a variety of worldviews is inherently impossible."²²³⁶ Habermas's idealization arguably exhibits a culturally specific prejudice towards a universal concept of reason. Habermas "ethnocentric discourse of modernity"²²³⁷ appears to have its basis in the lifeworld of the enlightenment project and attempts to transform the contexts of its occurrences accordingly. Lafont sums up Habermas's problematic situation in the following way:

The problems inherent in the contextualization of the processes of understanding...arise at two different levels. On the one hand, problems arise with respect to the very account of the conditions of possibility of understanding. The introduction of the lifeworld as a constitutive element of the processes of understanding entails the relativisation of any understanding to the factual belonging to a particular tradition... On the other hand, these relativistic consequences affect the scope of the analysis itself. For according to Habermas's own theory, this analysis necessarily takes place within a particular cultural tradition. Therefore it is in danger of merely reconstructing the self-understanding characteristic of this particular tradition, illicitly elevating it to a supposedly universal dimension.²²³⁸

Habermas's attempt to raise context-specific knowledge claims to a universal dimension has its basis in an *epistemic* conception of truth. That is to say, within a concept that interprets truth-values in relation to meaning conditions, or the way in which rules meaningfully determine understanding and/or justify (govern, contextualize) historical practices. As another famous Wittgensteinian observed, however, our understanding of what is rationally acceptable must be relativized to the linguistic context/s in question. Winch famously raises the problem of interpreting other cultural traditions from within a Wittgensteinian perspective, and such a problematic is understood to have implications for what effectively constitutes an ideal speech situation (or historically valid interpretations). Winch's guiding question was "how to make intelligible in our terms institutions belonging to a primitive culture, whose standards of rationality and intelligibility are apparently quite at odds with our own."²²³⁹ According to Winch, "the

²²³⁴ Parekh, Bhikhu. "Principles of a Global Ethic" in Eade, John and O'Byrne, Darren (eds.) *Global Ethics and Civil Society* (Cornwall: MPG Books Ltd, 2017), p.23.

²²³⁵ *ibid.*

²²³⁶ *ibid.*

²²³⁷ Li, Victor. "Habermas and the Ethnocentric Discourse of Modernity", in Kreiswirth, Martin and Carmichael, Thomas (eds.) *Constructive Criticism: The Human Sciences in the Age of Theory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), pp.44-61.

²²³⁸ Lafont, Cristina. *The Linguistic Turn In Hermeneutic Philosophy* trans. Jose Medina, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), p.175.

²²³⁹ Winch, Peter, "Understanding a Primitive Society" in Wilson, B.R. (ed.) *Rationality* (London: Blackwell, 1979), p.94.

possibilities of our grasping forms of rationality different from ours in an alien culture"²²⁴⁰ are "limited by certain formal requirements centeringround the demand for consistency."²²⁴¹ Yet these formal requirements "tell us nothing in particular about what is to count as consistency."²²⁴² We "can only determine this by investigating the wider context of the life in which the activities in question"²²⁴³ meaningfully *consist in*. In other words, an epistemic conception of truth can only "elucidate what is involved in the notion of a form of life as such. Wittgenstein's analysis of the concept of following a rule and his account of the peculiar kind of interpersonal agreement which this involves is a contribution to that epistemological elucidation."²²⁴⁴ While he does not expressly raise the question of effective history, his interpretation problematizes the very notion of idealizing presuppositions – the problem of interpreting historically distinct cultures and/or interpretations raises the question about the relation between meaning conditions and truth-values. If "our idea of what belongs to the realm of reality is given for us in the language we use"²²⁴⁵, it must be "in principle possible for other people to grasp that rule and judge when it is being correctly followed"²²⁴⁶ without judgment (criticism of the cultural standards questioned by other cultures). We therefore must not presuppose the very standards of rationality in question, and any inquiry into the historicity of understanding must seek to legitimate "different and competing ways of life, each offering a different account of the intelligibility of things."²²⁴⁷ Such a Wittgensteinian approach invariably turns every concept of rationality into a social *ritual*, or formal ceremony.²²⁴⁸ Compare (say) the different interpretations for rainfall in Native American and Western cultural traditions. Each tradition has their reasons for justifying qualitatively distinct interpretations of the world, and the justification remains part of the web of presuppositions in which cultural beliefs are meaningfully contextualized (questioned, determined).²²⁴⁹ The difficulty with an epistemic conception of truth,

²²⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 97

²²⁴¹ Ibid, p.82.

²²⁴² Ibid, p.81.

²²⁴³ Ibid, p.100.

²²⁴⁴ Winch, Peter. *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1990), p.41.

²²⁴⁵ Ibid, p.15.

²²⁴⁶ Ibid, p.33. Winch follows Wittgenstein's quietism by insisting that a philosophical inquiry into language must leave everything the way it is found(ed.) and the task of the social scientist was therefore to try and understand another culture by following (determining) its linguistic rules and conventions. And it can only do this by *not* being critical of the cultural standards in question.

²²⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 103.

²²⁴⁸ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society* trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p.26. Habermas refers, of course, to the "ritualized competition for the better arguments." According to Winch, however, we merely have competing rituals (or different ways of arguing) and ritualialized arguments cannot compete with each other on the same rational grounds.

²²⁴⁹ If a rain dance failed to produce rainfall, we would question the causal efficacy of rainmaking rituals. The failure of a rainmaking ritual, however, can be rationally situated and/or justified within the context of Native American beliefs – by merely confirming the lack of equilibrium between the

then, is that it invariably raises the problem of contextual relevance and its relation to confirmation bias. If linguistic context trans/forms the very conditions (meaning, rituals) of rationality itself, the problem is the way human understanding universally becomes "agreeable to itself"²²⁵⁰ (prejudiced towards its own set of mutually supportive beliefs) so as to make the given realm of reality "agree with" ²²⁵¹ the reasons for believing in the first place. The question for an epistemic conception of truth is the nature of the direction of fit between a rational consensus (agreement) and rationality (reason giving). Specifically, to what extent can a rationally motivated agreement be a criterion for truth – and by extension, cultural critique?

These questions are important because they highlight the tension within Habermas's conception of rationality. The tension is situated within the operation of idealizing presuppositions in effective history. On the one hand, Habermas problematizes consensus by arguing that rational thinkers would ideally be motivated to *disagree* with questionable norms and practices. Habermas's regulative idea urges that social agreements ideally remain in question, and conflicting interpretations play a critical role insofar as rational dissent may interpret mutually understood situations differently. Validity claims thereby become susceptible to critique because of the way they trans/form our relationship to the world. On the other hand, Habermas privileges consensus by urging that truth effectively becomes a matter of social agreement in an ideal speech situation – rational thinkers would ideally be motivated to agree with one another when determining the status of conflicting interpretations. Consensus as a criterion of validation is itself performatively contradictory in that it must act as a contradictory standard bearer throughout effective history. Specifically, rationally motivated agreement is simultaneously the reason for truth-bearing (socially acceptable, verifiable, valid) statements and orientations and also the reason for the falsifiability (socially unacceptable, refutable, invalid) statements and actions. It is only by subjecting traditionally accepted beliefs and practices to rational disagreements (contradictory actions) that interpreters may reach another mutually acceptable understanding or agreement – rendering the passing down (rationality, acceptability) of statements and orientations to performative contradiction in turn. If the lifeworld continues to be the site of potential disagreement, the very idea of what constitutes a rationally motivated

spiritual and material realm. If and when a dance does appear to produce rainfall, its causal efficacy – and harmonious relations between realms – would invariably be confirmed.

²²⁵⁰ Bacon, Francis, *Novum Organum: Or, True Suggestions for the Interpretation of Nature* (London: Longmans and Co, 1875), p.56. Bacon famously made the following observation about the human tendency towards confirmation bias. "The human understanding when it has once adopted an opinion (either as being the received opinion or as being agreeable to itself) draws all things else to support and agree with it. And though there be a greater number and weight of instances to be found on the other side, yet these it either neglects and despises, or else by some distinction sets aside and rejects; in order that by this great and pernicious predetermination the authority of its former conclusions may remain inviolate."

²²⁵¹ Ibid.

consensus contradicts – runs counters to – the validity (meaningfulness) of universally valid truth-claims. Indeed, it is within the realm of meaning conditions that ideal and reality actively come into conflict. Note that the ideal has two epistemic registers – firstly, that people would agree if they were completely rational, and secondly, such agreement would ideally make consensus more rational (or complete). The problem is placing the burden of proof on social agreements/conventions in the first place. Specifically, the normative content of the lifeworld will remain open to question when there continues to be the potential for rational disagreements over the status of the rational consensus itself. If truth is ideally a matter of agreement (rational acceptability under ideal conditions), the question of what may be thought rationally acceptable will never be ideal since there will always be the possibility for conflicting interpretations across *unanticipated* situations.

The Partiality of Reason: the problem of motivated reasoning.

The problem, then, remains the contextualization (or situation) of reason itself – whether it's possible (meaningful) to delimit its context of relevance and/or determine the normative status of the content surrounding (enabling, defining) a situation or event. Bernstein provides a useful definition of the situation:

Abstractly there is something enormously attractive about Habermas's appeal to the 'force of the better argument' until we ask ourselves what this means and presupposes. Even under 'ideal' conditions where participants are committed to discursive argumentation, there is rarely agreement about what constitutes the 'force of the better argument'. We philosophers, for example, cannot even agree what the arguments are in any of our canonical texts – whether Plato, Aristotle, Kant or Hegel, etc. – and there is certainly no consensus about who has advanced the better argument.²²⁵²

Bernstein is primarily talking about the difficulty of achieving mutual understanding and agreement on problems traced back to the philosophical discourse of antiquity.²²⁵³ The problem

²²⁵² Bernstein, Richard. "An Allegory Of Modernity/Postmodernity: Habermas and Derrida" in Thomassen, Lasse (ed.) *The Derrida-Habermas Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p.89.

²²⁵³ Chalmers, David. "Why Isn't There More Progress in Philosophy?" *Philosophy*, Vol.90, No. 1, 2015, pp. 3-31. Chalmers provides a recent state of play of 'analytic philosophy', and his diagnosis of its lamentable condition might deter anyone from considering whether it is even rationally possible. Some of the reasons for philosophy's lack of progress include: its primary *method* – that of argument – remains powerless to produce "collective convergence on an answer", (p.5), *anti realism* – "there are no objective truths to be had in the relevant domains" in question (p.26) – and *unknowability*, or that philosophical problems might be unsolvable since "the answers" might not be "knowable or (remain) unknowable" in principle (p.30). Chalmers nonetheless continues to recognize the

of reaching a rationally motivated (or impartial) consensus, however, goes much further back – to the way "motivated reasoning"²²⁵⁴ (or the partially *of* reason) actively informs definitions of given situations. Renoir's *Rules of the Game* (1939) provides a succinct characterization of the way the game of life is effectively played: the awful truth is that *everyone has their reasons* and the problem is that even the most questionable reasons may be rationalized (justified, interpreted away) accordingly.²²⁵⁵ As Kunda observes, every rational person's intuitive (unconscious, reflexive) "reliance on a biased set of cognitive processes – strategies for accessing, constructing and evaluating beliefs"²²⁵⁶ – calls into question the way we meaningfully argue with each other. Correia notes that the "phenomenon of motivated reasoning poses a considerable challenge for normative theories of argumentation"²²⁵⁷ because of the difficulty of entering and/or exiting the circle of another individual's understanding in a completely rational (impartial) way. Thagard points us in the right direction when he acknowledges that strategies for accessing, constructing and evaluating beliefs are partially determined by the way rational thinkers relate to their intentional states. It would therefore "be pointless to try to capture these (motivated) inferences by obviously fallacious arguments, because people are rarely consciously aware of the biases that result from their motivations"²²⁵⁸ – a situation complicated by the fact that we are all similarly motivated by the false belief that we are ourselves unbiased (unmotivated seekers of an objective truth). Part of the problem, then, is that our determination (understanding, evaluation of) a given situation plays off social psychologies, or distinct situations in life.²²⁵⁹ Specifically, the way we relate to the lifeworld remains a reflection of personal identities and interpersonal dynamics. Conflicting interpretations therefore become subject to cognitive and motivational biases or the "seeking out of confirmatory"²²⁶⁰ reasons for

philosophical importance of asking questions – to justify philosophy's continued (albeit) questionable existence (p.31).

²²⁵⁴ Kunda, Ziva. "The Case For Motivated Reasoning" *Psychological Bulletin* Vol.108, No.3, 1990, p.480.

²²⁵⁵ It is Renoir's character Octave that makes this observation, and as Octave famously observes "The awful thing about life is this: everyone has their reasons." The French film is a comedy of manners and provides a critical view of the ruling class by bringing out the tension between public morals (or social etiquette) and private actions.

²²⁵⁶ Kunda, Ziva. "The Case For Motivated Reasoning" *Psychological Bulletin* Vol.108, No.3, 1990, p.480.

²²⁵⁷ Correia, Vasco. "Biased Argumentation and Critical Thinking" in Herman, Thierry, and Oswald, Steven (eds.) *Rhetoric and Cognition: Theoretical Perspectives and Persuasive Strategies* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2014), p.90.

²²⁵⁸ Thagard, Paul. "Critical Thinking and Informal Logic: Neuropsychological Perspectives" *Informal Logic*, Vol. 31, No. 3, 152-170. We follow Correia in quoting Thagard here, although Correia argues that it may be possible to circumvent the problem of circularity.

²²⁵⁹ Ratele, Kopano and Duncan, Norman (eds.), *Social Psychology: Identities and Relationships* (Lansdowne: UCT Press, 2007), pp.9-10. While the concept of social psychology is itself "contested terrain" – and so subject to the problem of defining its own object of study – the conflicting interpretations do agree on one thing: how to make sense of *interpersonal identities and dynamics*.

²²⁶⁰ Taber, Charles and Lodge, Milton. "Motivated Scepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs" *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 50, No. 3, 2006, p. 77.

believing and acting. Competing validity claims emerge within the context of *other* beliefs and values and the 'power of reflection' itself reflects (stands in relation to, provides evidence of) the question of our *being-there*. Motivated reasoning remains a problem because of the role prejudices actively play in constituting the objects in question: the objects to which we refer to and argue about are *partially determined* by the *partiality of reason*. Motivated reasoning is particularly questionable when an individual's prejudice towards their prejudices may direct the "circular way of constituting the normative groups at issue."²²⁶¹ Frimer, Skitka and Motyl observe that "at least three basic processes work in tandem to create confirmation bias:) people *selectively expose* themselves to belief confirmation information, b) people *interpret* information that is already in front of them in a belief confirming manner, and c) people *remember* information that confirms their beliefs."²²⁶² Pronin, Puccio and Ross provide the best definition of the hermeneutic situation. The "recipients of persuasive arguments often prove to be rationalizing rather than rational agents, and are influenced less by logical rigor or objective evidence than by the interests and preconceptions that they bring to their task."²²⁶³

Witness the way *Wittgenstein's Poker* readily confirms that professionally trained philosophers are among the groups of people refusing to acknowledge the way hidden prejudices might motivate and/or distort their own understanding. The dispute is over whether Wittgenstein physically threatened Popper with a red-hot poker during their disagreement over whether there are any philosophical problems. The heated argument between Wittgenstein and Popper in 1946 resulted in conflicting testimonies between the many other people present and accounted for, and the infamous "argument continues inconclusively"²²⁶⁴ to this day. The "delightful irony"²²⁶⁵ is that individuals rationally motivated to seek the "grounds of knowledge, understanding and truth"²²⁶⁶ remain in fundamental disagreement "on crucial questions of fact."²²⁶⁷ Conflicting definitions of the situation abound – regarding the sequence of events, what

²²⁶¹ Rescher, Nicholas. *Pluralism: Against The Demand For Consensus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p.47.

²²⁶² Frimer, Jeremy, Skitka, Linda and Motyl, Matt. "Liberals And Conservatives Are Similarly Motivated to Avoid Exposure to One Another's Opinions" *Journal Of Experiential Social Psychology*, Vol.72, 2017, p.1

²²⁶³ Ibid.

²²⁶⁴ Thomson, Mel, and Rodgers, Nigel, *Philosophers Behaving Badly* (London: Peter Owen Publishers, 2005), p.145. As the title of the book might indicate, our philosopher of agreement was reportedly a very disagreeable person in real life – he was intolerant of dissent (typically shouting other people down) and subject to outbursts of violence that even kindergarten children experienced (he was briefly their teacher until he had to flee the scene of his crimes).

²²⁶⁵ Edmonds, David, and Eidinow, John. *Wittgenstein's Poker: The Story of a Ten-Minute Argument Between Two Great Philosophers* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), p.4.

²²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²²⁶⁷ Ibid.

really happened, etc. – and the *other* misunderstanding is divided along partisan lines.²²⁶⁸ The partiality *for* reason – the mutually agreed upon search for the truth of the matter – comes into direct conflict with the partiality *of* reason (conflicting interpretations, varying and/or selective reasoning, etc.). The disagreements over Wittgenstein and Popper's personal disagreement highlights the way motivated reasoning can directly 'inform' (determine) the content of the very 'information' being conveyed and/or called into question. Specifically,

Opposing partisans exposed to the same set of objective facts interpret these facts differently as they fill in details of context and content, infer connections, and use idiosyncratic scripts and schemas in search for coherence and meaning. Cognitive biases lead them to see and remember a reality that is consistent with their beliefs and expectations, while motivational biases cause them to see what is consistent with their needs, wishes and self-interest. Through such information-processing biases, two opposing partisans who encounter the same facts, historical accounts, scientific evidence, or even witness the same events can find additional support for their preconceptions.²²⁶⁹

Habermas's ideal of a rational motivated agreement therefore presupposes two questionable things in advance: the rightness of one's position over and against someone else's, and the right to defeat (displace, overcome) them via common consent. To argue in favour of the force of the better argument thereby exhibits a prejudice towards potentially illegitimate power relations and/or differentials – by positioning the activity of argumentation over and against other activities. Habermas's regulative ideal not only presupposes that everyone should play by the same rules governed by the 'legislative authority' in question, it legitimately forces people out of the publicly contested space of reasons if they cannot (or will not) attempt to beat someone at their own language game. Correspondingly, Habermas's legislative authority displaces and legitimates the *false consensus effect*, or evaluations of the truth-value of a normative group's beliefs and desires.²²⁷⁰

²²⁶⁸ *Wittgenstein's Poker* foregrounds the role class, race, temperament, loyalties and rivalries can actively play in the making of such determinations.

²²⁶⁹ Pronin, Emily, Carolyn, Puccio and Lee Ross. "Understanding Misunderstanding: Social Psychological Perspectives" in Gilovich, Thomas, Griffin, Dale and Kahneman, Daniel (eds.), *Heuristics and Biases: The Psychology of Intuitive Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.648-649. Pronin, Puccio and Ross might not be talking about *Wittgenstein's Poker* (or Habermas) but they do provide an excellent overview of empirical research into the problem of motivated reasoning.

²²⁷⁰ Biernat, Monica, and Eidelman, Scott. "Standards" in Kruglanski, Arie and Higgins, Tory (eds.) *Social Psychology: Handbook of Basic Principles* (New York: Guilford Press, 2002), p. 316. While the false consensus effect is traditionally attributed to individuals who *overestimate* the rational status of their own beliefs and desires – i.e., by assuming that every other rational person must already be in agreement with them – we have displaced this concept into the public realm because Habermas's regulative ideal presupposes that everyone wants to be and/or is similarly rationally motivated. To clarify the traditional use of the term. "Operationally, the false consensus effect is said

Suppose, for example, that "court historians"²²⁷¹ are in general agreement about the historical reality and moral status of the Holocaust. The difficulty is that such a consensus primarily reflects the official position of the normative groups at issue – academics and mainstream media outlets as ruling elites²²⁷² – and manages to conceal (or falsify) the prevalence of Holocaust denial and/or the normativity of anti-Semitism in culturally distinct lifeworlds.²²⁷³ Habermas's distinction between communicative and strategic action is similarly problematized by his use of Wittgenstein's concept of language game. Specifically, if the language game of argumentation is played to determine the outcome of disputes, the requirement is to adopt the most effective strategy. Rules cannot determine the state of play or moment of truth – they merely make the game possible by delimiting (situating, bounding) opposing reasons for thinking and acting. If competing arguments are to reach the desired goal, the problem is persuading others – participants and observers alike – on the validity (effectiveness) of strategic actions. It is *contextual strategies*²²⁷⁴ that provide the true measure of meaningful actions, but the question remains: by what standard can a situated reason determine the final "conversational score"?²²⁷⁵ There are no impartial observers in the language game of argumentation: participants cannot call on anyone to act as an independent referee to objectively arbitrate on matters arising from the play. The problem is particularly acute when we acknowledge the performative contradiction inherent in Habermas's conception of the language game in question – while the validity conditions expressed by competing statements is relativized to the context of their occurrence (argumentation), their truth-values may vary from context to context (arguments) since the conversation in which we find ourselves remains open-ended and/or ongoing. Habermas's performative contradiction can be defined in the following way: when making context-transcendent truth-claims, a situated reason attempts to score the goal of truth in a language

to have occurred 'when a person engaging in a given behaviour estimates that behaviour to be shared by a larger proportion of some reference group than would be estimated by a person engaging in an alternative behaviour'. In other words, false consensus is not about deviations from actual consensus but, rather, about deviations between individuals who differ in their self-reported attributes in terms of their predictions and expectations regarding others' standing on those attributes. The effect has been reported in such domains as behaviours, traits, preferences, beliefs, and personal problems."

²²⁷¹ Faurisson, Robert. "Faurisson Versus France" in Cassese, Antonio (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to International Criminal Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.668. We cite Faurisson's term of reference (or abuse) because of its contextual relevance here. We briefly return to Faurisson's attempt to *redefine the situation* via the *court of public opinion* below.

²²⁷² Amongst other groups, of course.

²²⁷³ See, for example, the Anti Defamation League's 2013-2015 global survey of Holocaust Awareness and Denial. The regional breakdowns – and overall figures – are alarming. http://global100.adl.org/info/holocaust_info

²²⁷⁴ As we have already seen, Derrida and Lyotard independently use variants of this phrase to justify their linguistic moves

²²⁷⁵ Lewis, David. "Scorekeeping In A Language Game" in *David Lewis: Philosophical Papers Vol. 1* (New York: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 238.

game yet to be played and/or on conceptual terrain that remains undetermined. Compare argumentation to (say) a basketball game: the performative attitude contradictorily presupposes the possibility of scoring a field goal in another competing team's language game or on a different – and unforeseen – court. The problem of delimiting context and arbitrating between contexts reintroduces the problem of the criterion and its relation to effective history: "who decides what is and is not an argument, by what criteria, and what constitutes the force of the better argument?...Is the very idea of a rational consensus in such concrete conflictual contexts even intelligible"?²²⁷⁶ Rescher argues that an ideal speech situation is *beside the question* anyway. agreement is never the real goal of conflicting interpretations. Habermas's regulative ideal removes the question of truth "from the operational range of the effective criteriology of human inquiry"²²⁷⁷ and cannot have "any practical implications"²²⁷⁸ in the domain of variegated experiences. Rescher observes that no one will ever be in the position of Habermas's ideal speech situation – reason is always situated and subject to the vagaries (competing interests, plurality of standards, limited knowledge, various fashions) of effective history. The difficulty is that Habermas's attempt to make an idealized consensus a criterion for truth presupposes the very thing at issue – namely, the intelligibility (historical possibility) of an ideal community of interpreters capable of reaching a final (or ultimate) agreement about definitions of situations. The question remains, however, whether linguistically disclosed horizons of the lifeworld can ultimately agree with a language independent (or objective) reality. Specifically, we still need to distinguish between being in potential *agreement with each other* and whether our meaningful statements actually *agree with an objectively true* – yet linguistically bound or inspected – *reality*. Suppose, for example, that the Nazis managed to wipe the Jews off the face of the earth, leaving little evidence of their existence or destruction. If a historian were to somehow ask about the fate of the world's Jewry, there would be a rationally motivated consensus around their historical status (in the form of a conspiracy of silence and/or eventual forgetting). Consequently, the question would itself become meaningless and might not even be possible – rational assent would falsify the truth-value of the fate of the Jews. Alternatively, suppose Faurisson was able to redefine the situation via his invocation of "critical"²²⁷⁹ reason and a "thoughtful and justified concern for historical truth."²²⁸⁰ Given his "excellent reasons"²²⁸¹ for contesting the authority of

²²⁷⁶ Bernstein, Richard. "An Allegory Of Modernity/Postmodernity: Habermas and Derrida" in Thomassen, Lasse, (ed.) *The Derrida-Habermas Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p.89.

²²⁷⁷ Rescher, Nicholas. *Pluralism: Against The Demand For Consensus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p.55.

²²⁷⁸ Ibid, p.59.

²²⁷⁹ Faurisson, Robert. "The Problem of the Gas Chambers" *Journal of Historical Review*, Vol.1, No.2, 1980, p.103.

²²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²²⁸¹ Faurisson, Robert. "Faurisson Versus France" in Cassese, Antonio (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to International Criminal Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.668. Faurisson was tried

court historians, Faurisson can "raise and strengthen anti-Semitic feelings"²²⁸² in the court of public opinion. The problem, of course, is that comment consent cannot act as a criterion for truth when it may effectively falsify history and add insult to injury. As Rescher observes, while "consensus can be invoked to *extend* the range of what is rationally acceptable as true, it cannot be invoked to *delineate* this range."²²⁸³ Specifically, "truth and consensus converge only in the ideal limit"²²⁸⁴ and the problem is trying to delimit the way truth and consensus agree with (move towards) each other in the real world. Kripke's conception of possible worlds can (ironically) provide a way out of Habermas's impasse when urging us to "conform to the rule of rigidity"²²⁸⁵ via a "criteria of trans-world identity."²²⁸⁶ Specifically, truth and consensus may circle around each other if rigidly designating terms of reference actively play the role of delimitation in the historicity of understanding. When agreeing to pick out the same objects in all possible worlds, rigid designators may thereby secure the ideal of rational inquiry as truth-bearing and/or orientating. We say ironical, of course, because Kripke's 'methodological fiction' permits us to invoke the world of *make believe* – or possible worlds – to ensure the reality of the referent across contexts of interpretation. Specifically, it has its basis in an objectively agreed upon 'reality', or definitions of situations that may actively disagree between contexts of interpretation (possible worlds) whilst securing the objective reality of the world in question (being re/defined). If we invariably understand by acquiring the horizon of question and answer, the question therefore becomes: how can we situate ourselves at such an ideal limit when interpreters invariably bring their own contexts and preconceptions to bear, transforming the horizon of understanding and/or the situation of reason indefinitely?

and convicted in the French courts on the basis of the two following statements. (i) 'No one will have me admit that two plus two makes five, that the earth is flat, or that the Nuremberg Tribunal was infallible. I have excellent reasons not to believe in this policy of extermination of Jews or in the magic gas chamber'; and (ii) 'I would wish to see that 100 percent of all French citizens realize that the myth of the gas chambers is a dishonest fabrication . . . endorsed by the victorious powers of Nuremberg in 1945–6 and officialized on 14 July 1990 by the current French government, with the approval of the "court historians" '.

²²⁸² We are quoting France's reason for convicting Faurisson on the grounds of racial hatred and incitement.

²²⁸³ Rescher, Nicholas. *Pluralism: Against The Demand For Consensus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 53.

²²⁸⁴ Ibid, p.54.

²²⁸⁵ Kripke, Saul. *Naming and Necessity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p.10. Rescher does not discuss Kripke, and is unlikely to agree with our attempt to run distinct positions together.

²²⁸⁶ Ibid, p.49. If we recall, rigid designators are determined by stipulation in the actual world (or extensional contexts) first. Kripke's essentialism defines his terms of reference via requirements insisting upon the condition of possibility for said agreement – if only to explore the ways worlds may meaningfully disagree with each other when determining the truth-value of referring terms.

Chapter 6: Rethinking the Circle -

Deconstructing Habermas, Reconstructing Derrida.

Aims and Objectives: Competing Ontological Commitments and the Logic of the Quasi.

The aim of this chapter is to bring our understanding full circle. The question of the direction of fit between thought and language occurs as phrases in dispute, or as a conflict that "cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both arguments."²²⁸⁷ As Lyotard argues, a "phrase which links and is to be linked is always a *pagus*, a border zone where genres of discourse enter into conflict over the mode of linking."²²⁸⁸ Furthermore, this "differend proceeds from the question, which accompanies any phrase, of how to link onto it."²²⁸⁹ We return to Derrida and Habermas, then, to bring forth conflicting movements within the circle re-directing the *pathways in question*. We argue that these conflicting interpretations form a complex whole and should be understood (questioned) *through* each other. Specifically, it the circle of understanding which directs itself in such a contradictory way, invariably throwing its interpretations (mode of linking, approach) back into question. Our aim is to explore the ways in which the circle of understanding performs conflicting interpretations of interpretations. We thereby call for(th) the conflict of interpretations as a *contextual strategy*, and argue that the conflicting interpretations serve a methodological function in the circle *performing* (enabling, directing) such contradictory questioning. The differend gives expression to these conflicting interpretations, enabling a link between distinct parts (or rulings) forming a complex whole. Derrida and Habermas, of course, presuppose conflicting criteria of relevance when navigating the circle in question. The conflict of interpretations now becomes particularly relevant in that it directs thought towards competing conceptions of critique (delimitations of self-understanding). The conflict nonetheless directs the question of the delimitation of being in a similar way – towards the question of ontological commitment as cultural critique.²²⁹⁰ That is to say, where

²²⁸⁷ Lyotard, Francois-Jean. *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.xi.

²²⁸⁸ Ibid, p.151.

²²⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 137-138.

²²⁹⁰ The *term* ontological commitment, of course, derives from Willard Quine. See Quine's essay "On What There Is" in *From A Logical Point of View* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961) for an elucidation of the way we "involve ourselves in ontological commitments: by our use of bound variables", p.12. According to Quine's attempt to make sense of the question of being, "to be assumed an entity is to be assumed as a value of a variable" within a given language (game) or conceptual scheme, p.13. Given these assumptions, to be committed to an ontology is to presuppose a criterion of relevance or adequacy mapping out (bounding) the relevant conceptual terrain. Quine's term is relevant for our purposes because he asks: "how are we to adjudicate among rival ontologies?" and answers that we look to the question of a "prior ontological standard... not in

the *being of their questioning* directs the *question of our being-there*. On the one hand, we find ourselves on the way towards a *reconstruction* of understanding (Habermas). On the other hand, we find ourselves on the way towards a *deconstruction* of understanding (Derrida). Either way, the question of ontological commitment delimits the way an interpretation intentionally relates to (questions) our being-in-the-world.²²⁹¹ While their interpretations of interpretation might remain at cross purposes, they similarly direct us *through* the same intersection – ontological commitment as cultural critique.

Given the competing ontological commitments – or distinct *ways of being-there* – we invariably find ourselves re-turning to the problem of evaluating the ontological standards in question: how can we determine the relevance or adequacy of the criteria specifying the relation between thought and language? Habermas and Derrida not only talk at cross purposes, but they also appear to meet at a great divide.²²⁹² While these two thinkers speak at cross purposes,²²⁹³ they

order to know what there is, but in order to know what a given remark or doctrine, ours or someone else's, says there is; and this much is quite properly a question involving language", p.15-16.

²²⁹¹ While we will not be committing ourselves to Quine's naturalistic ontology and/or behavioral theory of meaning, it is worth noting what he says about the role of interpretation in understanding. According to Quine, the question of being can only be intelligible within a context of interpretation, and so, the adjudication of rival ontologies requires us to contextualize beings in different ways - i.e., involve ourselves in the competing interpretations through a relativization of ontological commitments. Specifically, in *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969) Quine urges that "what makes sense is to say not what the objects of a theory are, absolutely speaking, but how one theory of objects is interpretable or reinterpretable in another", p.50. It therefore "makes no sense to say what the objects of a theory are, beyond saying how to interpret or reinterpret that theory in another", p. 51.

²²⁹² Bernstein, Richard. "An Allegory of Modernity/Postmodernity" in Thomassen, Lasse (ed.) *The Derrida-Habermas Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p.73. As Bernstein observes, interpreters following their respective movements cannot help but question whether they "share any common ground" and may "despair of bridging what appears unbridgeable. It is all too easy to think that an abyss separates them, that if there ever were vocabularies that are incommensurable, then the vocabularies of Habermas and Derrida qualify as paradigmatic examples."

²²⁹³ As we've already seen, Habermas accuses Derrida in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987) of claiming that "any interpretation is inevitably a false interpretation, and any understanding a misunderstanding", p. 198. Further, that "Derrida is particularly interested in standing the primacy of logic over rhetoric" and that he deals "with the works of philosophy as works of literature", p. 187 and 188 respectively. According to Habermas, Derrida isn't a true philosopher because he "does not proceed analytically" and instead "proceeds by a critique of style", p.189. Indeed, Derrida's procedure is said to lead thinking away from rational analysis and into an "empty formula-like avowal of some indeterminate authority" supposedly underwriting all con/texts, p.181. Given Derrida's overall approach, he collapses the distinction between true and false, and renders all validity claims meaningless. Suffice to say, Derrida was not impressed with Habermas's interpretation of his philosophical works. He complains in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), that Habermas deliberately misunderstands his con/texts and invalidates his interpretations of interpretations. Indeed, everything Habermas says about him "is false. I say false, as opposed to true", p.157. Derrida accuses Habermas of not even bothering to respect the "elementary rules of philology and of interpretation", resulting in a "frankly comic" misunderstanding of his philosophical position/s, p.158.

nonetheless intersect at the *problem of the performative*. Habermas and Derrida might provide conflicting interpretations of interpretation, but they also share a common understanding: the role interpretation plays in a circle that encompasses (enacts or moves through) the relation between thought and language. It may nonetheless still be possible to bridge the divide in some way. We can inaugurate our movement by understanding that Habermas and Derrida similarly approach the question of being through the *pathway of transcendental thinking*, or by way of the question enabling their questioning in the first place. Whatever the differences between them, we've observed that Habermas and Derrida similarly understand their respective approaches to the question of being as a working fiction (hypothesis, possibility) that follows the lead of the being of the question/s directing (conditioning, necessitating) them. Specifically, their questioning is understood as "a methodological fiction"²²⁹⁴ and "logical-rhetorical fiction"²²⁹⁵ – as being conditional upon a "transcendental illusion"²²⁹⁶ or a "quasi-transcendental"²²⁹⁷ respectively. Habermas and Derrida have independently agreed that their competing claims to knowledge can only have a "quasi-transcendental status."²²⁹⁸ Nonetheless, their respective quasi-transcendental approaches still refer to the possibility of a "moment of unconditionality"²²⁹⁹ built into the rationality of reason, or an "unconditional rationalism that never renounces...the possibility of... criticizing unconditionally all conditionalities, including those that still found the critical idea, namely, those of the *krinein*, of the *krisis*, of the binary or dialectical decision or judgment."²³⁰⁰ While they approach the problem of context-transcending validity claims from

²²⁹⁴ Habermas, Jürgen. *Between Facts and Norms* trans William Rehg, (Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 1988), p.326.

²²⁹⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "As If It Were Possible Within Such Limits" in *Paper Machine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 83.

²²⁹⁶ Habermas, Jürgen. "Truth and Society" in *On the Pragmatics of Social Interaction: Preliminary Studies in the Theory of Communicative Action* trans. Barbara Fultner (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001), p.103.

²²⁹⁷ Derrida, Jacques. *Glas* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), p.162a. See also Bennington, Geoffrey, and Derrida, Jacques. "Derridabase: The Series: (Quasi) Transcendental Questions" in *Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p.278.

²²⁹⁸ Habermas, Jürgen. "Some Difficulties in the Attempt to Link Theory and Praxis" in *Theory and Practice* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), p.8. While Habermas is only talking about himself here, the fact that both philosophers have used the term *quasi-transcendental* is not without significance. Whatever the disagreements between them, they have independently agreed about the quasi-transcendental character of their questioning over the years. Although the latter Habermas has since downplayed this term in favor of "transcendental illusion" and/or "methodological fiction", the latter Derrida has continued to sanction its use. See also Habermas's *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), for an earlier use of this term. Specifically, prior to Habermas's rational reconstruction and/or theory of communicative action, he talks about the "meaning of the validity of statements derivable within the quasi-transcendental system of reference of processes of inquiry", pp. 194-195.

²²⁹⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. "An Alternative Way Out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communicative Versus Subject-Centered Reason" in *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), p.322

²³⁰⁰ Derrida, Jacques. "To Arrive – At The Ends of the State" in *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p.142.

different directions, they similarly move towards the question of the conditions of possibility in a self-referential structure, or the way a complex whole is itself conditioned and/or necessarily becomes questionable.²³⁰¹ As Allen observes, the competing philosophers are "offering two different ways of characterizing...a certain transcendent moment of reason, a moment of unconditionality within (the conditionality of) reason."²³⁰² Consequently, any move towards quasi-transcendental questioning necessarily occurs via the circle directing (structuring) the events of its understanding, and becomes an inquiry into the conditions of its possibility (existence, occurrence), or mode of being-there.²³⁰³ While Habermas and Derrida might independently agree that their questioning necessarily occurs in a *quasi-transcendental* mode, they nonetheless *part ways* over what the "logic of the quasi...would consist of"²³⁰⁴ in the complex whole *in question*.

²³⁰¹ In the intervening years, Habermas has come to the understanding that Derrida might also be a philosopher and attempts to locate Derrida's interpretations within a shared philosophical tradition. See, for example, the 2004 interview with Eduardo Mendieta "America and the World: A Conversation with Jürgen Habermas" (published at the online journal *Logos*). During the conversation, Habermas observes "what connects me to Derrida is the philosophical reference to an author like Kant. Admittedly – and though we're roughly the same age, our life histories have been very different – what separates us is the later Heidegger." Further, "When Derrida and I mutually understand our so different background motives, a difference of interpretation must not be taken as a difference in the thing being interpreted." http://www.logosjournal.com/habermas_america.htm.

²³⁰² Allen, Amy. "Philosophies of Immanence and Transcendence: Reading *History of Madness* With Habermas and Derrida" in Custer, Olivia, Deutscher, Penelope and Haddad, Samir (eds.) *Foucault/Derrida Fifty Years Later: The Futures of Genealogy, Deconstruction, and Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), p.114.

²³⁰³ Bubner, Rudiger. "Is Transcendental Hermeneutics Possible?" in Manninen, Juha and Tuomela, Raimo (eds.) *Essays on Explanation and Understanding* (Dordrecht: D.Reidel Publishing, 1976). As Bubner previously indicated, the "transcendental presupposition" (p.61) remains directed by the question of its mode of being: it attempts to uncover "the conditions for the possibility...of understanding" (p.69) by determining the limits of the "ontological commitment" (p.63) in question. Consequently, an inquiry may be referred to as (quasi) transcendental when it "takes as its subject, together with the general conditions of knowledge, the conditions of its own genesis and functioning", Bubner, Rudiger. "Kant, Transcendental Arguments, and the Problem of the Deduction" *Review of Metaphysics*, Vol.28, 1975, p.462.

²³⁰⁴ Laclau, Ernesto. "Converging on an Open Question" in *Diacritics*, Vol.27, No.1, 1997, p.18-19. Laclau observes that any such theoretical approach remains "haunted by the perplexing question of the precise status of that quasi. The problem touches on, on the one hand, the question of meta-language; on the other the status, in theory building, of categories that apparently refer to empirical events but that in practice have a quasi-transcendental status, operating as the a priori conditions of intelligibility of a whole discursive domain.... Because of the undecided status of the 'quasi' we are confronted with a plurality of alternatives, whose two polar extremes would be a total hardening of those categories, which would thus become a priori conditions of all possible human development, and a no less extreme historicism which sees in them only contingent events, products of particular cultural formations. The first extreme is confronted with the whole array of problems emerging from any transcendentalisation of empirical conditions; the second, with the difficulties derived from not dealing with those conditions which make possible even a historicist discourse. The logic of the quasi tries to avoid both extremes, but it is extremely unclear in what that logic would consist of." While Laclau is primarily talking about his own (and Judith Butler's) quasi-transcendental approach to questioning, Habermas and Derrida similarly converge on an open question: it cannot be decided either way.

The task ahead of us, then, is to clarify the conditions in which their understanding takes place. Such an elucidation requires us to approach the circle of understanding from different directions. The question is how such contradictory movements can be possible, and the requirement is to determine the ways in which such interpretations may come into conflict and/or question one another. Given the competing ontological commitments, the problem is determining *the ways* different contexts of interpretation can be meaningfully contextualized (understood and/or questioned). We address this problem by adjudicating between rival ontological schemes, and so (re)interpret – or *move between* – the relevant intentional horizons. On the one hand, we allow for a conflict of interpretations and do not attempt to resolve the conflicting approaches via a common standard or measure. On the other hand, we critically evaluate one context of interpretation via another context of interpretation or ontological standard. We therefore attempt to *deconstruct Habermas* and *reconstruct Derrida* to question their conflicting movements around the circle of understanding. We thereby transcend the problem of context dependency or boundaries, and allow for the possibility of conflicting interpretations *across* contexts of interpretation. Our performative contradiction should be apparent from the outset – while these conflicting interpretations might attempt to transcend the context of their occurrence, the contexts must themselves remain context dependent or specific. We resolve the contradiction via a dialectic between question and answer. Following Gadamer, this invariably involves a reversal in direction, and the question is situating and/or directing their respective questioning accordingly. The question of conflicting ontological commitments, then, can only be answered within a fusion of horizons – and we move towards each horizon of being through the corresponding reversal in direction.

Deconstructing Habermas

We begin by bringing out the tensions within Habermas's rational reconstruction. These tensions circle around Habermas's attempt to ground validity within meaning, and have their basis in an intuitive rule consciousness that remains "fallibilistic in orientation."²³⁰⁵ Specifically, if our knowledge of the world of experience is fallible, how is it possible to universally validate knowledge claims that remain subject to the possibility of contradiction across contexts of interpretation? In the following, we shall therefore identify three main tensions within Habermas's attempt to rationally reconstruct the conditions of understanding, and deconstruct him accordingly. Specifically, there is the tension within 1) Habermas's reasoning about conditions of possibility, 2) within Habermas's understanding of contexts of relevance and 3)

²³⁰⁵ Habermas, Jürgen. "Philosophy as Stand In and Interpreter" in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Nicholsen (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), p.16.

within Habermas's interpretation of the performative status of statements subject to rational criticism and/or validation.

Rules and conditions of (im)possibility.

Habermas's rational reconstruction is quasi-transcendental in that it seeks to establish the necessary conditions for (already) meaningful practices and a (potentially) more truthful understanding. Given the historicity of rule-governed activities, Habermas's questioning may therefore be divided in two related parts: what are the conditions of their possibility, and in what way is it possible to question their validity conditions? Habermas's questioning directs itself towards a fallibilistic consciousness insofar as the "unsettled ground of rationally motivated agreement among participants in argumentation is our only foundation."²³⁰⁶ Consequently, the attempt to ground any validity claim is made possible by the very rules in question.²³⁰⁷ The problem, however, is the circle in which Habermas's questioning moves: how do we determine the direction of fit between rational motivation and motivated rationality? If the historicity of understanding necessarily occurs against a background of *unquestioned* and/or potentially *questionable* presuppositions, reason may invariably call its directives and movements back into question. There are at least two related issues here.

The first is that *consensus* remains a criterion of truth irrespective of whether agreements are rationally motivated and/or directed. Habermas's interpretation of effective history presupposes

²³⁰⁶ Habermas, Jürgen. "Reply To My Critics" in Thompson, John and Held, David (eds.) *Habermas: Critical Debates* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), p.238.

²³⁰⁷ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge, 1930–1932* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p.88. To reiterate from another context: Wittgenstein argues that while (language) games remain their own justification, the paradox is that it is not possible (rational) to justify the rules of language games. Specifically, "Reason' only applies within a system of rules...It is nonsense to ask for reasons for the whole system of thought. You cannot give justification for the rules." Habermas recognizes the paradox when he observes "We understand the term "justify" when we know the rules for an argumentation game within which validity claims can be redeemed discursively. Now, we can make these rules the object of theory of argumentation or truth...yet, justifying these theories... must itself fit into the framework of an argumentation game to the same extent as must the justification of harmless, e.g. practical everyday utterances. Certainly, the claims made of justification vary according to the argumentation form and context. Yet, which reason counts as a good or indeed as the better reason for what object in what context has to be assessed in terms of standards which under certain conditions become problematical and in turn require justification. Justifications must always be provided in one and the same place – there are no meta-discourses in the sense that a higher discourse is able to prescribe rules for a subordinate discourse. Argumentation games do not form a hierarchy. Discourses regulate themselves. Discourses are in principle open. And it is impossible to predict the outcome of discourses, that is, except from the perspective of an observer who is not a party to the discourse, yet who has to enter into another discourse in order to be able to justify his/her prognosis" (Habermas, Jürgen. "A Reply" in Honneth, Axel and Joas, Hans (eds.) *Communicative Action: Essays on Jürgen Habermas's The Theory of Communicative Action* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991), p.231).

the being (or normative legitimacy) in question in that certain tacit presuppositions need to be taken as given (or true) for other presuppositions to be explicitly brought into question. The question, of course, is: how can a situated reason distinguish between the one and the other in relation to a universalized reason? Specifically, determine the rationality of the parts comprising a complex whole when it is their very *relationship* that remains open to questioning and/or movement? All presuppositions can only have a *provisional* truth-value unless otherwise presupposed (foregrounded and questioned). Since background knowledge can never be made completely explicit and/or questionable, the question effectively becomes: to what extent can effective history truly be thought rational (rationally motivated and directed)? The second issue concerns the rational status of effective history, or the way the dialectic of reason directs the rationality of any given understanding. If reason can question the status of its directives, it must simultaneously problematize its own criterion for truth and/or conditions of possibility (mutual understanding through rationally motivated agreements). The role of rational dissent is *critical* here: effective history is ideally where falsification occurs and can make rational disagreements possible and/or inevitable. The dialectic of question and answer thereby remains caught within the contradictory movements and/or rulings of reason itself. The dialectic is not only directed by the possibility of contradiction – reversals in direction – it is itself contradictory: the move towards mutual understanding through rational agreement simultaneously presupposes a counter ideal or movement: mutual understanding through rational disagreements.

Gadamer's conception of dialectic, of course, motions against the intelligibility of uniquely correct interpretations.²³⁰⁸ The hermeneutical situation is itself defined by the possibility of equally meaningful interpretations, and the question was determining their validity throughout effective history.²³⁰⁹ While Habermas's conception of universal reason is intended to correct Gadamer's emphasis upon the dialectic of experience, we also need to provide our own corrective by reversing the direction of dialectical reasoning. Specifically, there is no getting around the problem that the dialectic of reason raises a question about the logic of its own directives and movements in effective history – namely, why should the dialectic of question

²³⁰⁸ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996). Gadamer observes that "in view of the finite nature of our historical existence, there is, it would seem, something absurd about the whole idea of a uniquely correct interpretation", p.107.

²³⁰⁹ Gadamer does not deny, of course, that our presuppositions (or "prejudices") can act as truth-bearers. Nonetheless, he understands the problem of validity – or truth and falsity – differently to Habermas and so wants us to distinguish between 'truth' and 'method'. While the one might presuppose the other, the way to truth is not to be identified with methodological considerations. Indeed, it is method that effectively falsifies (objectifies) our relation to history, or rather, our relationship to the very presuppositions that may be thrown into question. Gadamer therefore urges that we need to distinguish "true prejudices, by which we understand, from the false ones, by which we misunderstand and only "temporal distance can solve question of critique in hermeneutics", p.298– 299.

and answer direct reason to the understanding that *any* interpretation should ever be thought correct (decisive, valid)? Following Derrida, we are obliged to question the rationality of the reason moving within the historicity of understanding in that a mobile reason invariably finds itself directed back to the question of its aporetic structure: the condition of its possibility (mutual understanding through agreement) is simultaneously the condition of its impossibility (mutual understanding through disagreement). Such a *paradoxical undertaking* puts a situated reason in an impossible situation and remains performatively contradictory: anyone who *makes or takes* a truth-claim irrationally commits themselves to the question of its universal validity and falsifies the historicity of understanding by way of reasoned agreement and potentially defeasible rulings. The question, then, is: to what extent can mutual understanding through agreement be thought truly rational? This question is particularly critical when we understand that it is the possibility of disagreements that invariably direct the rational status and/or movements of our agreements. Habermas's account of rationality requires dissent to determine the question of the truth-value of effective history – but only insofar as it contradictorily stops questioning and secures assent indefinitely.

The aporia is whether Habermas's rational reconstruction can transcend the hermeneutical situation and meaningfully allow for conflicting interpretations across contexts remaining in potential trans/formation. Or to put the problem within the context of a question: to what extent can Habermas's reconstruction be thought rational within effective history? It is important to emphasize that Habermas's universalization of reason remains at odds with Gadamer and Wittgenstein in distinct ways. As McCarthy observes, Gadamer's "universalization of hermeneutics rests on a logical argument against the possibility of methodologically transcending the hermeneutic point of view: any attempt to do so is inconsistent with the very conditions of possibility of understanding – the linguisticity and historicity of human existence."²³¹⁰ Wittgenstein's conception of language games similarly rests on a logical argument against the possibility of methodologically transcending the linguistic point of view: any attempt to do so is inconsistent with the very conditions of possible understanding – the context specificity of rule-governed activities turns on the paradoxical nature of rule-following. The idea of a *rationality motivated* agreement is antithetical to Wittgenstein's reasoning because there can be no rule for following a rule: the possibility of disagreeing with a given ruling is an *integral part* of their meaning and an interpretation cannot rule in advance without being led into an "infinite regress of the agreement/understanding on the meaning of words."²³¹¹ The

²³¹⁰ McCarthy, Thomas. *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), p.193.

²³¹¹ Pleasants, Nigel. *Wittgenstein and the Idea of a Critical Social Theory* (London: Routledge, 2002), p160.

possibility of conflicting interpretations, however, is not just *built into* the concept of rule-following: the rules of argumentation make it possible to have rational disagreements about how interpreters should intuitively follow (understand) them *anyway*. Consequently, we are required to ask the following question: to what extent can competing knowledge claims be thought rational – meaningful, valid – if they purportedly follow the same rules of argumentation and occur via a tacit agreement making ongoing disagreements possible? This question goes to the heart of the problem of the criterion and its relationship to effective history: it presupposes the paradox of rule-following in that it gives rise to conflicting rulings and/or a rule consciousness that remains conflicted in orientation. Habermas's rational reconstruction, then, directs us back towards the paradox in a different way: the possibility of rules deconstructing themselves.

Habermas's concept of rule-following *ideally* directs thinkers towards the possibility of transcending their consciousness: rational thinkers not only follow rules because they can become conscious of them within given contexts, but their rule consciousness is also directed by a context-independent reality. Habermas thereby leads us towards "the moment of unconditionality that we intuitively associate with truth-claims...in the sense of a transcending of local contexts."²³¹² Our speech acts are said to aim "at the moment of unconditionality that, with criticizable validity claims, is built into the conditions of processes of consensus formation."²³¹³ Our rule consciousness may therefore be thought to be rational because rules agree with (follow) something *other than themselves* and/or their own following (actions). Nonetheless, Habermas's rational reconstruction circles around a performative contradiction within the historicity of understanding: our rule consciousness remains directed by the possibility of contradictory rulings and/or reversals in direction. Rules lead reasoning in different directions simultaneously: towards the possibility of rational agreement and/or disagreement about (definitions of) the situations in question. Rules of argumentation potentially "rule out"²³¹⁴ the way they should be followed – argued about – and so throw into question *the* rule for following a rule throughout effective history. Habermas therefore cannot resolve the tension between an

²³¹² Habermas, Jürgen. "Realism After The Linguistic Turn" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), p.38.

²³¹³ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 2, *Lifeworld and System: a Critique of Functionalist Reason* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p.399.

²³¹⁴ Habermas, Jürgen. "Realism After The Linguistic Turn" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), p.38.

epistemic conception of truth²³¹⁵ and an epistemological realism²³¹⁶ directed by a methodological fiction. Specifically, the rules of argumentation derive from and/or give rise to the paradox of rule-following: it is where their meaning conditions cannot be decided and their corresponding truth-values are "held in reserve"²³¹⁷ and deferred indefinitely. Arguments remain indecisive or inconclusive because "no completeness is possible"²³¹⁸ when the rules directing them are themselves *undecidable*: questioning can go either way and remains questionable indefinitely. Following Derrida, we find ourselves questioning reason's "reason to be",²³¹⁹ or "reason for being"²³²⁰ when its "condition of possibility"²³²¹ cannot be rationally followed any way. Specifically, to what extent "is the reason for reason rational"²³²² when reason finds itself moving within a "circle"²³²³ that "renders"²³²⁴ its questioning and rulings impossible? Derrida is, of course, directing reason (back) towards the movements of the *pharmakon*, which he reasons to be "at once the condition of possibility and the condition of impossibility of truth."²³²⁵ If *the rule*²³²⁶ for following the *rules of the language game of argumentation* simultaneously presupposes contradictory validity conditions, reason cannot possibly direct itself towards meaningful definitions of situations: reason remains in disagreement with itself insofar as it

²³¹⁵ Habermas, Jürgen. "Richard Rorty's Pragmatic Turn" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p.365. As we've already indicated, Habermas struggles to define an ideal speech situation meaningfully, and this struggle is apparent in the way he originally attempted to locate truth-bearers in *arguments* orientated towards rational agreement. Specifically, a "proposition is true...if it could argumentatively reach agreement in an ideal speech situation", *ibid.*

²³¹⁶ Habermas, Jürgen. "Realism After The Linguistic Turn" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), p.2. As Habermas asks about being "ensnared in the familiar aporias concerning (our relation to) the thing in itself", p.42. Specifically, "how can we reconcile the assumption that there is a world existing independently of our descriptions of it and that which is the same for all observers with the linguistic insight that we have no direct, linguistically unmediated access to a brute reality"? p.2.

²³¹⁷ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson. (London: Continuum, 2004), p.130.

²³¹⁸ Derrida, Jacques. "Afterword" in *Limited INC* (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 2000), p.116.

²³¹⁹ Derrida, Jacques. "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of the Pupil" in *Eyes of the University* trans. Jan Plug (California: Stanford University Press, 2004), p.129.

²³²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.130.

²³²¹ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson. (London: Continuum, 2004), p.165.

²³²² Derrida, Jacques. "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of the Pupil" in *Eyes of the University* trans. Jan Plug (California: Stanford University Press, 2004), p.138.

²³²³ *Ibid.*, p.137.

²³²⁴ *Ibid.*

²³²⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson. (London: Continuum, 2004), p.165–6.

²³²⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of the Pupil" in *Eyes of the University* trans. Jan Plug (California: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 130. Following Leviniz, Derrida calls this rule "the principle of (sufficient) reason" and he specifically acknowledges his debt to Heidegger when talking about the "impossibility for the principle of grounding to ground itself", p.137. In other words, the principle of sufficient reason is insufficient because it is (also) irrational and rules itself out of its own bounds.

involves an active differentiation and deferral of meaning (redefinition of situations). Whenever someone decides to argue, they appear to be following a rule that cannot be ruled (out) – i.e., decided and/or acted upon. Following rules of argumentation merely sets a situated reason in motion and invariably displaces its corresponding claims to truth or falsity. Consequently, our rule consciousness is not so much directed by a demand for reaching an understanding via rational consensus but equally (or paradoxically) orientated towards the possibility for rational dissent and/or further misunderstanding.

Contexts of Relevance: what is a context and when does it become particularly relevant (critical)?

The possibility for rational dissent and/or contradictory rulings raises the question of contexts of relevance. The question is the relevance of context within Habermas's questioning – i.e., the role the lifeworld critically plays within a rational reconstruction and the extent rational thinkers can become "conscious of the world as universal horizon, as (a) coherent universe of existing objects."²³²⁷ Specifically, what is a context and/or when does it become relevant (meaningful, questionable, etc.)? The problem is *the way* Habermas's conception of the *lifeworld* must act as a "transcendental site"²³²⁸ in order delimit the "incalculable web of presuppositions that have to be satisfied if an utterance is to be at all meaningful, that is, valid or invalid."²³²⁹ Following Derrida, Habermas attempts to "calculate with the incalculable"²³³⁰, or decide (limit) undecidable *relations of presupposition* when determining the contextual relevance of interpretations. We raise the question of contextual relevance – *the relation* between relations of presupposition – because it foregrounds the way a complex whole determines the partiality (incompleteness, prejudicial relation) to its truth-claims. Such a determination necessarily occurs against a background of implicit and unquestioned knowledge claims that can only occur with varying degrees of relevance. The issue of contextual relevance therefore highlights the contradictory movement between a given intentional horizon and attempting to move beyond it. The question

²³²⁷ Husserl, Edmund. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy* trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1978), p.108. We cite Husserl's definition of the situation because Husserl's concept of the lifeworld effectively provides the historical context for Habermas's thinking.

²³²⁸ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2, Lifeworld and System: a Critique of Functionalist Reason* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p.126.

²³²⁹ *ibid*, p.131.

²³³⁰ Derrida, Jacques. "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority' in Cornell, Drucilla, Rosenfeld, Michel and Carlson, David (eds.) *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 28. While Derrida does not deny that deconstruction is itself predicated upon such an activity, it does its own "calculations" (of course) to direct us back towards the incalculable (the limitless, undecidable).

of the "context of effective history"²³³¹ becomes particularly relevant because it directs us back towards the original problematic: the nature of *the relevance (relation) between part and whole*. According to Habermas's definition of the situation, interpreters "understand the meaning of communicative acts" because they are already always "embedded in contexts of action oriented to reaching understanding – this is Wittgenstein's central insight."²³³² Habermas attempts to validate historically effected truth-claims by emphasizing "the action situation"²³³³ within the "movable horizon"²³³⁴ that "points to the complexity of the lifeworld."²³³⁵ This raises two questions: what is a context of interpretation and how does it interact with (act upon) speech acts directed towards the possibility of a more truthful understanding?

Habermas claims that legitimate knowledge claims are only possible when they become relevant in the appropriate contexts: when they invariably raise the question of their own contextual relevance. Specifically, "situations do not get defined in the sense of being sharply delimited. They always have a horizon that shift with the theme. A situation is a segment of a lifeworld contexts of relevance that is thrown into relief by themes and articulated through goals and plans of action; these contexts of relevance are concentrically ordered and become increasingly anonymous and diffused"²³³⁶ within effective history. As soon as a "context of relevance...is brought into a situation"²³³⁷, it may throw claims to knowledge back into question and resituate a historically effected consciousness. And it does this by revealing the "interconnections of meaning holding between a given communicative utterance, the immediate context, and its connotative horizon of meanings. Contexts of relevance are based on grammatically regulated relations among the elements of a linguistically organized stock of knowledge."²³³⁸ The concept of lifeworld remains critical: it provides the context in which to determine what can be meaningfully understood as relevant and makes it possible to re-contextualize interpretations. Nonetheless, the lifeworld is by definition comprised of situations *taken as given* or self-evident and it can never be completely brought forward and situated within a question. Lifeworld contexts act as a "correlate to the processes of reaching understanding" since interpreters "acting communicatively always come to an understanding in the horizon of

²³³¹ Habermas, Jürgen. "Modernity's Consciousness of Time" in *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), p.13.

²³³² Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p.115.

²³³³ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 2, Lifeworld and System: a Critique of Functionalist Reason trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p.123.

²³³⁴ *ibid.*

²³³⁵ *ibid.*

²³³⁶ *Ibid*, p.123.

²³³⁷ *Ibid*, p.124.

²³³⁸ *Ibid.*

a lifeworld."²³³⁹ Habermas subsequently redefined this (hermeneutical) situation because he became increasingly conscious of the "methodological limitation" of "neutralizing context."²³⁴⁰ In "coming to an understanding about something by way of their speech acts", interpreters "not only take up a frontal relation to three worlds" they also "have at their backs a context-forming lifeworld that serves as a resource for processes of achieving understanding."²³⁴¹ Habermas's interpretation of the performative status of understanding is itself correlated with a horizontal concern: the tension between *system* (predefined and administered situations) and *lifeworld* (the movable horizon of meaningful actions and situations). This concern is expressed in the thesis *colonization of the lifeworld*. Specifically, where instrumental and administrative standards of rationality override and/or penetrate the realm of practical reason (the problem of evaluating the meaning of said actions). The relation between system and lifeworld forms a complex whole, and the question is the way they trans/form each other. We should therefore "think of the lifeworld as represented by a culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns"²³⁴² that remains subject to re-contextualization (integration and/or questioning). While parts of the lifeworld may become increasingly (ir)relevant throughout time (remain in the background and/or move with the horizon), not every context can become questionable (relevant to a given situation). Habermas distinguishes between a direct and "indirect context"²³⁴³ of interpretation and attempts to delimit the ways these contexts trans/form each other. The distinction turns on the nature of the interaction between the lifeworld and an "action situation's thematically delimited domain of relevance."²³⁴⁴ It therefore raises the question: in what situations can a context become *actionable* (particularly relevant, questionable, etc.)? The issue of contextual relevance remains the overriding question in that it invariably directs the dialectic of question and answer. Only "the limited segments of the lifeworld brought into the horizon of a situation constitute a thematizable context of action oriented to mutual understanding; only they appear under the category of knowledge."²³⁴⁵

Given the role the lifeworld plays in a rational reconstruction, we are now obliged to ask: what kind of 'knowledge' is Habermas rationally reconstructing – i.e., trying to validate within effective history universally? Specifically, Habermas's definition of the lifeworld derives its rational

²³³⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p.70.

²³⁴⁰ Habermas, Jürgen. "Reply To My Critics" in Thompson, John and Held, David (eds.) *Habermas: Critical Debates* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), p.271.

²³⁴¹ Ibid.

²³⁴² Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 2, Lifeworld and System: a Critique of Functionalist Reason trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p.124.

²³⁴³ Ibid, p131.

²³⁴⁴ Ibid.

²³⁴⁵ Ibid, p.124.

content from context-specific occurrences: culturally re/produced horizons of meaning subject to rationalization and colonization. The underlying rationale of a reconstructive rationality is to preserve the "communicative infrastructure of the lifeworld"²³⁴⁶ by enabling the question of its normative legitimacy via criticizable validity claims. As Ingram observes, Habermas's approach "raises questions about the extent to which our meaningful representations of the world can be shared across specific contexts of communication and the cultural lifeworlds that ground them."²³⁴⁷ Part of the problem is that Habermas's conception of the lifeworld "threatens to reintroduce the very relativism and conservatism" that a rational reconstruction "was supposed to circumvent. In the venerable words of Wittgenstein: 'if the true is what is grounded, then the ground is neither true or false.' " ²³⁴⁸

Specifically, Habermas's attempt to rationally reconstruct effective history remains caught in a performative contradiction – that the 'unsettled ground' (tradition, lifeworld) is somehow a more original or primary *source of truth* and the *validity of meaning* ultimately lies *beyond* reason anyway. While Habermas attempts to provide a rational basis for meaningful interpretations, the concept of lifeworld invariably relativizes knowledge claims to distinct contexts of relevance and/or unstable grounds for criticism. Suppose, for example, that there are culturally distinct lifeworlds and their respective forms of life are incommensurable.²³⁴⁹ That is to say, their interpretive frameworks – language games – cannot be played by the same rules and their corresponding logic of discourse (standards of rationality) would *ideally* not be compared and evaluated. Habermas's appeal to the concept of lifeworld results in the problem of the ground moving between contexts of interpretation. On the one hand, the concept of lifeworld problematizes the notion of shared reference points between qualitatively distinct forms of life – i.e., where standards of rationality and intelligibility could never be rendered commensurable (similarly contextualized and/or universalized). On the other hand, the concept of

²³⁴⁶ Ibid, p.378.

²³⁴⁷ Ingram, David. *Habermas: Introduction and Analysis* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2010), p.95.

²³⁴⁸ Ibid, p.94.

²³⁴⁹ We again follow the lead of Peter Winch here – who (unlike Habermas) followed Wittgenstein in a completely different direction: towards the problem of understanding a form of life unlike our own. See again, for example, Winch, Peter. "Understanding a Primitive Society" in Wilson, B.R., (ed.) *Rationality* (London: Blackwell, 1979). If we recall, Winch was faced with the question of "how to make intelligible in our terms institutions belonging to a primitive culture, whose standards of rationality and intelligibility are apparently quite at odds with our own", p. 94. According to Winch's interpretation of Wittgenstein, "the possibilities of our grasping forms of rationality different from ours in an alien culture" are "limited by certain formal requirements centeringround the demand for (coherence and) consistency", pp. 97 and 92 respectively. Yet these formal requirements "tell us nothing in particular about what is to count as (coherence and) consistency", p.82. We "can only determine this by investigating the wider context of the life in which the activities in question" are understood, p.81.

communicative action moves beyond its context of relevance by allowing for the possibility of questioning incommensurable modes of discourse. It not only implies that distinct forms of life can be equally valid (or true) relative to interpretive framework, it is also contradictorily committed to the claim that some lifeworlds are more valid (universal, rational) than others. The concept of communicative rationality attempts to moves beyond its context/s of interpretation by insisting on the "possibility of evaluating worldviews"²³⁵⁰ and their corresponding lifeworlds. Rational interpreters can therefore distinguish between qualitatively distinct "cultural interpretive systems"²³⁵¹ via effective history itself – i.e., by distinguishing between the "closedness of mythical worldviews and the openness of the modern understanding of the world."²³⁵² Given the distinction between mythical (closed) and modern (open) interpretations, Habermas argues that there is a "context-independent standard for the rationality of worldviews."²³⁵³ The question is whether an interpretive system can "permit a reflective relation to itself"²³⁵⁴ and be "open to criticism"²³⁵⁵ and "critical revision."²³⁵⁶ Habermas's definition of the hermeneutical situation, however, raises three related questions. If a mythical lifeworld is closed, how it is possible for an external standard of rationality to understand (enter and criticize) its interpretations? Further, if a modern worldview is open to criticism and/or revision, why do such criticisms/revisions make it *inherently* more rational (true, valid)? All said and done, how open (critical) can a modern worldview be when it remains oriented to the re/production (renewal, elevating) of its own lifeworld? The fact that Habermas chooses to prioritize one particular cultural tradition is not without relevance: it draws attention to the problem of delimiting a context of relevance in the first place. Habermas might talk the language (game) of universals, but such claims to knowledge threaten to displace and/or enshrine a parochial interpretative framework. The performative contradiction is that performative attitudes remain predicated on the attempt to "close off"²³⁵⁷ the possibility of further criticism/revision through rational discourse: reason attempts to resolve disagreements and/or overrule alternate standards of rationality via the myth (methodological fiction) of uniquely correct interpretations. Nonetheless, Habermas moves beyond Wittgenstein's central insight by arguing that the possibility of reaching an understanding lies within linguistic interactions always already directed towards rationally motivated assent. Communicative action presupposes *rational agreement at a fundamental*

²³⁵⁰ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society* trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p.61. It's worth stressing that Habermas expressly discusses (interpretations of) Winch via his own theory here.

²³⁵¹ Ibid, p.59.

²³⁵² Ibid, p.64.

²³⁵³ Ibid, p.62.

²³⁵⁴ Ibid, p.71.

²³⁵⁵ Ibid.

²³⁵⁶ Ibid.

²³⁵⁷ Trey, George. *Solidarity and Difference: The Politics of Enlightenment in the Aftermath of Modernity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), p.141.

level: within a form of life giving rise to universal truth-claims. Habermas argues *as if* communicative action rationally motivates background knowledge in some way (via forms of life grounded in socially *prior* tacit assent), and the lifeworld reproduces and/or interrogates itself through this communicative infrastructure. Steinhoff notes that Habermas's argument attempts to "seek shelter"²³⁵⁸ under the concept of lifeworld as it "takes over the explanatory duties that the concept of communicative action was supposed to fulfil."²³⁵⁹ Consequently, Habermas's appeal to the lifeworld "moves in circles"²³⁶⁰ – the question of the direction of fit between communicative action and background knowledge claims closes in on itself and thus the "circle begins anew."²³⁶¹

The paradox is that it is Habermas's attempt to *break out of the circle* of understanding that re/produces this series of concentric circles and/or rotations along circular pathways. The main difficulty is the way Habermas circles around the relation between the unconditional – a context-transcendent reason – and the conditioned – context-specific and/or immanent reasoning. Specifically, Habermas tries to *have his background knowledge and foreground it too*.²³⁶² The question re-turns: in which situations can linguistic interactions be foregrounded and/or become universally valid (contextualized accordingly)? The problem is particularly acute when we recall that speech acts raising universal validity claims remain bound to a particular context – an ideal speech situation – occurring over and above their respective occurrences: it contextually binds speech acts through the practice of rational argumentation and remains directed towards the unconditional accordingly. According to Habermas's definition of the hermeneutical situation, "a

²³⁵⁸ Steinhoff, Uwe. *The Philosophy of Jürgen Habermas: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press), p. 201.

²³⁵⁹ Ibid.

²³⁶⁰ Ibid, p.202.

²³⁶¹ Ibid.

²³⁶² Habermas's attempt to have it both ways can be seen via the distinction between institutionally *bound* and institutionally *unbound* speech acts. If we recall, the institutionally *bound* refers to speech acts which arise within specific social contexts and remain bound to them (i.e., marriage ceremonies). The *institutionally unbound*, however, transcend social context and/or particular institutional practices and settings (i.e., rational arguments). Stanley Fish sums up Habermas's paradoxical situation in *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999) in the following way. Habermas "can only proceed by assuming as already available the very conditions...whose possibility he sets out to establish." It is the "existence of institutionally unbound speech acts (and therefore a linguistic space in which critical reflection can occur) that is the question, and the question is begged if it is simply answered by invoking the phrase institutionally unbound speech acts. The problem is to find some, and the only direction Habermas provides is to start with concrete speech acts embedded in specific contexts and disregard all aspects these utterances owe to their pragmatic functions." Since language users remain "pragmatically situated" the distinction "would be no less context-bound than the functions that were its object", p.454.

moment of unconditionality is built into factual processes of mutual understanding"²³⁶³ and a quasi-transcendental "reason is by its very nature incarnated in contexts of communicative action and in structures of the lifeworld."²³⁶⁴ Habermas might conceive such a situation as a methodological fiction, but its performative status remains *critical* regardless: true understanding is directed towards rational consensus and presupposes the possibility of universally correct interpretations within a historically effected consciousness.

Habermas's rational reconstruction is, of course, an attempt to move between the immanent and the transcendent in order to question the contextual relevance of competing knowledge claims. The dialectic between question and answer provides the ground on which to move between them: it is the context in which critical reason arises and determines the relevance of our reasons for thinking and acting. Habermas's rational reconstruction thereby purports to be conditioned by a given understanding operating on two levels: a) that it is itself motivated by reason's attempt to determine the rationality of the lifeworld, and b) the resulting speech acts are themselves determined by the unconditional nature of truth-claims. The problem, however, is whether a rational reconstruction can bridge the divide between rational motivation and motivated rationality. As Taylor observes, the problem is the way a situated reason invariably relates to its relations of presupposition: in what way do we unconditionally evaluate the relevance – truth-value – of the presuppositions in question and how may their "unconditional nature"²³⁶⁵ act as a relevant precondition for acting critically? Specifically, the logic of discourse invariably raises the question of its capacity to provide reasons for action and motivating reason via rational evaluations: why should rational critique "occupy a special position"²³⁶⁶ within the lifeworld or convince us that "that it should be preferred to all other purposes?"²³⁶⁷ Habermas's definition of the situation presupposes the critical issue: a criterion of relevance within specific contexts of interpretation – i.e., the way our presuppositions *should* relate to each other and/or direct (contextualize) our reasons for acting. Habermas's move towards the unconditional therefore remains conditional upon the very contexts in question (dependent upon competing evaluations and/or movable action contexts).

Habermas's questioning moves within a circle it cannot break out of, and directs reason back towards its guiding question: how to relate to presuppositions that remain effected and/or may

²³⁶³ Habermas, Jürgen. "An Alternative Way Out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communicative Versus Subject-Centered Reason" in *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), p.322.

²³⁶⁴ Ibid.

²³⁶⁵ Taylor, Charles. "Language and Society" in Honneth, Axel and Joas, Hans (eds.) *Communicative Action* (Polity Press: Cambridge, 1991), p.31.

²³⁶⁶ Ibid.

²³⁶⁷ Ibid.

turn back on themselves. On the one side of the circle, Habermas directs us towards the question of determining the status of relations of presuppositions within *contexts of relevance* (definitions of situations invariably brought into question and thematized). On the other side, we find ourselves moving back towards the question of determining the relevance of relations of presuppositions across *contexts of interpretation* (the discourse that surrounds and defines interpretations of given situations). The problem is the presupposition directing his overall movements within the circle in question. Specifically, Habermas's rational reconstruction remains built on a questionable presupposition: that it is possible to find a place to direct action contexts and relate to other presuppositions accordingly. Habermas's circular motion results from an attempt to define (decide) what is contextually relevant when given definitions of a situation are thrown back into (a) question. Following Derrida, the "category of intention"²³⁶⁸ is intended to play a decisive role within Habermas's questioning: it attempts to "govern the entire scene and system of utterance"²³⁶⁹ from within a given definition of a situation. Although Habermas already understands the situation to be indefinable, he attempts to situate (decide, maintain) it anyway by making "intentionality adequate to itself and its contents."²³⁷⁰ Consequently, Habermas's questioning is "guided by an intention of truth"²³⁷¹, and his speech acts remain directed towards saying "the ontological: the presumed possibility of a discourse about what is"²³⁷² meaningful or true – i.e., contextually relevant *throughout* time. Habermas's concept of the lifeworld, however, continually throws such a fundamental presupposition into question. If we can never occupy a place outside a "horizon forming context"²³⁷³ that moves with us, the question of what is contextually relevant lies beyond the threshold of conscious understanding or control. The attempt at *saying the ontological*, or speaking about the *presumed possibility of a discourse about what is meaningful or true* therefore redirects Habermas back to the problem of delimiting contexts of relevance. While the being of a question might provide a meaningful context in which to question our (relationship to) presuppositions, the relation between part and whole remains complex (undecided, indeterminate). The reason Habermas's rational reconstruction attempts to presuppose – say – relations of presuppositions is that he thinks that intentionality can direct the question of our being–there. Habermas has already

²³⁶⁸ Derrida, Jacques. "Signature Event Context" in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.18.

²³⁶⁹ Ibid.

²³⁷⁰ Ibid, "Limited INC..a.b.c.." p.64

²³⁷¹ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: Continuum, 2004), p.164.

²³⁷² Derrida, Jacques. "The Double Session" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: Continuum, 2004), p.204.

²³⁷³ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2, Lifeworld and System: a Critique of Functionalist Reason* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p.135.

decided that thought can follow its contradictory directives and guide it towards a rational end within language – hence the performative contradiction from the outset.

The performative contradiction occurs via Habermas's attempt to direct effective history towards a universal reason (i.e., towards a definition of a situation that can somehow encompass and enact all understanding). Coming from one direction in history, there remains the problem of an implicit (or background) knowledge that must be *taken as given* or self-evident until it can be thematized and questioned. Coming from the other direction, there is the problem of not knowing what themes or questions may move into the foreground from a future approaching at different distances and varying relevance. The contradiction goes beyond the difficulty of understanding situations that must be taken as given from both directions in history – it's that the relationship between background and foreground necessarily results in a *fusion of horizons* that may move in either direction at any given time. Habermas was, of course, originally critical of Gadamer's concept of fusion of horizons and sought to transcend the problem of knowledge claims converging around a "single point"²³⁷⁴ in history. According to Habermas, reason "calls for a reference system that goes beyond the framework of tradition as such, only then, can tradition also be criticized."²³⁷⁵ He immediately found himself asking, however, "how could a reference system be legitimated except, in turn, out of the appropriation of tradition?"²³⁷⁶

While Habermas's rational reconstruction provides an answer to this question, the problem of historical context invariably reintroduces the question of the relationship between *background and foreground knowledge claims* (relations of presuppositions and/or the way a situated reason relates to them). The lifeworld raises the problem of "always moving *within* the horizon"²³⁷⁷ of a given understanding: interpreters can never "step out of"²³⁷⁸ the reference points *moving with* them as the lifeworld simultaneously directs them towards the transcendental site in question – i.e., to a place in which the appropriation of tradition can be questioned and/or legitimated. Nonetheless, the very concept of horizon continues to throw into question the relationship between background and foreground, or the way in which a context trans/forms itself when in motion. Indeed, it is this very *way-making movement* that makes a context relevant (known, possible) in the first place: such movements trans/form the way in which relations of presupposition can be contextualized and understood (approached, questioned). Specifically,

²³⁷⁴ Habermas, Jürgen. "A Review of Gadamer's Truth and Method" in Ormiston, Gayle and Schrift, Alan (eds.) *The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricoeur* (Albany: State University of New York Press), p.236.

²³⁷⁵ Ibid.

²³⁷⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷⁷ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2, Lifeworld and System: a Critique of Functionalist Reason* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p.126.

²³⁷⁸ Ibid.

the line at which distinct planes of reference appear to meet changes continually, resulting in an intentional horizon determined by the possibility of back and forth movement. Consequently, it is *the way* in which presuppositions relate to each other there that becomes the contextually relevant question – insofar as the relationship between background and foreground knowledge remains an open question. Relations of presupposition shift with the horizon in trans/formation – by being called into question and/or being via horizontal movements. Following Derrida, then, linguistically constructed relations of presupposition remain undecidable and invariably place themselves within (a) question that can be deconstructed in turn. The movement between part and whole ensures that such relations remain questionable across contexts of interpretation. They invariably call "to each other from afar"²³⁷⁹ by way of a "hidden mediation"²³⁸⁰ and "secret argumentation."²³⁸¹ Given that contexts are always already trans/forming themselves, the question of their normative content (or legitimacy) remains subject to conflicting interpretations and/or move with the horizon *in* question.

Performative Status of Statements that Remain Open to Question and Criticism.

We now turn to the performative status of statements that remain open to question and/or criticism (validation). We do this to question "the ground of its presuppositions, the entirety of the discourse in which one could articulate the question of the "entire field" (as a question and hence as a discourse)."²³⁸² Habermas argues that the *relation* between question and answer plays an active role in determining the status of competing statements potentially "caught up in the tumult of opposing reasons."²³⁸³ Specifically, the dialectic of reason directs communicative reason to "those linguistically mediated interactions in which all participants pursue illocutionary aims"²³⁸⁴ and can "take up an interpersonal relationship with a thematically stressed validity claim."²³⁸⁵ Rational agents thereby "express a general will"²³⁸⁶ towards mutual understanding, and implicitly agree to enter into a relationship "on the presupposed basis of validity claims that

²³⁷⁹ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 78.

²³⁸⁰ Ibid.

²³⁸¹ Ibid, p.79.

²³⁸² Derrida, Jacques. "The Double Session" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: Continuum, 2004), p.245.

²³⁸³ Habermas, Jürgen. "Communicative Action and the Use of Reason" in *Between Naturalism and Religion* trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), p.49.

²³⁸⁴ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p.295.

²³⁸⁵ Habermas, Jürgen. "What Is Universal Pragmatics"? in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p.86.

²³⁸⁶ Habermas, Jürgen. "Discourse Ethics: Notes on a Program of Philosophical Justification" in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), p.63.

are mutually recognized."²³⁸⁷ Habermas clarifies the conditions of a possible *overturning* in understanding by directing rational thinkers towards the question of their "binding and bonding"²³⁸⁸ relationship to the "stubbornly transcending power"²³⁸⁹ of language "renewed with each act of unconstrained understanding."²³⁹⁰ The concepts of illocutionary acts and illocutionary force are particularly effective – and questionable – here. We are therefore forced to ask: what is the source of the illocutionary force of the dialectic of question and answer, and how does the generation of "communicative power"²³⁹¹ direct the way-making movements of effective history? Given that "communicative reason operates in history as an avenging force,"²³⁹² the answer becomes self-evident. The dialectic's illocutionary force coincides with the "unforced force of the better argument"²³⁹³ in that reason proposes to act as its own corrective and/or directive via its "generative power"²³⁹⁴ to call into being *good reasons* for thinking and acting otherwise.²³⁹⁵ In adopting an *intentional stance*,²³⁹⁶ "the performative attitude allows for a mutual orientation toward validity claims (such as truth, normative rightness, and sincerity), which are raised with the expectation of a yes or no reaction (or a quest for further reasons). These claims are designed for critical assessment so that an intersubjective recognition of a particular claim can serve as a basis for a rationally motivated consensus."²³⁹⁷ The problem, however, is the circle in which a situated reason moves against itself: how can reason be thought truly (or completely) rational when it remains caught in the tumult of potentially opposing reasons? The "rational acceptability of validity claims is *ultimately* based only on reasons that withstand objections under certain demanding conditions of communication. If the process of

²³⁸⁷ Habermas, Jürgen. "What Is Universal Pragmatics"? in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p.23.

²³⁸⁸ Habermas, Jürgen. "Actions, Speech Acts, Linguistically Mediated Interactions and Lifeworld" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p. 221.

²³⁸⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. "Reply To My Critics" in Thompson, John and Held, David (eds.) *Habermas: Critical Debates* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), p.221.

²³⁹⁰ *ibid.*

²³⁹¹ Habermas, Jürgen. *Between Facts and Norms* trans. William Rehg, (Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 1988), p.170.

²³⁹² Habermas, Jürgen. "Reply To My Critics" in Thompson, John and Held, David (eds.) *Habermas: Critical Debates* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), p.227.

²³⁹³ Habermas, Jürgen. *Between Facts and Norms* trans William Rehg, (Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 1988), p.306.

²³⁹⁴ Habermas, Jürgen. "What Is Universal Pragmatics"? in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p.56.

²³⁹⁵ Heidegger, Martin. *The Principle of Reason* trans. Reginald Lily (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp.26-27. As Heidegger more critically observes, "reason as such demands to be given back as reasons – namely, back (re) in the direction of the representing, cognizing subject, *by* this subject and *for* this subject."

²³⁹⁶ Dennett, Daniel. *The Intentional Stance* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989). We adopt Dennett's famous phrasing of intentional relations here.

²³⁹⁷ Habermas, Jürgen. "Interpretive Social Science vs. Hermeneutics" in Haan, Norma et al. (ed.) *Social Science as Moral Inquiry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p.255.

argumentation is to live up to its meaning, communication in the form of rational discourse must allow, if possible, all relevant information and explanations to be brought up and weighed so that the stance participants take can be inherently motivated solely by the revisionary power of free-floating reasons."²³⁹⁸ If, however, the *relation* between question and answer directly constrains the way objects can be meaningfully understood and argued about, our question becomes: to what extent can reversals in direction themselves be directed? Given that such back and forth movements occur within the historicity of understanding, the question is whether it's possible to direct the circle of understanding itself.

The concern is whether our (ontological) commitment to the language game of argumentation forces us to falsify a reason's presupposed truth-value via "the moment of unconditionality that we intuitively associate with truth-claims...in the sense of a transcending of local contexts."²³⁹⁹ The problem is the way the moment of unconditionality is always already "built into the conditions of processes of consensus formation"²⁴⁰⁰ when directing ourselves towards criticizable validity claims. Witness the contradictory role consensus plays within Habermas's own argumentation game: as an unquestioned tacit agreement about definitions of situations and as a rationally motivated redefinition of situations reached through questioning and explicit assent. The problem is that the rational status of a *reason for thinking and acting* plays an active part within the complex whole in question: by what criterion – social principle or standard – may a given reason "count as a good or indeed the better reason"²⁴⁰¹ for thinking and acting? The problem of the *contextualization* of reason(s) invariably calls the circle of understanding back into question. If giving reasons is supposed to persuade us to accept a rationally motivated agreement, the very possibility of a 'good or better' reason for acting presupposes *actively disagreeing with* either a) what is already tacitly agreed and acted upon – persuasive reasons

²³⁹⁸ Habermas, Jürgen. "Communicative Action and the Use of Reason" in *Between Naturalism and Religion* trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), p.49.

²³⁹⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. "Realism After The Linguistic Turn" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), p.38.

²⁴⁰⁰ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2, Lifeworld and System: a Critique of Functionalist Reason* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p.399.

²⁴⁰¹ Habermas, Jürgen. "A Reply" in Honneth, Axel and Joas, Hans (eds.) *Communicative Action: Essays on Jürgen Habermas's The Theory of Communicative Action* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991), p.231. Habermas recognizes that "the claims made of justification vary according to the argumentation form and context. Yet, which reason counts as a good or indeed as the better reason for what object in what context has to be assessed in terms of standards which under certain conditions become problematical and in turn require justification. Justifications must always be provided in one and the same place – there are no meta-discourses in the sense that a higher discourse is able to prescribe rules for a subordinate discourse. Argumentation games do not form a hierarchy. Discourses regulate themselves. Discourses are in principle open. And it is impossible to predict the outcome of discourses, that is, except from the perspective of an observer who is not a party to the discourse, yet who has to enter into another discourse in order to be able to justify his/her prognosis."

constitutive of a preunderstanding – or b) with critical reason by securing tacit approval via reasons that are so persuasive they invariably must be similarly *taken as given* or as *unquestionably true*).²⁴⁰² Either way, a reason for thinking and acting can only have the performative status as a cultural (de)posit: as statements put forward on the basis of competing arguments or as statements invariably held back for (potentially) further argument. We raise the question of the normative status of reasons to redirect ourselves back to Habermas's original problematic: the problem of systematic distortions and/or colonization of the lifeworld by way of system integration. Given this problematic, consensus also becomes a standard for falsification and obfuscation within Habermas's interpretation of (a) mutual understanding. Consensus becomes contradictory in that it remains part of the complex whole in question: consensus *acts* as a standard for truth *and* falsity simultaneously, and Habermas cannot resolve this contradiction without begging the original question about the relevancy or adequacy of the given "criterion to distinguish between true and false consensuses."²⁴⁰³ Habermas is thereby logically committed to a paradoxical definition of the hermeneutical situation: if a consensus is true it may also be – or become – false. Habermas's emphasis upon consensus therefore raises the problem of the criterion and its relation to the validity of our reasons for thinking and acting. Specifically, how can interpreters agree to distinguish between a true and false consensus within their understanding? The concept of consensus brings Habermas's argument full circle in two related ways. On the one side, there is the problem of delineating the rationality of our reasons within a mutual understanding – particularly if the requirement is to critically evaluate opposing reasons attempting to similarly transcend the context of their occurrence. On the other side, there is the problem of con/fusing horizons via methodological considerations, or mistaking the standard of truth for the truth itself when determining the normative status of our reasons for being-there.

Suppose that we agree that truth is *ideally* reached through consensus. Habermas also requires us to agree that consensus may be *less than ideal* in that it is simultaneously a standard for falsification and obfuscation. The difficulty is bringing forth and sustaining a truth-evaluative

²⁴⁰² Kendi, Ibram. *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (London: Bodley Head, 2017). See, for example, Kendi's intellectual history of prejudice in America. Kendi argues (at least) two things when questioning the myth of a post-racial America – while the power of reason has been able to convince many people that entrenched racism lacked rational justification, racial prejudice (via social relations and practices) persists in entrenched ways regardless. Nonetheless, the primary argument turns the myth of the given on its head – by arguing that the *power of reason was originally complicit in racism*. Specifically, many celebrated thinkers rationally accommodated themselves to the 'mood' of the times by convincing others that there are good reasons to justify racial discrimination. The true source of racism, then, is not ignorance or hatred but linguistically constructed arguments that sought to rationalize racial prejudice on social grounds.

²⁴⁰³ Jhingran, Saral. *Ethical Relativism and Universalism* (New Delhi: Shri Jainendra Press, 2001), p.325.

distinction occurring against the background of a lifeworld in constant trans/formation and continually subjected to criticizable validity claims. Rorty therefore asks how it might be possible for a situated – and mobile – reason to distinguish between "true consensus and false consensus"²⁴⁰⁴ or "validity and power"²⁴⁰⁵ when consensus always already acts as the binding/bonding power in effective history. A consensus about what is "true or valid"²⁴⁰⁶ is effectively built into the lifeworld and so exhibits a contradictory binding power: consensus simultaneously becomes a standard for truth and falsity and can move (force, bond) interpreters either way. The concept of mutual understanding through agreement itself becomes questionable because Habermas cannot "provide any criteria for distinguishing a truly rational consensus from a merely apparent rational agreement."²⁴⁰⁷ Horizons of understanding remain limited by their *relations of presupposition* and movements (back) towards them: interpreters cannot literally transcend the context of their occurrence and independently question (compare and evaluate) the validity of their reasons for thinking and acting. Following Gadamer, it is the *relation* between background and foreground that determines the horizon in question – by actively bringing forth the questionability of what is questioned.²⁴⁰⁸

Habermas's linguistic actions raise the question of the conditions of possibility of rational discourse within a given horizon of understanding – via the "cultural interpretive systems or worldviews that reflect the background knowledge of social groups and guarantee an interconnection among the multiplicity of their action orientations."²⁴⁰⁹ Habermas distinguishes between mythical and modern worldviews, and argues that myth and enlightenment²⁴¹⁰ may be meaningfully distinguished and evaluated via a specific criterion: whether those engaged in the relevant "conduct (or form) of life"²⁴¹¹ can understand that their "linguistically constituted worldview"²⁴¹² is, in reality, merely an "interpretation of the world."²⁴¹³ Significantly, the concept of prejudice plays an active role within Habermas's hierarchical distinction. Actors "who raise

²⁴⁰⁴ Rorty, Richard. "Habermas and Lyotard on Postmodernity" in Richard Bernstein (ed.) *Habermas and Modernity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 161– 2.

²⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁰⁷ Badillo, Robert. *The Emancipative Theory of Jürgen Habermas and Metaphysics* (Washington: CRVP, 1991), p.72.

²⁴⁰⁸ Gadamer, Hans–Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.363 If we recall, Gadamer argues that "the significance of questioning consists in revealing the questionability of what is questioned."

²⁴⁰⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1, *Reason and the Rationalization of Society* trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p.43.

²⁴¹⁰ Ibid, p.47. Habermas uses the phrase "enlightened thought" within the context of his argument. Habermas is obviously familiar with Adorno and Horkheimer's dialectic of myth and enlightenment, or the way the one invariably way turns (back) into the other.

²⁴¹¹ Ibid.

²⁴¹² Ibid, p.50.

²⁴¹³ Ibid, p.45.

validity claims have to avoid materially prejudicing the relation between language and reality, between the medium of communication and that about which something is being communicated"²⁴¹⁴. Habermas's reason is self-evident: in order to actively resist "reifying the linguistic worldview"²⁴¹⁵ and opening rational thought up to the possibility of more valid or truthful interpretations. If a mythical worldview cannot see itself "as an interpretation of the world that is subject to error and open to criticism"²⁴¹⁶ enlightened thinking is fallibilistic in orientation and directed towards an "objective world"²⁴¹⁷ in a more rational way. The rational status of competing interpretations therefore turns on the "function of the formal world concepts"²⁴¹⁸, or the way a linguistically conceptualized (interpreted) reality may be reconceived (reinterpreted). Habermas posits the notion of an objective world open to criticizable validity claims in accord with the three "formal world concepts...(that) presuppose a world that is identical for *all possible* observers, or a world intersubjectively shared *by members*, and they do so in an abstract form freed of all specific content."²⁴¹⁹ A world conceived thus objectively – i.e., via a theoretical (re)interpretation – is said to provide rational access through the "medium of common interpretative efforts, in the sense of a cooperative negotiation of situation definitions."²⁴²⁰ Consequently, "the concepts of the three worlds serve here as *the commonly supposed system of coordinates* in which the situation contexts can be ordered in such a way that agreement will be reached about what the participants may treat as a fact, or as a valid norm, or as a subjective experience."²⁴²¹ The critical question, however, is the tenability of Habermas's distinction between mythical and modern worldviews: is a situated reason's prejudicial "claim to universality"²⁴²² self-mythologizing? Put another way: how can rational discourse possibly distinguish itself from mythical thinking when the claim to universality is also a condition of its impossibility? The problem is that the performative attitude is performatively contradictory and so remains *in error*.²⁴²³ In ontologically committing itself to *the truth* – via "the premise that a single correct interpretation has to be found"²⁴²⁴ – rational discourse effectively *misinterprets* the historicity of understanding²⁴²⁵ by

²⁴¹⁴ *ibid*, p.50.

²⁴¹⁵ *ibid*, p.51.

²⁴¹⁶ *ibid*, p.50.

²⁴¹⁷ *ibid*, p.51.

²⁴¹⁸ *ibid*, p.69.

²⁴¹⁹ *ibid*, p.50.

²⁴²⁰ *ibid*, p.69.

²⁴²¹ *ibid*, p.70.

²⁴²² *ibid*, p.44.

²⁴²³ Heidegger, Martin. "The Anaximander Fragment" in *Heidegger, Early Greek Thinking* trans. David Krell and Frank Capuzzi (London: Harper and Row, 1975), p.26. To quote Heidegger's concept of inerrancy out of context, "error is the space in which history unfolds."

²⁴²⁴ Habermas, Jürgen. "Habermas Responds to His Critics: Reply to Symposium" in *Cardozo Law Review*, Vol.17, Nos.4-5, 1996, p.1498.

²⁴²⁵ Lincoln, Bruce, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology and Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). According to Lincoln's historical overview, modernity's hierarchical distinction between mythical and rational worldviews remains caught within the contradictory movements of

interpreting away the role of motivated rationality. Habermas's rational reconstruction therefore materially prejudices the relation between language and reality in a different way: it reifies a linguistic worldview by perpetuating the myth that the "contest of interpretations makes sense only on the premise"²⁴²⁶ in question. Given that Habermas's rational reconstruction follows the lead of the performative attitude, we are forced to ask whether the *idealizing presuppositions* of a rational reconstruction are built upon what Mackie²⁴²⁷, McCarthy²⁴²⁸ and Cook²⁴²⁹ independently call a *category mistake*: does it direct reason towards making an "ontological error"²⁴³⁰ when formally describing the evaluative properties of our 'reasons' for thinking and acting *as if* they were objectively binding and/or bonding? The ontological error is that the objective purport of competing knowledge claims – critical evaluations thereof – attempts to weave the rationality of competing reasons into "the fabric of the world"²⁴³¹ in question. Nonetheless, "the claim to objectivity, however ingrained in our language and thought, is not

effective history. Prior to Plato's attempt to invert the (then) traditional hierarchy between myth and logos, rational thought was originally conceived as "lies, masquerade, and dissimulation", p.4, and was directed towards "shady speech acts: those of seduction, beguilement, and deception", p.x. Mythos, however, was "the speech of the preeminent, above all poets and kings, a genre (like them) possessed of high authority, having the capacity to advance powerful truth-claims, and backed by physical force", p.x. Consequently, mythos and logos are "not words with fixed meanings (indeed, no such words exist), nor did their meanings change glacially over time, as the result of impersonal processes. Rather, these words, along with many others, were the sites of pointed and highly consequential semantic skirmishes fought between rival regimes of truth", p.18. The requirement, then, is "to transform a simple, linear plot of development and progress ("from *mythos* to *logos*") into one that recognizes the importance of multiple actors, perspectives, and positions. None of these are dismissible, none are pure, and none hold a monopoly on truth. Indeed, the protestations of the principals notwithstanding, the central issue with which they grapple is not truth per se but discursive authority", p.43.

²⁴²⁶ Habermas, Jürgen. "Habermas Responds to His Critics: Reply to Symposium" in *Cardozo Law Review*, Vol.17, Nos.4-5, 1996, p.1498. The full quote is "This contest of interpretations makes sense only on the premise that it is necessary to find a single correct reading that claims to *exhaust* the universalistic content of these rights in the present context."

²⁴²⁷ Mackie, John. *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (New York: Penguin, 1977), p.35. Mackie prefers to use the term "error theory" to interrogate the categories of evaluative thinking, and provides an "argument from relativity" and "an argument from queerness" to illustrate the categorical error of treating "conventional" reasons for moral evaluation as making factual judgments.

²⁴²⁸ McCarthy, Thomas, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1981), p.303. McCarthy argues that Habermas's consensus theory of truth mistakes "the meaning of truth with the methods for arriving at true statements"

²⁴²⁹ Cook, Deborah. *Adorno, Habermas and the Search for a Rational Society* (London: Routledge, 2004), p.89. Cook argues that Habermas makes a category mistake typical of philosophers making the linguistic turn. Specifically, while it might be true that beliefs and desires "are expressed in language", Habermas errs by moving within a circle and so falsely inferring that our intentional states "are themselves intrinsically linguistic."

²⁴³⁰ Horgan, Terry, and Timmons, Mark. "Morality Without Moral Facts" in Dreier, James (ed.) *Contemporary Debates in Morality* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p.229. Horgan and Timmons are specifically discussing Mackie's error thesis regarding the ontology of moral values. Although we are not sympathetic to Mackie's attempt to create an ontological divide between 'facts' and 'values' – we've been stressing the parallel between ethics and epistemology from the outset – the question remains.

²⁴³¹ Mackie, John. *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (New York: Penguin, 1977), p.15.

self-validating"²⁴³² and begs the original question regarding a given argument's validity conditions. Specifically, does the mutual orientation towards criticizable validity claims ontologically commit interpreters to making a category mistake when arguing with each other? An *idealized projection* of ultimately true meaning under more ideal conditions does not save (competing definitions of) *the situation* since it ontologically commits Habermas to a paradoxical (and equally false) speech situation: the myth of having a final say. Following Derrida, Habermas is legitimating reason's myth of origin (telos, destination) when it can (falsely) claim to direct "the hierarchical axiology, the ethical-ontological distinctions which ...not only set up value-oppositions clustered around an ideal and unfindable limit, but moreover subordinate these values to each other."²⁴³³ The myth of reason is that its condition of possibility is also its condition of impossibility: determining the rationality of reason is the reason 'reason' remains divided and/or mobilised against itself. As Quine's naturalised epistemology also argues for significantly different reasons,²⁴³⁴ the determination of meaning remains relative to the linguistic horizon in question and logically prior – or more enlightened – ontological standards invariably revert back to myth anyway. Quine's ontological relativism even goes so far as to reduce material objects to mythical beings:

Physical objects are conceptually imported into the situation as convenient intermediaries – not by definition in terms of experience, but simply as irreducible posits comparable, epistemologically, to the gods of Homer. Let me interject that for my part I do, qua lay physicist, believe in physical objects and not in Homer's gods; and I consider it a scientific error to believe otherwise. But in point of epistemological footing the physical objects and the gods differ only in degree and not in kind. Both sorts of entities enter our conception only as cultural posits. The myth of physical objects is epistemologically superior to most in that it has proved more efficacious than other myths as a device for working a manageable structure into the flux of experience.²⁴³⁵

²⁴³² *ibid*, p.35.

²⁴³³ Derrida, Jacques. "Limited INC a b c..." in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.93.

²⁴³⁴ The irony, of course, is that Quine was the most prominent philosopher who publicly objected to Derrida receiving an honorary degree from Cambridge, and would not approve of being brought into close proximity to Derrida here. Although they approach the question of being from opposing philosophical 'worldviews', they do share a common perspective: the problem of determining the identity of meaning conditions, or the meaning of 'being' (there).

²⁴³⁵ Quine, Willard. "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" in *From a Logical Point of View* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), p.44. Quine also argues in "Identity, Ostension and Hypostasis" that "We can improve our conceptual scheme, our philosophy, bit by bit while continuing to depend on it for support; but we cannot detach ourselves from it and compare it objectively with an unconceptualized reality. Hence it is meaningless, I suggest, to inquire into the absolute correctness of a conceptual scheme as a mirror of reality. Our standard for appraising basic changes of conceptual scheme must be, not a realistic standard of correspondence to reality, but a pragmatic standard." Concepts are language, and the purpose of concepts and of language is efficacy in

Habermas might argue, of course, that Quine cannot consistently make a claim to universality if the logical space of reasons can be relativized to a given ontological commitment: how is it possible to compare and evaluate objects of experience if all reasons can be similarly reduced to the *myth of the given*.²⁴³⁶ As Kim independently complains, an "epistemology that has been purged of normativity"²⁴³⁷ can no longer be thought epistemic or normative: any given reason may be thought equally good or bad, and it would not be possible to distinguish between truth and falsity meaningfully. If the concept of truth is normative in some way, it must therefore still be possible for *given reasons* to be called (back) into question: in what way can rational beings *remain answerable* to the question of their being-in-the world via the *giving and taking* of potentially competing reasons? This returns us, then, to the parallel between ethics and epistemology,²⁴³⁸ or the way reasons enter into the normative conception of the very practical identities in question.

The myth of the given occurs within Habermas's conception of consensus in a contradictory way. Habermas attempts to direct the mutual orientation towards validity claims through the pathway of agreements bringing forth ongoing disagreements and/or negotiated settlements (formal arrangements establishing a sense of community in previously unoccupied or unsettled places). Habermas's concept of consensus therefore operates at two different levels simultaneously. On one level, a consensus is generally implicit and unquestionable – it provides the meaningful background in which to move and is necessarily taken as given. On another level, these unquestionable truths may become explicit and questionable – via questions and themes actively moving into the foreground. The performative contradiction is assigning truth-values to beliefs and practices that occur *beyond* reason – must be taken as given – while also seeking to distinguish between a true and false consensus from *within* the context of opposing reasons directed towards a given myth (or methodological fiction). Approached from one

communication and in prediction. Such is the ultimate duty of language, science, and philosophy, and it is in relation to that duty that a conceptual scheme has finally to be appraised", *ibid*, p.79.

²⁴³⁶ McDowell, John. "Avoiding the Myth of the Given" in *Having the World In View: Essays on Kant, Hegel, and Sellars* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), p.256. We have already observed that the related terms *logical space of reasons* and the *myth of the given* derive from Wilfrid Sellars. McDowell reminds us, however, that despite its almost mythical (legendary, storied, contested) status within contemporary philosophy, we cannot (ironically) take the meaning of Sellars's term "myth of the given" as *(a) given*: it has since been displaced by the logical space of reasons and remains open to questioning. Given that Sellars's does not clarify its meaning, the question is trying to determine the meaningful limits of the givenness of experience. Specifically, "Sellars notoriously neglects to explain in general terms what he means by it. As he remarks, the idea of givenness for knowledge, givenness to a knowing subject, can be innocuous. So how does it become pernicious?"

²⁴³⁷ Kim, Jaegwon. *Supervenience and Mind: Selected Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.227.

²⁴³⁸ Quine implicitly defers to this parallel via his own value preference for modern science over ancient narrative. As Lyotard might observe, it's no coincidence that the title of his publication is called *from a logical point of view* and not (say) *the stories we tell* or *stories to be told*.

direction, particular reasons for thinking and acting have already been objectified – they appear to be part of the fabric of the world in question. Approached from another direction, Habermas's conception of the performative attitude as self-validating legitimates the objectifying and/or weaving process of argumentation via the claim to universality. If, however, the historicity of understanding always provides the normative context in which to move back or forth, how can a situated reason meaningfully distinguish between true and false consensus in the first place? Part of the problem is the *functional* role of consensus, or the way an agreement becomes socially acceptable and acts as a truth-bearer within a complex whole invariably calling itself (back) into question. The problem is that Habermas provides an interpretation where meaning conditions (mutual understanding through agreement) acts as a "functional equivalent of truth."²⁴³⁹ The "symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld is at stake"²⁴⁴⁰ in that the "subsumption of the lifeworld under the system"²⁴⁴¹ remains at issue. The question of an argument's social function intersects with the issue of its contextual relevance, and so re-turns us to the problem of the normative dimensions of "communicatively structured domains of action."²⁴⁴² Specifically, a rationally motivated agreement becomes performatively contradictorily – and so potentially dysfunctional – when a socially accepted argument may move towards *better* integrating a social order that would *ideally* remain in question. Eriksen and Weigard sum up the contradictory situation best when they observe that "the purpose of Habermas's analysis – which is to demonstrate the irreparability of social integration – can be accused of being trapped in a functionalist frame of interpretation."²⁴⁴³ All said and done, Habermas's emphasis on "reproductive processes"²⁴⁴⁴ is not so much "normative"²⁴⁴⁵ but "functionalist"²⁴⁴⁶ in that it equates the reproduction of meaning with the occurrence of a *more truthful* (rationally ordered) society. According to Habermas, "system integration cannot replace social integration in the areas of the lifeworld without"²⁴⁴⁷ the latter becoming dysfunctional (i.e., pathological and/or distorted). However, if "we continue to ask why it is important to avoid such side effects"²⁴⁴⁸ in effective history, the "only answer that Habermas seems able to offer is that it would be dysfunctional in relation to the goal of social stability and order."²⁴⁴⁹ Consequently, Habermas

²⁴³⁹ Rescher, Nicholas. *Pluralism: Against the Demand for Consensus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), p.53.

²⁴⁴⁰ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2, Lifeworld and System: a Critique of Functionalist Reason* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p.367.

²⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.342.

²⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, p.349.

²⁴⁴³ Eriksen, Erik and Weigard, Jarle. *Understanding Habermas* (London: Continuum, 2003), p.103.

²⁴⁴⁴ Breen, Keith. *Under Webers Shadow: Modernity, Subjectivity and Politics in Habermas, Arendt and MacIntyre* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), p.54.

²⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.* Breen is unsympathetic to such an interpretation and merely acknowledges its possibility.

²⁴⁴⁷ Eriksen, Erik and Weigard, Jarle. *Understanding Habermas* (London: Continuum, 2003), p.103.

²⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴⁹ *ibid.*

offers an argument which "refers to functional efficiency rather than normative legitimacy."²⁴⁵⁰ The difficulty is that Habermas's definition of the (hermeneutical) situation inadvertently reduces normative legitimacy to functional efficiency. If the historicity of understanding necessarily *create(s) its normativity out of itself*, legitimacy is invariably re/produced through the circle of understanding. Consequently, the relation between part and whole thereby becomes complex (questionable) because it is itself performatively contradictory. Given that genuinely meaningful interpretations can only occur within the *context of effective history*, the question is the way the lifeworld acts as the *locus of continuing tradition*. Habermas's questioning therefore presupposes the very paradoxical situation in question – the social function (contextual relevance, transmission) of competing arguments and/or rational standards. Given that consensus acts as the locus of continuing tradition, it must also throw the (re)creation of its normativity (back) into question and unsettle the very ground on which 'truth' moves and remains directed.

Since our rule consciousness remains fallibilistic in orientation, Habermas maintains that "it is the goal of justifications to discover a truth that exceeds all justification."²⁴⁵¹ Nonetheless, Habermas understands that the "gap between rational acceptability and truth cannot be bridged", putting the "participants in discourse in a paradoxical position."²⁴⁵² Indeed, this is the reason why Habermas's conception of rationality is performatively contradictory: he wants reason to be directed towards a "Janus faced truth that establishes an internal connection between performative certainty and warranted assertibility."²⁴⁵³ Habermas's conception of truth is two-faced because he wants to distinguish between the conditional (context-dependent) and the unconditional (context-independent) to hold onto the possibility of interpretations *becoming universally true*.

Reaching understanding cannot function unless the participants refer to a single objective world, thereby stabilizing the intersubjectively shared public space with which everything that is merely subjective can be contrasted. This supposition of an objective world that is independent of our descriptions fulfills a functional requirement of our processes of cooperation and communication. Without this supposition, everyday practices, which rest on the (in a certain sense) Platonic distinction between believing and knowing unreservedly, would come apart at the seams.²⁴⁵⁴

²⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁴⁵¹ Habermas, Jürgen. "Realism After the Linguistic Turn" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 39–40.

²⁴⁵² Ibid, p.40.

²⁴⁵³ Habermas, Jürgen. "Rightness Versus Truth" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p.253.

²⁴⁵⁴ Habermas, Jürgen. "Richard Rorty's Pragmatic Turn" in *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p.359.

Note the distinction between believing and knowing, and the *functional role* reason plays in the "translation"²⁴⁵⁵ of the one into the other. Interpreters in the lifeworld necessarily "rely on what is unconditionally held-to-be- true" when questioning the historicity of their own beliefs. This "mode of unconditionally holding-to-be-true is reflected on the discursive level in the connotations of truth-claims that point beyond the given contexts of justification and require the supposition of ideal justificatory conditions – with a resulting decentering of the justification community. For this reason, the process of justification can be guided by a notion of truth that transcends justification although it is always already operatively effective in the realm of action."²⁴⁵⁶ Habermas's two-faced conception of truth presupposes Heidegger's distinction between "ready– to– hand"²⁴⁵⁷ and present– to hand in that the requirement is to determine the truth-value of "habitualized practices" and the question of their "continued functioning"²⁴⁵⁸ in effective history. The problem is questioning a "frustrating reality...in an action context that is no longer functioning."²⁴⁵⁹ An interpretation that is "contrary to our beliefs destabilizes our certainties about how to act. Only if agents distance themselves from their practical coping with the world and enter into rational discourse"²⁴⁶⁰ about their dysfunctional beliefs that questioning can "become a discursively mobilized reason...and enters as criticism"²⁴⁶¹ within the understanding.

The question, then, is whether a mobilized reason can ever be unconditionally valid: under what conditions – or (definition of) a situation – can a criticizable reason *become universally 'true'*? Specifically, "what we hold to be true has to be defensible on the basis of good reasons, not merely in a different context but in all possible contexts, that is, any time against anybody. This provides the inspiration for the discourse theory of truth: a proposition is true if it withstands all attempts to refute it under the demanding conditions of rational discourse."²⁴⁶² The *performative* status of a defensible and/or criticizable reason remains *integral* here. All said and done, how can a mobilized reason withstand all attempts to reverse its direction in effective history? Alternatively, under what circumstances can the attempt to *translate* action contexts (habitualized beliefs and practices) into rational discourse (competing knowledge claims) move reason towards (definitions of) situations that are unconditionally true in all possible contexts of

²⁴⁵⁵ Ibid, p.372.

²⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁵⁷ Habermas, Jürgen. "From Kant to Hegel: On Robert Brandom's Pragmatic Philosophy of Language" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p.154.

²⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁴⁶² Habermas, Jürgen. "Richard Rorty's Pragmatic Turn" in *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p.367.

interpretation? Given the dialectic of question and answer, Habermas's methodological fiction invariably becomes dysfunctional in that it can never justify its directive: it merely attempts to *objectify (parts of) action contexts through the activity of questioning*. The translation of action contexts into a different context and/or activity therefore reveals the questionability of rational discourse – by begging the question of the continued functioning (contextual relevance and/or adequacy) of habitualized practices.²⁴⁶³ Truth *acting as idealized consensus* is antithetical to the dialectic of question and answer and interprets away the role of motivated reasoning (the way competing reasons – values and interests – actively inform conflicting definitions of situations). Habermas's concept of the lifeworld throws into question the *relation* between *reason as a capacity of thought* and *reason as evidentiary consideration* in that reasons invariably remain conditional upon (definitions of) situations: they're relevant insofar as being culturally specific and/or relative to the contexts in question. Habermas's attempt to situate a unitary reason within effective history – define a situation where reason and reasons can be directed and/or united through mutual agreement – problematizes the very regulative ideal of truth as consensus. Taken from one direction – the end of history – a final consensus deprives arguments of their original force by urging that the lifeworld would ideally be beyond reason's purview and directives (i.e., *not* fallibilistic in orientation, subject to conflicting interpretations, criticizable validity claims). If there is a situation where everyone can (conceivably, theoretically) come to a final agreement, the performatively contradictory goal is to render effective history speechless (ineffective). Taken from the other direction – communicative reason finding its way through competing definitions of situations – a consensus *formally* defined can never act as a truth connective or bearer. The possibility and/or desirability of reason arguing effectively renders the reason for arguing dysfunctional (divisive, mobilized). While a functioning reason demands to be given back as reasons, reason stays answerable (true) to itself by actively falsifying the reasons it invariably gives (back) to itself: it is always already performatively contradictory and *ideally* remains on the way back to the language in question. The distinction between *rational motivation* and *motivated rationality* therefore acts as a constant reminder that the possibility of dissent is "ever present and ineliminable given the inevitable variation in people's information and (hermeneutical) situation."²⁴⁶⁴ Disagreements are *the way* rational

²⁴⁶³ Rorty, Richard. "Response to Jürgen Habermas" in Brandom, Robert (ed.) *Rorty And His Critics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p.57. As Rorty reminds Habermas, a situated reason cannot meaningfully (truthfully) translate its own meaning conditions into unconditional truth-values. Specifically, "a rational discourse is just one more action-context in which a behavioural certainty evinces itself... Rational discourses are the species of action-context in which" interpreters are "trying to acquire better habits of action by comparing and contrasting" their "own habits with those of others. In such contexts, your behavioural certainty makes itself evident in your attempt to justify your belief"²⁴⁶³ with defensible and/or criticizable reasons.

²⁴⁶⁴ Rescher, Nicholas. *Pluralism: Against the Demand for Consensus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), p.7.

thinkers identify and evaluate the normativity of reasons for thinking and acting in hermeneutical situations in the first place: the normative force of reasons has its basis in their action-directive function and involves selecting competing norms or standards for thinking and acting. Consensus and dissensus therefore presuppose each other in that reason remains directed towards arguing with itself over how to evaluate what constitutes 'a good or better reason'. Wellmer sums up the performative contradiction in the following way.

We can give no criteria for rational consensus other than this: that precisely all those taking part are similarly persuaded by good reasons. Since, however, what "good reasons" are can only be shown in that they compel us towards an agreement, a consensus can never be the criterion that what we have before us are good reasons. The concept of a "good reason" is attached, in an irreducible way, to the perspective of the one "persuaded" by good reasons. One cannot describe from a meta- perspective which "qualities" reasons must have in order to be really good reasons. To call reasons "good" is not the ascription of an "objective" quality, rather it is the adoption of an attitude with normative consequences...this also means that consensus and dissent are equiprimordial: just as every controversy about truth-claims has its telos in an uncoerced consensus, so does every consensus carry in itself the seed of new disagreements.²⁴⁶⁵

Habermas's two-faced conception of truth therefore throws the reasoning of his argument into question: it presupposes the rational status of the very reason in question. Habermas's attempt to translate particular cultural beliefs into universal knowledge claims also threatens to collapse the distinction between a traditional and critical theory. By emphasizing the re/production and/or renewal of a given cultural tradition, Habermas's conception of critique is invariably directed towards rationally accommodating itself to the (myth of) given. The dialectic of reason's primary concern remains functionalist in orientation in that it derives its illocutionary force from within the system re/producing its directives. Critique becomes directed towards validating the complex whole in which it occurs: reason's questionable movements are already understood to be true insofar as its parts ideally work together to promote a more rational (valid) social order. Specifically, where all the constituent parts can form a coherent (or more meaningful) whole throughout effective history – a totality ideally free of (performative) contradictions and/or conflicting interpretations. While the dialectic of reason necessarily reproduces contradictory movements, Habermas's questioning is contradictorily directed towards re/producing a particular form of life as if were always already universally valid (internally consistent, relating to such a complex whole in its totality). The performative contradiction is that Habermas's attempt to fulfil the 'functional requirement of our processes of cooperation and communication'

²⁴⁶⁵ Wellmer, Albrecht. "The Debate About Truth: Pragmatism Without Regulative Ideas" in Freundlieb, Dieter, Hudson, Wayne and Rundell, John (eds.) *Critical Theory After Habermas* (Boston: Brill, 2004), pp.198-200 respectively.

reveals a mythical worldview that cannot be rationally argued for. The myth being: a given cultural tradition can transcend the context/s of its occurrence by appealing to a situated – and motivated – reason's presupposed universality. While Habermas prefers to call such a worldview a 'methodological fiction', he cannot meaningfully answer the question of its truth-value and/or bearing – namely, why reason's claim to universality is not mythological (or self-mythologizing). Given Habermas's inability to decide these questions either way, reason's movements occur "by way of the undecidable"²⁴⁶⁶ and cannot direct the question of its rationality. The historicity of understanding moves reason in different directions simultaneously: it remains performatively contradictory insofar as the condition of its possibility is also the condition of its impossibility. Following Derrida, reason is caught "between possibilities" that "are themselves highly determined in strictly defined situations"²⁴⁶⁷ and so functions within a problematic that is impossible to define (determine either way). Performatively speaking, reason's attempt to remedy its situations simultaneously becomes its own undoing. Consequently, another question needs to be asked: why does reason *remain* mobilized and/or divided against itself?

Reconstructing Derrida

On the Way (Back).

We attempt an answer to this question by following Derrida's movements. We do this, however, not just to follow Derrida's lead but to also question his general "sense of direction."²⁴⁶⁸ Our directive is therefore contradictory, or guided by movements that "reverse their direction and turn back on themselves."²⁴⁶⁹ Specifically, we reconstruct Derrida's questioning to identify a differend within the way-making movements of a reason deconstructing itself. Following Derrida, we call one of these "differends"²⁴⁷⁰ a pharmakon and argue that reason "divides its own

²⁴⁶⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Afterword" in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.116.

²⁴⁶⁷ Ibid, p.148.

²⁴⁶⁸ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p.362.

²⁴⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 365.

²⁴⁷⁰ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson. (London: Continuum, 2004), p.130. While the concept of differend has become associated with Lyotard since the publication of *The Differend: Phrases In Dispute* in 1983, Derrida also uses the term in a similar way in *Plato's Pharmacy* (originally published in *Tel Quel*, nos. 32 and 33, 1968) and reproduced in *Dissemination* in 1981. Instead of talking about phrases in dispute, however, Derrida is referring here to the pharmakon as "(the production) of difference" and the way difference reproduces "the opposites and the differends that the process of discrimination will come to carve out", *ibid*, 130.

identity... while constituting it"²⁴⁷¹ in "the law of the circle."²⁴⁷² Derrida's lines of questioning, of course, purports to follow the lead of a reason directed against itself. Derrida follows reason's way-ward movements for a "consistent"²⁴⁷³ – or "undeconstructible"²⁴⁷⁴ – reason: so as to be able to do *justice* to directives moving against reason(s). Derrida thereby throws into question the ways rational thinkers attempt to "confine their criteriology"²⁴⁷⁵ to given intentional horizons. Dooley and Kavanagh note that the "myth of the given"²⁴⁷⁶ has been Derrida's primary object of inquiry in that he has consistently challenged "the notion that objects, consciousness and indeed all experience in general are simply given, present and transparent to all."²⁴⁷⁷ Lumsden observes that since there can be no direct access to the objects in question, Derrida ontologically commits himself to avoiding "reinstalling a given"²⁴⁷⁸ in turn and the logical "space of reasons"²⁴⁷⁹ becomes displaced through reason's activities. Nonetheless, Derrida's contextual "strategy for thought's transformation of itself"²⁴⁸⁰ returns us to the performative contradiction of his quasi-transcendental thinking: in what way does Derrida direct the performative flow of the objects in question? As Caputo argues, Derrida's inquiries are "also supplying the presuppositions for thinking that whatever sense language does make will also be unmade, that the things we do with words will come undone."²⁴⁸¹ Derrida's questioning consistently states that "it is always possible to find some context in which an otherwise false statement is true, or an otherwise true statement is false...and this therefore tends to undo the universalizability that we would want to attribute to a transcendental property."²⁴⁸² Norris brings us closer to Derrida's performative contradictions when he observes that one of Derrida's main objectives is to call into question "the methodological priority of language over thought"²⁴⁸³

²⁴⁷¹ Derrida, Jacques. "Limited INC a b c" in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.53.

²⁴⁷² Derrida, Jacques. *The Truth in Painting* trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987), p.33.

²⁴⁷³ Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 2006), p.129. Derrida talks here of a "consistent deconstruction" that presupposes a "critical idea or questioning stance" affirming an "emancipatory promise."

²⁴⁷⁴ *ibid*, p.92.

²⁴⁷⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "Violence and Metaphysics" in *Writing and Difference* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p.131.

²⁴⁷⁶ Dooley, Mark and Kavanagh, Liam. *The Philosophy of Derrida* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p.60.

²⁴⁷⁷ *ibid*.

²⁴⁷⁸ Lumsden, Simon. "Derrida and the Problem of Subjectivity" in *Self-Consciousness and the Critique of the Subject: Hegel, Heidegger, and the Post-Structuralists* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2014), p.174.

²⁴⁷⁹ *ibid*.

²⁴⁸⁰ *ibid*.

²⁴⁸¹ *ibid*, p.97.

²⁴⁸² *ibid*.

²⁴⁸³ Norris, Christopher. "Analytic Philosophy In Another Key: Derrida On Language, Truth and Logic" in *Derrida: Negotiating the Legacy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p.28.

insofar as such prioritizations become "demonstrably self-refuting since they presuppose what they purport to deny."²⁴⁸⁴ Note Norris's use of the term *demonstrably* – such a possibility presupposes that Derrida's displacement of the logical space of reasons is itself capable of logical proof via the act of placing and positioning objects of thought.²⁴⁸⁵ Culler observes that we therefore find ourselves directed back towards the "paradoxical situation"²⁴⁸⁶ in question: that the "exercise of language and thought involves us in intractable paradoxes, which we cannot escape but only repress."²⁴⁸⁷ The paradox, however, is whether it is possible to repress (deny, contextualize) the truth-values in question. Although Norris originally claimed that Derrida's thought is "simply the most-hard pressed and consequent of relativistic doctrines applied to questions of meaning, logic and truth"²⁴⁸⁸ the paradox remains: is Derrida's ontological relativism universally true or false? Norris has since claimed that Derrida's 'demonstrations' must be ontologically committed to *realism* if they are to make absolute sense.²⁴⁸⁹ Specifically, we need to presuppose universally agreed upon standards of rationality to determine their context-independent truth-value – namely, that there exist certain features of an objective reality that remain ontologically independent of any given intentional horizon or linguistic practice.²⁴⁹⁰

²⁴⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p.29.

²⁴⁸⁵ Derrida, Jacques. *Positions* trans. Alan Bass (London: Athlone Press, 1981), p.105. We have already seen that Derrida remains ontologically committed to the *idea of the pursuit of truth* via the *possibility* of questioning and/or deconstructing (other) truth-claims. To reiterate: It "goes without saying that in no case is it a question of a discourse against truth...we must have truth." See, also, Derrida, Jacques. "Derrida's Response to Moore" in Glendinning, Simon (ed.) *Arguing With Derrida* (London: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), p.84. Specifically, Derrida's "commitment to the truth" involves an "engagement which calls for performative gestures" – such as questioning – "if only to question the possibility of the truth."

²⁴⁸⁶ Culler, Jonathan. "Jacques Derrida" in Direk, Zeynep and Lawlor, Leonard (eds.) *Jacques Derrida: Critical Assessments, Vol. 3* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p.253.

²⁴⁸⁷ *ibid.*

²⁴⁸⁸ Norris, Christopher. *The Contest of Faculties: Philosophy and Theory after Deconstruction*, (London: Methuen, 1985), p.216.

²⁴⁸⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. "Realism After the Linguistic Turn" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p.2. The philosophical concept of realism remains (of course) contested terrain. Habermas provides one definition of the situation when he asks: "How can we reconcile the assumption that there is a world existing independently of our descriptions of it and that is the same for all observers with the linguistic insight that we have no direct, linguistically unmediated access to "brute" reality?"

²⁴⁹⁰ Blackburn, Simon. *Truth: A Guide For The Perplexed* (London: Penguin, 2005), pp.117-121. Blackburn provides an amusing account of the philosophical difficulties in defining realism since "cross purposes abound" when delimiting the boundary between language, thought and/or world. Unlike the latter Norris, then, Blackburn does *not* see Derrida as a realist and maintains that he is an ontological relativist that needs to get a better grip on reality. Blackburn claims that Derrida – among other French theorists – have enclosed themselves within the "sealed world of their own beliefs and sayings" and that "there are amusing episodes of radical postmodernists who suddenly forgot all about the death of the author and the indefinite plasticity of meaning when it came to fighting about copyright and the accuracy of translations of their own works. As it bears down on you, it is not possible to hold that the oncoming bus is a piece of text", *ibid.*, p.170.

...with respect to the question of whether truth can properly or intelligibly be conceived as transcending the limits of available evidence, present best knowledge or attainable proof. I (now) maintain that Derrida can be seen to espouse a realist position not only in logico-semantic terms...but also as a matter of strong metaphysical and ontological commitment. Indeed, if this were not the case, then there could be no justification for the claim – implicit throughout his work – that a deconstructive reading can discover (rather than project or invent) hitherto unrecognized complexities of sense and logic.²⁴⁹¹

Re-turning to the Problematic of the Performative.

We return, then, to the "problematic of the performative"²⁴⁹² within "strictly defined situations"²⁴⁹³. the problem remains *integral* insofar as Derrida deconstructs what a situated reason tries to administer to itself *across* contexts of interpretation. Derrida *does* this by problematizing "any certitude or supposed criteriology that would assure us of the justice of the decision."²⁴⁹⁴ Derrida's deconstructive questioning thereby finds itself directed towards reinterpreting the "relative stability of the dominant interpretation...of the text being commented upon."²⁴⁹⁵ As Kakoliris comments, however, adopting such a performative attitude remains a "contradiction in terms"²⁴⁹⁶: it requires Derrida to *stabilize* the meaning of the text through the affirmation of authorial (or textual) intent and to *destabilize* it via the negation of another author's intentions or text.²⁴⁹⁷ Such a contradictory approach – via Derrida's (re)quest for mutually opposed reasons – is the way Derrida's performs the text(s) across the contexts in question. Derrida claims to be able to come to terms with such a contradiction via his ontological commitment to an "absolute

²⁴⁹¹ Norris, Christopher, *Derrida, Badiou and the Formal Imperative* (New York: Continuum, 2012), p.14. We've included the word now in brackets because Norris reverses his conception of Derrida's "ontological commitment" here without irony or comment.

²⁴⁹² Derrida, Jacques. "Signature Event Context" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.321.

²⁴⁹³ Derrida, Jacques. "Afterword" in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.148.

²⁴⁹⁴ p.23.

²⁴⁹⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "Afterword" in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.143.

²⁴⁹⁶ Kakoliris, Gerasimos. "Derrida's Double Deconstructive Reading: A Contradiction in Terms?" *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* Vol.35, No.3, 2004, p.283. Kakoliris is not speaking of Habermas's performative attitude as such – he is more commenting on Derrida's "double gesture" or reading. Nonetheless, Derrida's performative gestures presuppose a contradictory performative attitude in that it requires Derrida to positively affirm and critically negate the text simultaneously.

²⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p.284. Kakoliris notes that such a contradictory approach "mirrors the paradoxical presuppositions of deconstructive criticism: the determination of the metaphysical text has to be stable since the destabilizing force of deconstruction can only take place on something that possesses a certain stability while simultaneously being unstable in order for deconstruction to be possible."

performative"²⁴⁹⁸ that renders all contexts of interpretation unstable and/or questionable. From within the context of these unstable movements, Derrida attempts to move rational thought *beyond* reason – towards the possibility of *justice* without "economic circularity, without calculation and without rules, without reason and without rationality."²⁴⁹⁹ The problem, however, is determining the rational limits of Derrida's questioning: in what way may its terminal points or boundary lines be *justified*? We use the term justify in two related senses here 1) to have a *good or better reason* for displacing the logical space of reasons so that 2) the lines of Derrida's text can *form or follow a through-line (thread, path) towards the margins* of interwoven contexts. Derrida also claims that deconstruction should never be understood as a conscious "act or an operation"²⁵⁰⁰ – it is merely an "event"²⁵⁰¹ that occurs of its own accord within language. Nonetheless, such events must remain "faithful to the themes and audacities"²⁵⁰² of thinking insofar as thought and language necessarily direct each other. Consequently, the question of the 'specificity of intentionality...without limit remains open"²⁵⁰³ to questioning. Our question turns into: in what ways does deconstruction defer to thought to interrogate "the ground of its presuppositions, the entirety of the discourse in which one could articulate the question of the "entire-field" (as a question, and hence as a discourse)."²⁵⁰⁴ Derrida's conception of undecidability as a "necessary condition"²⁵⁰⁵ for rationality provides an entry point into the question of the legality of his decision-making and begs the question of the conditions of its possibility. Following Habermas, we shall therefore reconstruct Derrida's questioning via universal conditions of mutual understanding. Specifically, if our knowledge of the world of experience remains questionable – undecidable – how is it possible to question and/or decide upon the limits of rational discourse in such a performatively contradictory way?

Habermas's concept of performative attitude becomes integral – particularly since Derrida *independently* offers an alternative to Habermas's *yes or no* ontological commitment to linguistic interactions. According to Derrida, there is a more originary speech situation directing our

²⁴⁹⁸ Derrida, Jacques. "A Number of Yes" in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other* (California, Stanford University Press, 2008), p.238.

²⁴⁹⁹ Derrida, Jacques. "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'" in Cornell, Drucilla, Rosenfeld, Michel and Carlson, David (eds.) *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p.25.

²⁵⁰⁰ Derrida, Jacques. "Letter to a Japanese Friend" in Wood, David and Bernasconi, Robert (eds.) *Derrida and Differance* (Robert, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.3.

²⁵⁰¹ Ibid, p.4.

²⁵⁰² Derrida, Jacques. "Violence and Metaphysics" in *Writing and Difference* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p.84.

²⁵⁰³ Derrida, Jacques. "Afterword" in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.148.

²⁵⁰⁴ Derrida, Jacques. "The Double Session" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson. (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 245.

²⁵⁰⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "Afterword" in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.116.

actions, returning us to the "question of the question"²⁵⁰⁶ that has been following us "since the beginning."²⁵⁰⁷ Following Heidegger, we are obliged to ask the question of the "possibility of any question. i.e., language"²⁵⁰⁸ and so find ourselves returning to the problem of questioning the language "already speaking for us – it must, so to speak, be already spoken and addressed to us."²⁵⁰⁹ Derrida calls this "quasi-transcendental and silent performative"²⁵¹⁰ an "archi-originary yes"²⁵¹¹ that "resembles an absolute performative"²⁵¹² in that "it is not, strictly speaking, an act"²⁵¹³ and must somehow still be listened to and/or spoken for. Such a "wordless...yes"²⁵¹⁴ directs our questions back towards the "tacit commitment of language towards language"²⁵¹⁵: it lets language speak *through* our speech acts because it is a "pre-originary pledge which precedes any other engagement in language or action."²⁵¹⁶ This "yes" is always already an answer to any given speech act because it throws speech (back) into question and speaks through our acts accordingly. Our speech acts are therefore said to have a more originary performative attitude – a yes that also (or simultaneously) says no in that it makes it possible to question the rationality of "giving reason"²⁵¹⁷ back over to itself in language. The yes "resounds in it always in order to come before it...and opens the question and always lets itself be presupposed by it, a yes that affirms prior to, before or beyond any possible question."²⁵¹⁸ Consequently, the "supposed last instance of the questioning attitude"²⁵¹⁹ can never give rational "thought its measure"²⁵²⁰ and would ideally be directed back towards that "movement which exceeds it."²⁵²¹

In the following, we identify two related performative contradictions within Derrida's attempt to deconstruct the logical space of reasons, and reconstruct his questionable movements in accordance with Habermas's conception of criticizable validity claims. Specifically, there is a

²⁵⁰⁶ Derrida, Jacques. *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989), p. 129.

²⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

²⁵¹⁰ Derrida, Jacques. "A Number of Yes" in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other, Vol 2* (California, Stanford University Press, 2008), p.238.

²⁵¹¹ Ibid.

²⁵¹² Ibid.

²⁵¹³ Ibid.

²⁵¹⁴ Derrida, Jacques. *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989), p. 130.

²⁵¹⁵ Ibid, p.129.

²⁵¹⁶ Ibid, p. 130.

²⁵¹⁷ Derrida, Jacques. "A Number of Yes" in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other* (California, Stanford University Press, 2008), p.238.

²⁵¹⁸ Ibid, p. 233.

²⁵¹⁹ Derrida, Jacques. *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989), p. 130.

²⁵²⁰ Ibid.

²⁵²¹ Ibid.

performative contradiction within Derrida's reasoning about reason's conditions of possibility and a performative contradiction within Derrida's delimitation of contexts of interpretation. Derrida's performative contradictions similarly occur within the "horizon of a lifeworld,"²⁵²² or against "background convictions"²⁵²³ brought into the context of a question. Derrida must therefore "be able to provide reasons or grounds"²⁵²⁴ for his own questioning and arguments. Specifically, a rational reconstruction presupposes the possibility of a lifeworld enabling a "reflective relation to itself"²⁵²⁵, permitting "in principle that interpretations stored in tradition be placed in question and subjected to critical revision."²⁵²⁶ Consequently, the performative status of Derrida's quasi-transcendental questioning *turns on the question* of the conditions of its possibility, or the contextual relevance of using reasons for deciding (moving) either way.

What are the conditions of possibility for knowing an undecidable?

We begin by following Derrida's questioning of the "principle of reason",²⁵²⁷ or "juridical"²⁵²⁸ rulings maintaining that there can be no beings – entities and/or movement – without (a) reason determining their rational ordering (being-there). Derrida explicitly follows the "path of the Heideggerian question"²⁵²⁹ in that such an interrogation presupposes the question of being, and so circles around the relation between "reason and being."²⁵³⁰ Nonetheless, Derrida's questioning follows Heidegger's way-making movements to move "beyond"²⁵³¹ the question of being. Derrida locates this "beyond" within an "experience and experiment of the undecidable"²⁵³² since any attempt to "interiorize every limit as *being* and as being its own *proper*"²⁵³³ merely reopens "the field of decision or decidability."²⁵³⁴ Derrida follows Heidegger's lead because Heidegger's questioning has given Derrida reason to think that the principle of

²⁵²² Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p.70.

²⁵²³ *ibid.*

²⁵²⁴ *ibid.*, p.12.

²⁵²⁵ *ibid.*, p.71.

²⁵²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁵²⁷ Derrida, Jacques. "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of the Pupil" in *Eyes of the University* trans. Jan Plug (California: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 129.

²⁵²⁸ Derrida, Jacques. *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p.xi.

²⁵²⁹ Derrida, Jacques. "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of the Pupil" in *Eyes of the University* trans. Jan Plug (California: Stanford University Press, 2004), p.138.

²⁵³⁰ *ibid.*, p.129.

²⁵³¹ *ibid.*, p.153.

²⁵³² Derrida, Jacques. "Afterword" in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.116.

²⁵³³ Derrida, Jacques. "Tympan" in *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), p.xix.

²⁵³⁴ Derrida, Jacques. "Afterword" in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.116.

reason calls itself into question through "juridical reason itself."²⁵³⁵ Derrida similarly questions the rationality of the "delimiting of ontology"²⁵³⁶ or deciding the "ontological: the presumed possibility of a discourse about what is."²⁵³⁷ Consequently, Derrida remains in Heidegger's "debt"²⁵³⁸ and wants us to be equally "faithful to reason's call"²⁵³⁹ when answering the question of reason's authority to govern itself. He offers reason "questions in return"²⁵⁴⁰ to "think through the possibility of that summons"²⁵⁴¹ and so questions "the reason of reason"²⁵⁴² again and again. Given the way reason invariably rises against itself, it cannot uphold its *sovereignty* without falling into the abyss. Derrida has therefore made a decision that recurs throughout his thinking, namely; that reason should always question the "unquestioned authority of the principle of reason"²⁵⁴³ and defer to what "remains unthought."²⁵⁴⁴ Derrida consistently claims that it is difficult to justify (other) knowledge claims because "one cannot rationally distribute the part that is calculable and the part that is incalculable. One has to calculate as far as possible, but the incalculable happens...without one's being able to do one's part."²⁵⁴⁵ The "moment in which the decision is made is heterogeneous to knowledge...it supposes a rupture with knowledge and (is) therefore an opening to the incalculable."²⁵⁴⁶ Derrida nonetheless observes that to have a "reason for being...is to have a justification"²⁵⁴⁷ for being-there and so "also a footing and foundation, ground to stand upon."²⁵⁴⁸ As Heidegger observed before him, however, there is the problem of reason finding its footing and/or rationally standing its ground. The principle of reason can only affirm itself through the "double negation...nothing without reason."²⁵⁴⁹ If reason tries to affirm the reason for this principle, however, it appears groundless and throws its own reason for being-there into question. Reason appears to be without (a) reason and points to something *other than* reason determining its way-making movements: if the principle asserts

²⁵³⁵ Derrida, Jacques. *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p.xi.

²⁵³⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Letter to a Japanese Friend" in Wood, David and Bernasconi, Robert (eds.) *Derrida and Differance* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.4.

²⁵³⁷ Derrida, Jacques. "Double Session" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson, (London: Continuum, 2004), p.204.

²⁵³⁸ Derrida, Jacques. "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of the Pupil" in *Eyes of the University* trans. Jan Plug (California: Stanford University Press, 2004), p.136.

²⁵³⁹ Ibid, p.138.

²⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁵⁴² Ibid.

²⁵⁴³ Derrida, Jacques. "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of the Pupil" in *Eyes of the University* trans. Jan Plug (California: Stanford University Press, 2004), p.148.

²⁵⁴⁴ Ibid, p.140.

²⁵⁴⁵ Derrida, Jacques and Maurizio, Ferraris. *A Taste For the Secret* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), p.61.

²⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁴⁷ Derrida, Jacques. "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of the Pupil" in *Eyes of the University* trans. Jan Plug (California: Stanford University Press, 2004), p.129.

²⁵⁴⁸ Ibid, pgs.129-30.

²⁵⁴⁹ Heidegger, Martin. *The Principle of Reason* trans. Reginald Lily (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p.5.

that there can be no being without (a) reason, "what reason is the reason for the principle of reason?"²⁵⁵⁰ Although the principle might assert "something necessary"²⁵⁵¹ and "unconditional"²⁵⁵², the reason for its being-there falls "intractably into groundlessness."²⁵⁵³ Derrida's questioning, then, follows Heidegger by thinking through "the enigma of this situation"²⁵⁵⁴ and attempts to direct reason back towards the question of what remains "insidious and enigmatic."²⁵⁵⁵ As Derrida reiterates, "is the reason for reason rational?"²⁵⁵⁶ and he asks furthermore whether "answering to the principle of reason (is) the same act as answering for the principle of reason?"²⁵⁵⁷ Derrida answers that rational thought truly becomes possible when reason continually answer the call of reason through questioning. The question, however, is whether reason finds itself moving within a circle or towards an abyss. The answer, of course, can never be straightforward: the circle or the abyss are not diverging routes but intersecting pathways that point to the "aporia or non-way"²⁵⁵⁸ of undecidability. Reason cannot choose between (say) rationality as cure or poison and must "go through the ordeal of the undecidable"²⁵⁵⁹ to direct (prescribe and administer) itself. Such an aporetic situation is the condition of movement insofar as we otherwise couldn't "find our way"²⁵⁶⁰ and this "impossibility to find one's way is a condition"²⁵⁶¹ of remaining answerable to reason's call. Whatever is decided, reason will invariably be directed back towards the path (not) taken in a circle lacking rational foundation. The "circle would consist in seeking to account for reason by reason, to reason to the principle of reason, appealing to the principle to make it speak of itself at the very point where, according to Heidegger, the principle of reason says nothing about reason itself. The abyss, the hole ..., the empty gorge would be the impossibility for a principle of grounding to ground itself."²⁵⁶² Either way, the "principle of reason installs its empire only to the extent that

²⁵⁵⁰ *ibid*, p.18.

²⁵⁵¹ *ibid*, p.6.

²⁵⁵² *ibid*, p.8.

²⁵⁵³ *ibid*, p.12.

²⁵⁵⁴ Derrida, Jacques and Maurizo, Ferraris. *A Taste For the Secret* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), p.61.

²⁵⁵⁵ Heidegger, Martin. *The Principle of Reason* trans. Reginald Lily (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), p.6.

²⁵⁵⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of the Pupil" in *Eyes of the University* trans. Jan Plug (California: Stanford University Press, 2004), p.138.

²⁵⁵⁷ *ibid*, p.137.

²⁵⁵⁸ Derrida, Jacques. "Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility: A Dialogue With Derrida" in Kearney, Richard and Dooley, Mark (eds.) *Questioning Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.73.

²⁵⁵⁹ Derrida, Jacques. "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'" in Cornell, Drucilla, Rosenfeld, Michel and Carlson, David (eds.) *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p.24.

²⁵⁶⁰ Derrida, Jacques. "Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility: A Dialogue With Derrida" in Kearney, Richard and Dooley, Mark (eds.) *Questioning Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.73.

²⁵⁶¹ *ibid*.

²⁵⁶² Derrida, Jacques. "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of the Pupil" in *Eyes of the University* trans. Jan Plug (California: Stanford University Press, 2004), p.137.

the abyssal question of being that is hiding within it remains hidden, and with it the question of the grounding of the ground itself."²⁵⁶³

Given that undecidability remains a necessary condition of competing knowledge claims, Derrida moves thought back towards the aporia in question. Derrida's definition of the situation – undecidability as an ordeal, trial and/or non-way – presupposes it in that undecidability is *the way* reason finds itself moving *anyway*. By moving back and forth – and trying to break out of known pathways – reason may come to know that the *way of undecidability* is simultaneously reason's condition of possibility and impossibility. Undecidability is therefore not to be mistaken for "paralysis in the face of the power to decide."²⁵⁶⁴ It is not indecision or indecisiveness but an enabling "aporia we have to face constantly."²⁵⁶⁵ Undecidability does not direct reason towards the difficulty in choosing between alternative pathways or "two contradictory and very determinate rules, each equally imperative"²⁵⁶⁶ in a given situation. Undecidability calls situations into being and/or question through reason's way-making movements – and so *remains (an) imperative either way*. Consequently, undecidability is not to be distinguished from decision-making and/or definitions of given situations. Such distinctions do the aporia of undecidability an injustice – it invariably becomes *the* reason for reason insofar as reason can never be thought completely rational and/or decisive. Undecidability presupposes the context/s in which reason necessarily moves and directs thought back towards the problem of contextualizing its movements any-way. As an ontologically prior condition, it "prohibits any saturation of the context"²⁵⁶⁷ and is merely opposed to situations of complete (or definitive) knowledge. Undecidability remains an imperative insofar as it motions against reason's tendency towards closure, and *reopens* every decision to the question of the condition of (im)possibilities. Derrida's conception of undecidability, then, does not attempt to resolve the problem of the criterion and its relation to the question of being. Undecidability, however, turns the paradox on its head by making the *problem of deciding (moving) either way* reason's enabling principle: all claims to knowledge necessarily begin and end in undecidability. Consequently, reason remains approachable – answerable and questionable – through the impasse of undecidability and moves (back) towards the "ordeal of the undecidable"²⁵⁶⁸ to justify its actions: it remains an *integral part* of reasoning in that it simultaneously makes all of

²⁵⁶³ *ibid*, p.139.

²⁵⁶⁴ Derrida, Jacques. "Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility: A Dialogue With Derrida" in Kearney, Richard and Dooley, Mark, (eds.) *Questioning Ethics*, (London: Routledge, 1999), p.66.

²⁵⁶⁵ *ibid*, p.73.

²⁵⁶⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority" in Cornell, Drucilla, Rosenfeld, Michel and Carlson, David (eds.) *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), p.24.

²⁵⁶⁷ Derrida, Jacques. "Signature Event Context" in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.18.

²⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.24.

reason's validity claims *possible and impossible*. It would therefore not be possible for reason to question its rationality unless it remained directed by an "experience"²⁵⁶⁹ of "undecidability"²⁵⁷⁰ (impossibility, non-being). For this reason, Derrida claims that a truly rational thinker must also be "mad"²⁵⁷¹ or "identify a madness"²⁵⁷² in the rationality of decision making. Deconstruction recognizes that "the instant of decision is a madness"²⁵⁷³, and its "desire for justice"²⁵⁷⁴ remains directed towards – or by – momentarily lapses of reason.

Derrida's conception of the aporetic structure of justice is integral to the way deconstruction questions the legality of rational arguments – and indicates the circular way Derrida justifies his linguistic interactions. Despite Derrida's privileging of the concept of *undecidability*, Derrida has nonetheless been led to decisively say that "deconstruction is justice"²⁵⁷⁵ – whatever *that* is or can possibly mean across the contexts in question. Indeed, all of Derrida's interpretations are understood to be "attempts to have it out with this formidable question."²⁵⁷⁶ Derrida's concept of justice and/or deconstruction – insofar as either can be meaningfully conceived or questioned – remains directed towards the "sense of a responsibility without limits"²⁵⁷⁷, and such a direct response is a "responsibility that regulates the justice and appropriateness of our behaviour, of our theoretical, practical, ethico-political decisions."²⁵⁷⁸ As Derrida forcefully argues, "there is no such thing as law (*droit*) that does not imply in itself, in the analytic structure of its concept, the possibility of being "enforced", applied by force."²⁵⁷⁹ Derrida's 'concept' of justice thereby circles around the "overflowing of the performative"²⁵⁸⁰, or the way "performative force, which is always an interpretive force"²⁵⁸¹ can meaningfully enable and direct the legality of all questioning. The overriding directive is to move reason (back) towards deconstruction's "privileged site – or rather, its privileged instability"²⁵⁸² within the circle of understanding.

²⁵⁶⁹ Derrida, Jacques. "Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility: A Dialogue With Derrida" in Kearney, Richard and Dooley, Mark, (eds.) *Questioning Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.66.

²⁵⁷⁰ *ibid.*

²⁵⁷¹ Derrida, Jacques. "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority" in Cornell, Drucilla, Rosenfeld, Michel and Carlson, David (eds.) *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p.25.

²⁵⁷² *ibid.*

²⁵⁷³ *ibid.*, p.26.

²⁵⁷⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p.15.

²⁵⁷⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Letter to a Japanese Friend" in Wood, David and Bernasconi, Robert (eds.) *Derrida and Differance* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.4

²⁵⁷⁷ Derrida, Jacques. "Force of Law: The "Mystical Foundation of Authority" in Cornell, Drucilla, Rosenfeld, Michel and Carlson, David (eds.) *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), p.19.

²⁵⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p.20.

²⁵⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁵⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p.27.

²⁵⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.13.

²⁵⁸² *ibid.*, p.21.

According to Derrida's 'calculation', the unstable relation "between law and justice"²⁵⁸³ is "in fact only one aporia, only one potential aporetic that infinitely distributes itself"²⁵⁸⁴ throughout the rational order. Derrida argues that the distinction between law and justice is untenable because each presupposes – or directs itself back towards – the other across contexts of interpretation. The problem of their relationship is thereby called back into question through their movements and/or directives (relations of presupposition). We therefore need to similarly direct ourselves towards the "difficult and unstable distinction between justice and droit, between justice (infinite, incalculable, rebellious to rule and foreign to symmetry, heterogeneous and heterotropic) and the exercise of justice as law or right, legitimacy or legality, stabilizable and statutory, calculable, a system of regulated and coded prescriptions."²⁵⁸⁵ The unstable relation between law and justice requires thought to think through the enigma of law's origins and/or destinations insofar as the question of its justification remains insidious and enigmatic. The law's "very moment of foundation or institution...would consist of a coup de force, of a performative and therefore interpretive violence that in itself is neither just nor unjust and that no justice and no previous law with its founding anterior moment could guarantee or contradict or invalidate."²⁵⁸⁶ Consequently, the legality of the law remains an open question and/or directive: it follows the ways reason attempts to direct the question of its movements. The possibility of justice (as a possible experience of the impossible) becomes a directive insofar as it moves rational thought "outside or beyond law,"²⁵⁸⁷ and remains on *the way*. If "the law and justice are at the same time, but also by turns, inseparable and in contradiction with one another,"²⁵⁸⁸ the problem is the way rational decision-making must "submit to the law of giving reason(s)"²⁵⁸⁹ and "can only tend toward imperial hegemony"²⁵⁹⁰ when ruling on reason's other. Derrida's performative contradiction, of course, is anticipated by the interpretive violence inherent within the very term *deconstruction*. Following the law in the name of justice invariably gives way to interpretive violence (via a violent act or procedure) in that it involves a *forceful reinterpretation* (displacement, unsettling, suspension) of *other interpretations*.

²⁵⁸³ *ibid*, p.22.

²⁵⁸⁴ *ibid*, p.22.

²⁵⁸⁵ *ibid*.

²⁵⁸⁶ *ibid*, p.13.

²⁵⁸⁷ *ibid*, p.14.

²⁵⁸⁸ Derrida, Jacques. "The Reason of the Strongest" in *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p.100. While Derrida is talking about sovereignty and democracy here, the quote also helps clarify the nature of the unstable relation between law and justice discussed elsewhere.

²⁵⁸⁹ *ibid*, p.101.

²⁵⁹⁰ *ibid*, p.102.

Questioning the Question: Derrida's conditions of possibility.

We begin by questioning the limits of Derrida's questioning. Following Derrida's lead, such an interrogation circles around the question of the possibility of Derrida's questioning. Specifically, it directs itself towards the "question of the question"²⁵⁹¹ by asking about the question of conditions of possibility across contexts of interpretation. Given that the overall aim is to *reconstruct* the *general being* of Derrida's questioning, we shall simultaneously be following Habermas's lead here. In answering the question of conditions of possibility, we shall therefore attempt to "make explicit the self-referentiality that is already contained in"²⁵⁹² Derrida's questionable speech acts. We shall also be directing ourselves to the "general presuppositions of communicative action...aimed at reaching understanding" through the "validity basis of speech acts."²⁵⁹³ We can only do this, of course, by questioning the "double structure"²⁵⁹⁴ or "inherent reflexivity"²⁵⁹⁵ of Derrida's questioning. By emphasizing the "reflexive structure"²⁵⁹⁶ of Derrida's questioning, it becomes possible to determine the question of the relation between its meaning conditions and truth-values. As Habermas observes, the double structure of language is self-referential in that it makes it possible to question "both how what is said is to be employed and how it is to be understood...The illocutionary portion establishes the sense in which the propositional content is to be employed and the sort of action which the utterance should be understood as."²⁵⁹⁷ While Derrida's questioning might aim to be a "radical critique"²⁵⁹⁸ of what can be rationally understood, he also wants to claim that it "certainly entails a moment of affirmation"²⁵⁹⁹ and such critiques remain "motivated by some kind of affirmation, acknowledged or not. Deconstruction always presupposes affirmation."²⁶⁰⁰ The questions, then, are: what does the general being of Derrida's questioning affirm and how can it do this within the circle of understanding? To some extent, the answer is already *self-evident*: it remains rationally motivated by reason's other and so acts as a "response to a call."²⁶⁰¹ Derrida consistently "maintains two contradictory affirmations"²⁶⁰² towards his own questioning within

²⁵⁹¹ Derrida, Jacques. "As If it Were Possible, Within Such Limits" in *Paper Machine* trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p.85.

²⁵⁹² Habermas, Jürgen. "What is Universal Pragmatics?" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p. 64.

²⁵⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 21.

²⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p.63.

²⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p.64.

²⁵⁹⁶ Habermas, Jürgen. *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays* trans. William Mark Hohengarten (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992), p.64.

²⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid*.

²⁵⁹⁸ Kearney, Richard (ed.) "Deconstruction and the Other" in *Debates in Continental Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), p.149.

²⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid*.

²⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid*.

²⁶⁰¹ *Ibid*.

²⁶⁰² *Ibid*, p.144.

"effective...history."²⁶⁰³ On "the one hand, we affirm the existence of ruptures in history, and on the other we affirm that these ruptures produce gaps or faults in which the most hidden and forgotten archives can emerge and constantly recur throughout history. One must surmount the categorical oppositions of philosophical logic out of fidelity to these conflicting positions of historical discontinuity (rupture) and continuity (repetition), which are neither a pure break with the past nor pure unfolding or explication of it."²⁶⁰⁴ The performative contradiction is the way such questioning becomes "effective or active interventions...that transform contexts without limiting themselves to theoretical or constative utterances even though they must also produce such utterances."²⁶⁰⁵

Although Derrida argues that is impossible to delimit a meaningful context, he nonetheless maintains that we can still ask questions "as if it were possible within such limits."²⁶⁰⁶ Rational thought can attempt to *do* this because all contexts of interpretations remain questionable and so reason can direct itself towards the delimitations in question. The rational status of Derrida's questioning therefore remains similarly open to questioning and/or (re)contextualization: it questions the possibility "to overcome all performative contradictions"²⁶⁰⁷ by way of the quest for the "quasi (or logical-rhetorical fiction of as if)."²⁶⁰⁸ Derrida's questioning turns on the question of the performative status of this *as if* insofar as it returns us to the problem of a language dividing its own identity while constituting it. Specifically, to what extent can Derrida's questioning be thought meaningful and/or true across contexts of interpretation directing (enabling, necessitating) it? We ask this question because Derrida's overall approach turns on the problem of *justifying its context-transcending claims within questionable contexts*. By *moving through* and problematizing the question of conditions of possibility, Derrida's questioning remains conditional and/or necessarily becomes questionable in turn. Indeed, how is it possible for Derrida "to be coherent"²⁶⁰⁹ about the question of "problematic context(s) and strategies"²⁶¹⁰ when answering "the demand for the condition of possibility"²⁶¹¹ across contexts of interpretation?

²⁶⁰³ Derrida, Jacques. "But beyond..." *Critical Inquiry* 12 (Autumn 1985), p.168.

²⁶⁰⁴ Kearney, Richard (ed.) "Deconstruction and the Other" in *Debates in Continental Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), pgs.144-145.

²⁶⁰⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "But beyond..." *Critical Inquiry* 12 (Autumn 1985), p.168.

²⁶⁰⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "As If it Were Possible, Within Such Limits" in *Paper Machine* trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p.85.

²⁶⁰⁷ *ibid*, p.76.

²⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p.83.

²⁶⁰⁹ *ibid*.

²⁶¹⁰ *ibid*.

²⁶¹¹ *ibid*, p.84.

Perhaps the best way to approach this question is via the performative contradiction that makes Derrida's questions possible. That is to say, "who or what decides for Derrida"²⁶¹² when he speaks *through* – and *for* – a complex whole such as language? Part of the problem is whether deconstruction attempts to conceal its ideality (or theoretical status) when talking around the near-mythical status of its discourse.²⁶¹³ Derrida's questioning requires us to ask whether it attempts to disguise (downplay, displace) its own "mastery and totalizing overview"²⁶¹⁴ of the being/s in question. Deconstruction's quasi-transcendental approach appears to contradictorily control or master language in a different way – via the knowledge claim that since language speaks for itself it can only be truthfully spoken for in *this way*. Performatively speaking, Derrida's approach is contradictory in that what he decides to (not) say to other speakers purport to be decisive *either way*. Derrida purports to *speak for* language *to other* language users, and as such, attempts to convince others of the universal validity of particular position/s through speech acts subject to rational appraisal and consideration. We use the term *position* advisedly here. Derrida not only claims to be uniquely positioned within language – to occupy privileged sites of instability and to put other rational thinkers in a similarly unique position – but such positioning invariably becomes a decisive act of positing. Derrida's *logical-rhetorical fiction* asks us to take specific assumptions and directives as a postulate (given) in order to destabilize (upend, direct) our relationship to language. While Derrida might claim that deconstruction cannot itself be defined (stabilized, situated), he nonetheless defers to certain "quasi-entities"²⁶¹⁵ (such as difference and pharmakon) to stabilize (organize, direct) the *general being* of his questioning. Derrida argues *as if* what he says and does in particular contexts is unconditionally meaningful and true over and above the contexts in question. The myth of quasi-beings must be *taken as given*, and is thought epistemologically superior to the rational order of beings in that it *proves to be* more efficacious as a device for working a manageable structure into the flux of experience. The question, then, is the role quasi-transcendental entities like pharmakon and difference actively play within Derrida's questioning. More specifically, the ways such questionable entities decide (enable and/or direct) Derrida's overall movements and questioning: to what extent can a *logical-rhetorical fiction* have general truth-value or be generally thought truth-bearing? Derrida's interpretation of the term pharmakon might have

²⁶¹² Miller, Hillis Joseph. *For Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), p.9. It is worth stressing that Miller provides a very sympathetic interpretation of the general being of Derrida's questioning and (generally speaking) offers an exposition of Derrida's overall approach. We restate Miller's question in a more critical context here.

²⁶¹³ We have already acknowledged (in our first chapter on Derrida) that Derrida had been revered as an 'intellectual demigod' in some quarters, and that such devotion had attracted a 'cult following' among 'disciples' similarly 'seduced by unreason.'

²⁶¹⁴ Caputo, John. *More Radical Hermeneutics: On Not Knowing Who We Are* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), p.96. Caputo – like Miller – provides a very sympathetic interpretation of Derrida's overall approach, and we merely quote Caputo – like Miller – in a more critical context.

²⁶¹⁵ Ibid.

originated in a particular context,²⁶¹⁶ but it invariably comes to occupy a privileged role across contexts of interpretation. Specifically, Derrida claims that the pharmakon is "the prior medium in which differentiation in general is produced" since it is "the *différance* of difference" itself.²⁶¹⁷ While Derrida argues that the pharmakon's meaning can never be decided in the context/s originally interpreted and/or moves beyond any given context of interpretation, its undecidable meaning is said to exemplify a more general and active mode of (non) being.

If the *pharmakon* is 'ambivalent', it is because it constitutes the medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play that links them among themselves, reverses them or makes one side cross over into the other...The *pharmakon* is the movement, the locus, and the play: (the production of) difference. It is the *différance* of difference. It holds in reserve, in its undecided shadow and vigil, the opposites and the differends that the process of discrimination will come to carve out...the opposition between different effects.²⁶¹⁸

Note the way Derrida questions the pharmakon's *omnipresence* – by determining the ways the pharmakon actively disrupts and displaces the metaphysics of presence. Derrida's questioning maintains that such a 'non-being' trans/forms the contexts – and beings – in question. Derrida speaks as if the pharmakon is itself re/productive and trans/formative, and his questioning purports to determine the performative status of the quasi being/s in question. Performatively speaking, it is the pharmakon which *speaks through* (enacts) language, and Derrida's communicative acts purport to follow its actions by directing thought back towards the ways it identifies and distinguishes itself there. Derrida's interpretation of the pharmakon's 'speech' acts *as if* it were an absolute performative: it is understood to be a quasi (or non)²⁶¹⁹ being that does not depend on anything else for its existence or occurrence, and so remains *beyond* human understanding and control. Derrida's interpretation speaks *as if* the pharmakon's way-making movements occur without conditions or limitations, and its mode of being (actions) cannot be legislated or infringed upon. Derrida's illocutionary point is that the general being of language is itself performative, and so exercises illocutionary force in its own right (ways that are appropriate for a given situation or condition, and acting in accord with its own sense of propriety and justice). As Derrida consistently maintains, "the disappearance of truth as presence, the withdrawal of the present origin of presence, is the condition of all (manifestation of) truth. Nontruth is the truth. Nonpresence is presence. *Différance*, the disappearance of any originary

²⁶¹⁶ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson. (London: Continuum, 2004).

²⁶¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.125.

²⁶¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.130.

²⁶¹⁹ *Ibid*. Derrida maintains here that "the pharmakon, without being anything in itself, always exceeds" beings "in constituting their bottomless fund. It keeps itself forever in reserve even though it has no fundamental profundity fundity nor ultimate locality", p.130.

presence, is at once the condition of possibility and the condition of impossibility of truth."²⁶²⁰ Derrida's claim to knowledge thereby moves within the circle enabling and/or directing the general being of his questioning and its corresponding ontological commitment to non-beings. The circle directs Derrida's communicative actions by moving them (back) towards the question of the nature of the relationship between the construction of beings and/or their inevitable deconstruction. While Derrida's questioning can only ontologically commit itself to a logical-rhetorical fiction, the question remains: to what extent is it possible to presuppose or imply the existence of 'quasi beings' when presupposing the existence (or reality) of 'beings'? That is to say, to speak as *if* language itself speaks and/or cannot be spoken for within language? Derrida speaks, of course, as if it were possible to speak about such a limitless non-being within specific limits (or beings): it is the being of language that makes the general being of his questioning possible in the first place. The pharmakon might be undecidable, but the role it actively plays within Derrida's argument nonetheless becomes decisive. Derrida's interpretation of the pharmakon's performativity is directed and stabilised in a particular way – via a fusion of horizons calling into question any possible meaning (activity). Witness the way the pharmakon – and related "forces of association"²⁶²¹ with words such as pharmakos (wizard, magician, poisoner, scapegoat)²⁶²² – actively become meaningful within an interpretation directed towards other interpreters. Although Derrida's questioning might place emphasis on ruptures within history, it can only *argue for* the pharmakon's undecidable status by bringing forth the possibility of an effective historical consciousness (or "the unity between"²⁶²³ interpreter and interpreted). Derrida's questioning actively defers to *relations of presupposition* defining the contexts (or situations) in question. Effective historical consciousness determines Derrida's interpretation by being "already effectual in finding the right questions to ask."²⁶²⁴ And Derrida can only do this

²⁶²⁰ *ibid.*, p.168.

²⁶²¹ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson. (London: Continuum, 2004), p.132.

²⁶²² *ibid.* If we recall, Derrida's interpretation of the pharmakon's meaning goes beyond what Plato's original text tries to stabilize and extends to the Plato's subsequent writing about the trial and execution of the accused sorcerer Socrates elsewhere (where he becomes a pharmakos – scapegoat – and is forced to drink a pharmakon – poison – in order to cure a social ill such as destabilizing philosophical questions). Specifically, Derrida argues as if the differential movements of the pharmakon is already always in play within Plato's original text (*Phaedrus*) and so occurs contextually (or in other con/texts). While the related term pharmakos might not be actually present there, "for all its hiddenness, for all that it might escape Plato's notice, is nevertheless something that passes through certain discoverable points of presence" elsewhere.

²⁶²³ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996), p. 299. Gadamer is talking about here, of course, of the "relationship that constitutes both the reality of history and the reality of historical understanding", *ibid.*

²⁶²⁴ *ibid.*, p.301. According to Gadamer, the "principle of history of effect" determines "in advance both what seems to us worth inquiring and what will appear as an object of investigation", *ibid.*, p.300.

by "acquiring the right horizon of inquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition."²⁶²⁵

Reconstructing Derrida's Argument with Plato.

We must therefore reconstruct the way Derrida argues about reason's conditions of possibility. We do this to determine the limits of Derrida's quasi-transcendental approach to the being of the question and so delimit the ways it can be thought possible (meaningful, true). We shall thereby question the way it is possible for Derrida to argue that the rationality of reason remains impossible and/or irrational. We can only do this by bringing forth the performative contradiction within Derrida's reasoning about reason. We shall argue that deconstructing the relative stability of the dominant interpretation within a given text is only possible because Derrida can implicitly raise three different validity claims within meaningfully available – and intentionally related – contexts. Furthermore, such a questionable approach contradictorily attempts to become relatively stable in that it seeks dominance over the contexts in question. Derrida can only occupy a privileged site of instability if he can thus first stabilize his context of interpretation, and orient it towards the possibility of mutual understanding and agreement. Although Derrida maintains that deconstruction cannot be meaningfully defined or situated, it nonetheless remains an object of inquiry delimited by its own purview. To do deconstruction justice, we must therefore question its conditions of possibility, and such questioning (reconstruction) remains an interrogation of its mode of being. The question immediately before us is: to what extent is it possible to "argue with Derrida"?²⁶²⁶ We shall argue that the best way to argue with Derrida is by *being with* him, and so determine the ways the contexts in question argue with – or deconstruct – themselves. Following Derrida's lead, then, to argue *with* Derrida is to agree that a con/text invariably disagrees with its arguments, throwing the context back into (a) question and/or (an) argument. If we are to question the limits of Derrida's quasi-transcendental approach, we must therefore *move with* and *against* Derrida by similarly rationally accommodating ourselves to the very relations of presupposition in question. Such a rational *reconstruction* directs us (back) towards the question of deconstruction's conditions of possibility. Specifically, where *arguing with* Derrida requires us to embed deconstructive speech acts "within three world relations, and claiming validity for them under these aspects."²⁶²⁷ We do this in order to determine the ways in which a rationally motivated agreement about quasi-transcendental entities such as the pharmakon and/or difference simultaneously becomes

²⁶²⁵ *ibid*, p. 302.

²⁶²⁶ Bennington, Geoffrey. "For The Sake of Argument (Up to a Point)" in Glendinning, Simon (ed.) *Arguing With Derrida* (London: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), pp., 34-52.

²⁶²⁷ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), p.308.

possible and impossible. The aim is to question the truth-value of a logical-rhetorical fiction bringing forth the question of reason's conditions of possibility and/or rationality (reason for being-there). In determining the performative status of Derrida's transcendental questioning, we must thereby determine the limits of reason's *acceptability conditions*. We shall argue that Derrida's questioning is valid insofar as it raises the question of how it can become *rationaly acceptable*.²⁶²⁸ The answer turns on the performative status of possible *criticizable validity claims* and their corresponding *binding and bonding forces*. Following Habermas, the question of the rationality of reason remains conditional upon the possibility of giving reasons: it is determined by whether reason can actively question its *reasons for being-there*.

We understand a speech act when *we know* the kinds of reasons that a speaker could provide in order to convince a hearer that he is entitled in the given circumstances to claim validity for his utterance – in short, when we (can) know what makes it (rationally) acceptable. A speaker, with a validity claim, appeals to a reservoir of potential reasons that he could produce in support of the claim. The reasons interpret the validity conditions and to this extent are themselves part of the conditions that make an utterance acceptable.²⁶²⁹

The three worlds remain part of a complex whole: questioning our knowledge of the world of experience involves bringing the respective parts together and determining the rationality (reasons for) their relationship to each other. Interpreters are thereby oriented towards reaching mutual understanding through the validity claims in question, and become rationally motivated to provide reasons subject to questioning and/or argumentation across related domains. Our rational reconstruction of Derrida's deconstruction of Plato's text shall therefore proceed in two interdependent parts. In the first part, we elucidate *the way* Derrida implicitly raises validity claims. In the second part, we observe the role the lifeworld actively plays in determining Derrida's *way-making movements*.

Truth/Objectivity

According to Habermas, our *conception of truth* remains conditional upon the existence of an objective world acting upon any given interpretation of it.²⁶³⁰ Although Habermas maintains that

²⁶²⁸ Habermas, Jürgen. "Social Action, Purposive Activity, and Communication" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p.132. According to Habermas, "We understand a speech act when we know what makes it acceptable...A speech act may be called acceptable if it satisfies the conditions that are necessary in order for the hearer to take a "yes" position on the claim raised by the speaker."

²⁶²⁹ Ibid, pp. 232-233.

²⁶³⁰ Habermas, Jürgen. "Realism After the Linguistic Turn" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003). We shall primarily be citing Habermas's attempt to move

our conception of objects remains linguistically determined, bound and mediated, the *concept of objectivity* emerges as a *coping strategy* across given interpretive contexts: it arises via breakdowns in understanding and their corresponding truth-values.²⁶³¹ Given the possibility of conflicting or competing interpretations of the very objective world thrown into question, "it is not truth as such but the epistemic concept of ascertaining truth that is the regulative idea guiding our practices of inquiry and justification."²⁶³² The presupposition of *ontological realism* is therefore necessarily built into our actions insofar as an independent reality transcends and/or acts upon our directed statements – and it is that context-transcending realm that we turn (back) to via the performativity of our truth-claims.

What we want to express with true sentences is that a certain state of affairs 'obtains' or is 'given.' And these facts in turn refer to 'the world' as the totality of things about which we may state facts. This ontological way of speaking establishes a connection between truth and reference, that is, between the truth of statements and the 'objectivity' of that about which something is stated. The concept of the 'objective world' encompasses everything that subjects capable of speech and action do not 'make themselves' irrespective of their interventions and inventions. This enables them to refer to things that can be identified as the same under different descriptions. The experience of 'coping' accounts for two determinations of 'objectivity': the fact that the way the world is not up to us; and the fact that it is the *same* for all of us. Beliefs are confirmed in action by something different than in discourse.²⁶³³

Derrida's deconstruction of Plato's 'text' implicitly adopts this *ontological way of speaking*. Derrida's contextual strategy actively refers to the way Plato's *pharmaceutical operation* breaks down and becomes a way of performatively coping with the textual breakdown in question. Consequently, Derrida more than just claims that non-truth is the truth in this particular context of interpretation: he demonstrates a connection between truth and reference across interpretive contexts by arguing as if the truth of non-truth is an "unconditional (truth) claim that points

beyond an epistemic conception of truth here – towards his equally problematic attempt to bridge the gap between truth and epistemology. By this stage, Habermas acknowledges that while "we cannot sever the connection of truth and justification, this *epistemically unavoidable* connection must not be turned into a *conceptually inseparable* connection in the form of an epistemic concept of truth", p.38. So although competing truth-claims can only justify themselves in epistemic terms (via the reasons given), the concept of truth cannot be *identified* with what may be thought rationally justified (the given reasons).

²⁶³¹ Habermas, Jürgen. "Rightness versus Truth: On the Sense of Normative Validity in Moral Judgments and Norms" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), p.255.

²⁶³² Habermas, Jürgen. "Norms and Values: On Hilary Putnam's Kantian Pragmatism" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), pp.226-27.

²⁶³³ Habermas, Jürgen. "Rightness versus Truth: On the Sense of Normative Validity in Moral Judgments and Norms" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), p.254.

beyond all the evidence available to us."²⁶³⁴ Derrida argues for the universality of this claim by maintaining that his statements are true over and above the context of their occurrence (beings in question), and provides textual evidence for an independent or objective reality (limitless contexts) *in action* there. Derrida's coping strategy remains tied to the *rationality of reason giving* insofar as he provides reasons for the occurrence of non-being. The reason being: the substitution and exchange of meaningful beings are exemplified by the pharmakon's mode of *non-being-there*. The particular evidence provided for reasoning about the reproduction of difference presupposes a necessary relationship between the truth-value of his questioning and an objective world being questioned as such – namely, that conditions of possibility are conditional upon the totality of objects and/or events making truly meaningful statements impossible in the first place. Derrida's way-making moments are said to follow the lead of the differential relations and forces in question – and his ontological commitment remains true – faithful, consistent with an objective reality – by *acting and/or being in accord with* the occurrence of non-truth. The context in question therefore becomes questionable and/or necessary because it remains part of a complex whole that cannot meaningfully answer for itself in such a rational (decisive) way. Such contexts of interpretation merely call back into question their relationship to an objective state of affairs understood as a limitless context – which are said to be determined by undecidable structures and subject to differential forces that 'for all their hiddenness...pass through discoverable points of presence'.

Normative/Social

According to Habermas, "normative rightness must be regarded as a claim to validity that is analogous to a truth claim"²⁶³⁵ and "actualize an already established pattern of relations."²⁶³⁶ Claims to universal validity therefore imply that they are "covered by existing norms, and that means by (at least) de facto recognition of the claim that these norms rightfully exist."²⁶³⁷ Note that Habermas claims that normative rightness is *analogous* to an unconditional truth claim and not equivalent to it. The requirement, then, is to determine the way distinct universal validity conditions may be similarly (or simultaneously) upheld and/or become comparable. The point of comparison turns on, of course, the question of the *discursive justification* of the corresponding unconditional validity claims. According to Habermas, "truth is a justification-

²⁶³⁴ Habermas, Jürgen. "Rorty's Pragmatic Turn" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p. 358.

²⁶³⁵ Habermas, Jürgen. *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* trans. Christian Lenhardt (MIT Press: Massachusetts, 1990), p.197.

²⁶³⁶ Habermas, Jürgen. *Communication and the Evolution of Society* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Heinemann: London, 1979), p. 54.

²⁶³⁷ *ibid.*

transcendent concept"²⁶³⁸ that "must be met by (objective) reality itself."²⁶³⁹ Normative rightness, however, is a "justification-immanent"²⁶⁴⁰ concept that emerges within a *socially constructed* world of "well-ordered interpersonal relationships."²⁶⁴¹ The corresponding validity claim is therefore determined "in terms of social conditions and relations of reciprocal recognition"²⁶⁴² and mutual understanding. Given our attempt to reconstruct Derrida's claim that non-truth is the truth²⁶⁴³, we find ourselves *arguing with* Derrida in another way. Contextual relevance plays an integral role in determining the justificatory immanence of Derrida's reason giving here. Normative rightness is *thereby* determined by the very contexts in question. Witness the way someone might be accused of asking too many questions or for being an argumentative person. Given the context – say, an employee within a workplace – their questions and arguments might be thought completely out of place. Suppose, however, the employee is a trained philosopher and the workplace a university – questions and arguments come with the territory. Also note the commonplace concern that everyone's comments may be taken out of context: when finding their way into a different set of circumstances informing their occurrence (possible meaning), the original comments might come to mean something entirely different or other than intended. The resulting misunderstanding (confusion or disagreement) therefore raises the issue of justifying the context in question: in what way can the justification be thought immanent (operating *within* and *across* contexts)? We are now in a position to reconstruct the contextual relevance of Derrida's questions and arguments insofar as it prescribes and administers a limitless context in accord with a given 'rule' (action or text) that *should* be similarly *followed and understood*. Note that Derrida's attempt to displace the logical space of reasons is itself placed or situated via "the cultural embodiment of reason."²⁶⁴⁴ Derrida's quasi-transcendental questioning does not come from *out of space*: it occurs in a grounded sequence of potentially related linguistic interactions that may be subject to criticizable validity claims in re-turn. Derrida's argument with Plato occurs within the context of a *circumscribed* text similarly opening itself up to boundless or immeasurable contexts. Derrida has followed established norms by arguing in a delimited text bearing his name, and this place of writing has been published and disseminated in other contexts of interpretation. It's contextually relevant, then, that Derrida's argument was not (say) written on a disposable napkin or sent by carrier pigeon. Nor did

²⁶³⁸ Habermas, Jürgen. "Rightness Versus Truth: On the Sense of Normative Validity in Moral Judgments and Norms" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), p.248.

²⁶³⁹ *ibid.*

²⁶⁴⁰ *ibid.*

²⁶⁴¹ *ibid.*

²⁶⁴² *ibid.*

²⁶⁴³ Amongst other related claims of course.

²⁶⁴⁴ Habermas, Jürgen. "Norms and Values: On Hilary Putnam's Kantian Pragmatism" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), p.218.

Derrida's text go up in smoke in the form of skywriting or was it scattered to the winds via smoke signal. Equally significant is that Derrida's text occurs in an interrogative and argumentative mode of being-there: the selected linguistic actions do not serve the communicative function of (say) an apology, greeting, accusation or refusal. Derrida's prescribed text remains *directed towards* other texts and contexts and *proceeds from* the assumption that it will reach its destination(s) as intended. Derrida intends to be understood correctly in that the delimited context in question might clear up any *possible misunderstanding* via the possibility of an *adequation between meaning and saying*.²⁶⁴⁵ Suffice to say, the normative rightness of Derrida's questioning remains a decisive turning point in the historicity of understanding in that texts arguing for the undecidability of meaning and reproduction of difference are covered by existing norms regulating the identity (contextualization or identification) of meaning: it presupposes that contextually relevant standards or patterns may be rightfully deferred to (called upon and enacted) when performing meaningful actions.²⁶⁴⁶ The question, then, is the contextual relevance of Derrida's text: in what way may it be normatively justified when also calling into question the notion of normative justification? Derrida's questioning of Plato's *pharmaceutical operation* remains prescriptive in that existing norms are imported into the situation as a *convenient intermediary acting between* interpreters. The performative status of Derrida's quasi-transcendental questioning, then, does not just occur with respect to the way it raises a justification-transcendent truth claim. Derrida's questioning also occurs by way of an analogous legal claim to the *justification* of the social construction of norms relating to evaluating standards for thinking and acting. Derrida presupposes that *the way* we should turn to the beings in question is through those questionable practices and relations already woven into the fabric of the social world. Consequently, Derrida simultaneously raises a universal validity claim concerning the normative rightness of his questioning and arguments – namely, that the being

²⁶⁴⁵ Derrida, Jacques. "Limited INC a b c" in *Limited INC* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p.51 and 62 respectively. Derrida implicitly calls on normative rightness, for example, when he complains that Searle was not "sufficiently present" to what he was originally "writing or rewriting." He then goes on to contradictorily argue – via a normatively right claim – that no one can be (completely) present and accounted for anyway when defending his own writing: there can never be "all adequation between meaning and saying" since context "leaves us no choice but to mean (to say) something that is (already, always, also) other than what we mean (to say), to say something other than what we say and would have wanted to say, to understand something other than."

²⁶⁴⁶ Compare Derrida's actions to that of Cratylus as reported in Plato's *Cratylus* (383a1–384e2, 427d–440e) and Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (4.1010a). During Plato's dialogue, Cratylus argues against the position that language is conventional in nature and defends the claim that words naturally (and so adequately) represent a world in a constant state of flux. Aristotle subsequently reports that Cratylus's commitment to Heraclitus's naturalism – via the ontological standard of universal flux – led him to abandon social convention and retreating into complete silence. If language truthfully represents things in nature, meaning must also be in a constant state of flux and so nothing can be truthfully said about it and/or to one another. Cratylus allegedly resorted to wagging and/or pointing his finger as a way of communicating the fact that one cannot even step into the *same river once* let alone the *same one twice*.

of the question is normatively right because it is rationally motivated and/or directed by the (non) truth-values of the beings in question. Arguing with Derrida involves a tacit commitment to the possibility (meaningfulness, truthfulness) of the *question* of the rationality of reason in a publicly *contested and evaluable* space of reasons. Derrida's general approach purports to follow the lead of questionable speech acts across a limitless context – and such a delimitation remains determined by its relationship to the normative context/s enabling such questions and arguments. Consequently, Derrida's interpretation of the pharmakon's movements remain answerable insofar as it follows its lead by *administering and/or prescribing* questionable (undecidable) contexts as the most legitimate (decisive, truthful) *social norm or standard* (prescription or directive put forward and followed there). The question of its own performative status is determined by way of the normative context(s) prescribing its way-making movements in the first place – and so remains answerable to the contexts (prescriptions) in question accordingly.

Sincerity/Truthfulness

According to Habermas, "truthfulness guarantees the transparency of a subjectivity representing itself in language."²⁶⁴⁷ Consequently, recognition of a subject's *truthfulness* is a necessary condition for reaching mutual understanding and agreement about the objective world. The possibility of speaking truthfully therefore raises a universal validity claim to subjective self-presentation about objective states of affairs in normative contexts. The presuppositions of objective truth and normative rightness thereby remain conditional upon the related possibility of *sincerely throwing the world into question*. While Derrida might seek to displace the possibility of rational subjects being (fully) present to themselves and/or the contexts in question, a rational reconstruction nonetheless urges that being rationally *present and accounted for* remains integral anyway. Consequently, all presentations – the giving of reasons via deconstructive reasoning – remain potentially criticizable with respect to the personal sincerity (openness and self-disclosure) of linguistic interactions presupposing mutual trust and understanding. If "a hearer challenges the truthfulness of a speaker's claim, the speaker cannot show her sincerity by arguing, because the truthfulness of her expressions, including her arguments, is precisely that which is at issue. Instead, she can show her sincerity only by acting in a manner consistent with her expressed intentions."²⁶⁴⁸ Derrida's claims about reason's inability to consistently express and/or present (decide) its truth-claims therefore raises a performatively contradictory universal validity claim. Derrida's questioning about reason's

²⁶⁴⁷ Habermas, Jürgen. "What is Universal Pragmatics?" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p. 80.

²⁶⁴⁸ Warnke, Georgia. "Communicative Rationality and Cultural Values" in White, K. Stephen (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

inability to *integrate* beings presupposes the ontological commitment of the very *integrated* being in question: the *integrity* of Derrida's truth-claims can only be possible if the sincerity of his questioning remains unquestionable. It is not only possible for Derrida to *say what he means*; such a possibility remains conditional upon *meaning what he says* and *believing what is said* (meant). Derrida's (ontological) condition of being *thus whole or undivided* – via adherence to differential relations and processes – remains *consistent with* his expressed actions: it contradictorily defers to a relationship between truthful subjective self-presentation and objective presentations of truth in order to reintegrate (re-contextualise) the question of the normativity (integrity, rightness) of our own practical identities in turn. Arguing with Derrida presupposes the possibility of an agreement with Derrida's world of subjective experiences (*sincerely given* reasons to displace or *take away* the space of reasons). It is therefore part of Derrida's communicative intent that we mutually understand and/or sincerely agree that his statements are capable of truth and are being expressed truthfully.

Contexts of Interpretation

We have thus far reconstructed Derrida by directing ourselves (back) to the question of three world relations and their corresponding validity claims. We now move beyond the "ontological presuppositions"²⁶⁴⁹ of three world relations to bring forth the question of the "background knowledge of the lifeworld."²⁶⁵⁰ We now transfer Derrida's questioning to reason's relation to "lifeworld contexts in which processes of reaching understanding are always embedded"²⁶⁵¹ and moving. Habermas argues that "because acting subjects have to cope with the world, they cannot avoid being (ontological) realists in the context of their lifeworld."²⁶⁵² Specifically, "as subjects capable of speech and action, language users must be able to *refer to something* in the objective world from within the horizon of their shared lifeworld if they are to reach an understanding *about something* in communicating with one another."²⁶⁵³ Given the implicit presupposition of ontological realism, language users must also presuppose "orientation toward unconditional truth"²⁶⁵⁴ when making criticisable validity claims. The lifeworld, of course, is

²⁶⁴⁹ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2, Lifeworld and System: a Critique of Functionalist Reason* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p.120.

²⁶⁵⁰ Habermas, Jürgen. "Actions, Speech Acts, Linguistically Mediated Interactions and Lifeworld" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p. 242.

²⁶⁵¹ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2, Lifeworld and System: a Critique of Functionalist Reason* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p.183.

²⁶⁵² Habermas, Jürgen. "Richard Rorty's Pragmatic Turn" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p.370.

²⁶⁵³ Habermas, Jürgen. "Realism After the Linguistic Turn" in *Truth and Justification* trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), p.89.

²⁶⁵⁴ Habermas, Jürgen. "Richard Rorty's Pragmatic Turn" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p.370.

composed of interpretations *taken as given* and generally re/produces itself beyond "the threshold"²⁶⁵⁵ of rational understanding and questioning. Lifeworld contexts therefore raise the question of reason's relationship to "the unquestioned ground of everything given in my experience, and the unquestionable frame in which all the problems I have to deal with are located."²⁶⁵⁶ Within the context of rationally reconstructing Derrida's questioning, the problem is locating reason's conditions of possibility and/or given intentional horizon. Although Habermas provisionally distinguishes between the concept of the lifeworld from his conception of three (other) worlds, all these worlds are obviously related to each other. While the three world relations – and their corresponding ontological presuppositions – presuppose the possibility of criticizable validity claims, Habermas claims that the lifeworld is the "transcendental site"²⁶⁵⁷ that makes questioning possible in the first place. The lifeworld determines our being-there because it is "where speaker and hearer meet, where they can reciprocally raise claims that their utterances fit the world (objective, social, or subjective), and where they can criticize and confirm those validity claims, settle their disagreements, and arrive at agreements."²⁶⁵⁸ By being in the background, the lifeworld trans/forms "the incalculable web of presuppositions that have to be satisfied if an actual utterance is to be at all meaningful, that is, valid *or* invalid"²⁶⁵⁹.

Lifeworld contexts can be seen to play the role of transcendental site within Derrida's argument about (speech) activities of the pharmakon and/or difference. The validity of Derrida's argument therefore turns on the way the lifeworld trans/forms – speaks through and to – Plato's text across contexts of interpretation. Derrida's questioning, then, remains directed by "the question of how the lifeworld – as the horizon within which communicative actions are always already moving"²⁶⁶⁰ – is itself rationally determined (constructed) and evaluated (deconstructed). Specifically, it is the context of effective history which makes Derrida's questioning simultaneously possible and impossible. Derrida argues, of course, that contexts are limitless, and any delimitation of beings are constantly trans/formed by differential relations and forces. Consequently, the very act of trans/formation keeps the beings in question open to interpretation and/or questioning (recontextualization). We need to put a constraint upon such a knowledge claim: contexts may be delimited – brought into being and/or question – if beings can be meaningfully interpreted and questioned. Although Derrida argues with Plato in distinct ways,

²⁶⁵⁵ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 2, *Lifeworld and System: a Critique of Functionalist Reason* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p.183., p.131.

²⁶⁵⁶ *ibid.* Habermas is quoting Alfred Schutz's and Thomas Lukmann's *Structures of the Lifeworld* with approval here.

²⁶⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p.126.

²⁶⁵⁸ *ibid.*

²⁶⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p.119.

²⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.119.

his general movements follows two main directives. On the one hand, Derrida argues that "for all its hiddenness, for all that it might escape Plato's notice, (there) is nevertheless something that passes through certain discoverable *points of presence* that can be seen in the text."²⁶⁶¹ Derrida thereby claims to be able to trace the pharmakon's *undecidable* meaning through wayward movements (pathways, performativity) across Plato's text's accordingly. On the other hand, Derrida also claims to be able to retrace the pharmakon's movements through an "absent"²⁶⁶² word that exerts performative "force"²⁶⁶³ regardless – via the pharmakon's relationship to a missing term that remains present and *accounted* for. Despite the fact that the term "*pharmakos* (wizard, magician, poisoner)"²⁶⁶⁴ does not directly occur within Plato's argument, Derrida argues that it is directing (acting upon) it anyway. The "word in question"²⁶⁶⁵ derives its force from lifeworld contexts in that it remains directed by the entanglement between word(s) and world(s). Specifically, "provided the articulations are rigorously and prudently recognized, one should be able to untangle the hidden forces of attraction linking a present word within an absent word in the text of Plato."²⁶⁶⁶

Derrida's argument emerges, of course, within the context of Plato's own argument about the pharmakon. Plato's argument is said to be divided against itself because the dialogue cannot decide – say, write – the validity (performativity) of its meaning. The pharmakon of writing remains undecided for a given reason: the context of its occurrence cannot be decided upon either way. Derrida decisively argues that Plato cannot rationally administer the pharmakon of writing in his writings. It is not possible to prescribe or apply the context of its occurrence when the pharmakon's possible meaning lies beyond rational understanding or control. Consequently, Derrida's argument with Plato goes further – back to the way a limitless context constructs and/or deconstructs Plato's contextual strategies. Derrida is thereby able to demonstrate that its condition of possibility is simultaneously a condition of impossibility – by *actively bringing forth* the role background knowledge (context) effectively plays in Plato's text.

Following Habermas, we shall divide lifeworld contexts into two main constitutive parts: foreground and background knowledge. These two parts form a complex whole in that the status of knowledge claims can only be meaningfully determined in relation to what can actively be brought forward, held back and/or thrown into (a) question throughout effective history. That is to say, historically distinct – and effected – interpreters cannot simply distinguish between

²⁶⁶¹ *ibid*, p.132.

²⁶⁶² *ibid*.

²⁶⁶³ *ibid*,

²⁶⁶⁴ *ibid*, p.133.

²⁶⁶⁵ *ibid*.

²⁶⁶⁶ *ibid*, p.130.

lifeworlds or contexts of interpretation. Interpreters are themselves part of lifeworld contexts, and the performative status of their questioning moves within the complex whole in question. The (hermeneutical) situation remains complex because it turns on the question of definitions of situations themselves. Given knowledge claims are determined by a historically effected consciousness insofar as they are *embedded within* and/or *directed by* the context of effective history. The lifeworld's foreground, then, consists of an interpreter's ability to understand an utterance in any given situation and "most of what is said in everyday communicative practices remains unproblematic."²⁶⁶⁷ Habermas divides such foreground knowledge into "situation specific horizontal knowledge"²⁶⁶⁸ and "topic dependent contextual knowledge"²⁶⁶⁹ Horizontal knowledge refers to shared presuppositions taken as given within a speech situation – such as a speaker's ability to argue with another speaker and/or question the content of their arguments. Topic dependent contextual knowledge is what is presupposed – or shared – within the "framework of a common milieu or horizon of subjective experience."²⁶⁷⁰ Topic dependent contextual knowledge therefore makes it possible to question the context of their occurrence, or the way presuppositions arguably relate to each other.

The "deep-seated background knowledge"²⁶⁷¹ of the lifeworld, however, is always "implicitly and pre-reflexively present"²⁶⁷², and raises the question of what cannot be directly presented and/or directed. Such tacit knowledge claims – insofar as they can be known – are distinguished by their "mode of immediate certainty"²⁶⁷³, "totalizing power"²⁶⁷⁴ and "holistic constitution."²⁶⁷⁵ Given that such knowledge occurs in the background and remains part of a complex whole, it cannot be consciously brought forward or mobilized (thematized and questioned) in its entirety. The background might belong to and/or determine *the question of our being-there*, but it primarily remains just that (or *there*): beyond the realm of rational understanding, control or questioning. The lifeworld is therefore best understood as a "culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns"²⁶⁷⁶ of potentially questionable relevance and/or commitments. The (hermeneutical) situation facing any given interpretation, then, is: to what extent can the lifeworld be brought forth and/or questioned within a rational reconstruction?

²⁶⁶⁷ Habermas, Jürgen. "Actions, Speech Acts, Linguistically Mediated Interactions and Lifeworld" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p. 240.

²⁶⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 241.

²⁶⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁶⁷¹ Ibid, p.242.

²⁶⁷² Ibid, p. 243.

²⁶⁷³ Ibid.

²⁶⁷⁴ Ibid, p.244.

²⁶⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁷⁶ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2, Lifeworld and System: a Critique of Functionalist Reason* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p.124.

We ask this question, of course, in order to rationally reconstruct the event(s) of Derrida's questioning. Given that the *being of the question* delimits an ontological commitment, Derrida's answer to *the question of being* determines the way meaningful beings can be thus situated (defined and/or specified). An ontological commitment thereby provides a "context of relevance"²⁶⁷⁷ and/or potentially questionable "relevance structures"²⁶⁷⁸ within given situations – by questioning the way they may "become relevant to (the definition of the) situation."²⁶⁷⁹ The *critical question* is the way rational thinkers can commit themselves to the corresponding ontology, and so requires us to question Derrida's criteria of relevance or adequacy within given situations – i.e., in what ways can Derrida's questioning be thought relevant or adequate? Following Habermas, "situations do not get 'defined' in the sense of being sharply delimited. They always have a horizon that shift with the theme. A situation is a segment of a lifeworld's contexts of relevance that is thrown into relief by themes"²⁶⁸⁰ and questions. Consequently, relevance structures occur as "interconnections of meaning holding between a given communicative utterance, the immediate context, and its connotative horizon of meanings. Contexts of relevance are based on *grammatically regulated* relations among the elements of a *linguistically organized* stock of knowledge."²⁶⁸¹

Derrida *argues with* Plato, of course, from within the context of Plato's presuppositions and ontological commitments. The pharmakon's *interconnections of meaning* and *connotative horizons of meaning* acquire their contextual relevance accordingly. Derrida's argument about the transcendental role of 'non-beings' such as the pharmakon and/or difference thereby occurs immanently, and attempts to move beyond the immediate context of their occurrence. Correspondingly, Derrida's argument about the pharmakon's differential movements similarly derive from the context in which rationally ordered beings arise and move. The pharmakon's undecidable truth-values therefore occur in relation to Plato's criteria of relevance, and Derrida's argument is an attempt to recontextualize the meaning of their being-there. Specifically, Derrida questions the way Plato's text argues with itself, and Derrida's argument calls on Plato's context to throw the question of (non) beings back into questioning. Derrida thereby brings forth and contextualizes the question of the relation between foreground and background knowledge. Following Habermas, the argument's *foreground knowledge* can be divided into two main parts: *context-specific horizontal knowledge* and *topic dependent contextual knowledge*. Within the context of Plato's argument – or Derrida's interpretation and recontextualization of it – horizontal knowledge occurs via the presupposition of what can be meaningfully determined. The

²⁶⁷⁷ *ibid.*

²⁶⁷⁸ *ibid.*

²⁶⁷⁹ *ibid.*

²⁶⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p.122.

²⁶⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.124.

dialogue's context-specific horizontal knowledge constitutes the "centre of the speech situation"²⁶⁸² in that it is tacitly aware that we speak to share our knowledge and that many shared beliefs can be mistaken or open to question. It is taken as a given that a body of discourse may be ridden with false or ill-suited beliefs, and the Platonic dialogues are centred around a more ideal speech situation: the possibility and/or desirability of such beliefs being true. Every speaker implicitly knows of situations, for example, where information might be false or falsified – and such situations should be remedied wherever possible. The ideal is to speak (know) the truth or speak as if what is said is true. Such horizontal knowledge gives rise to another situation within Plato's dialogue – and Derrida's interpretation of it. It purports to follow a vertical movement (or an "epistemological ascent")²⁶⁸³ and so moves towards the possibility of reaching a higher level of knowledge reflected in the well-being of the body politic. While such foreground knowledge might be taken as given, an unasked question typically remains in the background: how can reason rise to such a situation – i.e., how can true knowledge be possible or be meaningfully spoken about? The second form of foreground knowledge occurring here is the argument's topic dependent contextual knowledge. Specifically, Plato – and correspondingly, Derrida – foregrounds the problem of remedying questionable knowledge claims via the topic of writing as a *pharmakon*, and the dialogue speaks *through* "pharmaceutical"²⁶⁸⁴ concepts to bring forth and administer the question of whether writing is a poison or cure. Plato argues that the problem calls for a situation where false speech (acts) can be rationally questioned, and it actively prescribes the situation of questioning the *pharmakon*'s meaningful limits via the (performatively contradictory) act of writing. The rational status of topic dependent contextual knowledge appears to have a prescribed limit and is delimited in accord with actions thought truthful to the beings in question. Plato thereby mobilizes and situates reasons to determine the rational limits (and situation) of reason. The topic dependent contextual knowledge refers to the way a situated and mobilized reason actively plays in

²⁶⁸² Habermas, Jürgen. "Actions, Speech Acts, Linguistically Mediated Interactions and Lifeworld" in Cooke, Maeve (ed.) *On The Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), p. 241.

²⁶⁸³ Copleston, Frederick. *A History of Philosophy, Volume 1: Greece and Rome* (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 162. As Copleston notes in 1946, Plato's epistemological ascent is "no mere academic or narrowly critical interest: he is concerned with the conduct of life, tendance of the soul and with the good of the State", *ibid.* It is worth stressing that the *term* epistemic ascent has since become prevalent in the work of Ernest Sosa, who similarly draws a parallel with the question of a rational person's well-being. As Sosa observes in *A Companion to Epistemology* (Blackwell: West Sussex, 2010), "in defence of the ascent principle, I must stress that my use of 'full well'...is meant to suggest that the sort of knowledge involved is of a higher level than the animal knowledge requiring that one's belief track the truth, or be formed reliably, whether or not one appreciates (knows) any of this. Ascent therefore postulates a sort of knowledge requiring one's beliefs to be on a higher epistemic level, to which one is denied access if unable to affirm that one does not know, not even when one consciously ponders the problem" of knowledge, p.189.

²⁶⁸⁴ Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson. (London: Continuum, 2004), p.132.

remedying (writing, speaking) the question of the limits of knowledge.

Derrida's interpretation of the pharmakon's undecidable status therefore re-turns to the question of conditions of possibility. Derrida's questioning itself becomes possible when he brings forth the problem of deciding (delimiting) the background knowledge of the context in question. Derrida explicitly "points to an experience that was present in Greek culture"²⁶⁸⁵ and such an experience is said to have the "unique feature"²⁶⁸⁶ of being "overdetermined"²⁶⁸⁷ or "overlaid...with "another function"²⁶⁸⁸ Derrida is referring, of course, to the "formidable role"²⁶⁸⁹ the absent word pharmakos arguably plays within Plato's text, and it is argued that lifeworld contexts are particularly relevant when determining the rationality of the beings in question. Derrida argues *as if* the pharmakos is ontologically relevant (particularly meaningful or true) for a given reason. The reason Derrida gives – mobilizes, bring forth – within Plato's argument is "hidden forces of attraction"²⁶⁹⁰ within contexts of relevance, or the way the "system of language, cannot *not* have acted upon the writing reading of this text."²⁶⁹¹ Derrida claims that the text's words "communicate with the totality of the lexicon through their syntactic play"²⁶⁹² and invariably argue amongst themselves via hidden pathways and movements. A limitless context determines the question of the pharmakon's meaning conditions because words speak *through* each other in questionable ways. It is particularly important to stress the formidable role the pharmakos actively plays within Derrida's argument. Derrida's questioning directs itself towards a horizon that Derrida actively mobilizes and/or moves within. The question of background knowledge therefore only becomes relevant (possible, meaningful) when Derrida's questioning can determine its contextual relevance (possibility, truth). Witness the way the pharmakon takes on its possible meaning/s through a consciousness effected by history (our knowledge of Socrates' subsequent arrest for using the sorcery of words and his poisoning to cure the body of social discourse).²⁶⁹³ Socrates' trial determines the question of background knowledge in that it provides a context for Derrida's questioning. Derrida is thereby able to argue with Plato by claiming that context acts upon Plato's text in a more meaningful way – by *acting as a transcendental site* determining the question of conditions of possibility. A limitless context thereby gives rise to a text in argument with – divided against and/or multiplying – itself. Derrida's *definition of the situation* moves beyond Plato's immediate text – towards a context

²⁶⁸⁵ *ibid*, p.129.

²⁶⁸⁶ *ibid*, p.130.

²⁶⁸⁷ *ibid*,

²⁶⁸⁸ *ibid*,

²⁶⁸⁹ *ibid*.

²⁶⁹⁰ *ibid*, p.133

²⁶⁹¹ *ibid*.

²⁶⁹² *ibid*

²⁶⁹³ *ibid*, p.120.

that situates and/or redefines the pharmakon's movements in a *more decisive way*. Context becomes relevant insofar as "certain forces of association unite – at diverse distances, with different strengths and according to disparate paths."²⁶⁹⁴ Derrida calls on the (differential and/or deferential) role of deep-seated background knowledge to foreground the way the pharmakon is called (back) into question within the historicity of understanding.

Summary

We have brought our understanding full circle. We've done this in order to enable the question of *moving between* distinct parts forming a complex whole. Following Habermas and Derrida, we've interpreted the circle's movements as enacting (directing, performing) a dialectic between the structure and event of understanding. Following Gadamer, we've located this movement within the dialectic between question and answer. We've argued that the being of the question forms a complex whole, and finds itself directed by the circular relation between language and thought. Specifically, where the rationality of questioning remains determined by the horizon of intentionality and/or intentional relations and objects. We've also argued that such a complex whole is neither true²⁶⁹⁵ nor false²⁶⁹⁶ but falsifiable. That is to say, the whole is complex (meaningful, true) because the relation between thought and language remains subject to reversals in direction and necessarily re-turns to itself. For this reason, we've turned towards Habermas and Derrida, and circled around their movements accordingly. Whichever way we've turned, we've found ourselves moving towards a dialectical conception of truth, or a part/whole relationship that *acts* as a truth-functional or connective. We've observed Habermas and Derrida approaching the circle of understanding from different directions, and interpret its directives in different ways. Despite the conflicting movements, their interpretations have nonetheless moved towards intersecting pathways – that of the *logic of the quasi-transcendental*. Specifically, the conflicting interpretations have approached the circle of understanding through the question of conditions of possibility, and they've both argued that such a question has enabled (directed, made possible) their overall approach. The conflicting interpretations similarly turned (back) towards the question enabling their movements. Following such a directive simultaneously brought forth the question of ontological commitment as cultural critique – namely, determining the limits (possibility, being) of questioning linguistic relations and practices. We argued, however, that the conflicting approaches – commitments, directives – presuppose each other and necessarily bring them into irresolvable conflict and/or potential

²⁶⁹⁴ *ibid*, p.132.

²⁶⁹⁵ Hegel, Wilhelm Friedrich Georg. *Phenomenology of Spirit* trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.11.

²⁶⁹⁶ Adorno, Theodor. *Minima Moralia: Reflections From Damaged Life* trans. E.F.N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2005), p.50.

dialogue. Habermas and Derrida have conflicting conceptions of reason, and no standard of rationality can resolve the differences between them. As we previously argued, however, Lyotard's concept of differend presupposes the rationality of the very being/s and/or rulings in question – by directing itself towards the possibility of rationally identifying and evaluating conflicting reasons for being-there. Consequently, it is the circle of understanding that makes the conflict of interpretations possible (meaningful, true). While the general being of their questioning might differ in significant ways, the circle directs their movements back (towards) the question of the structure and event of understanding. Approaching the circle in this way – i.e., interpreting the conflict as a differend and committing ourselves to the corresponding ontological schemes – enacts a performative contradiction in that it makes possible *the question* of what cannot be said or done *across contexts* of interpretation. While the concept of a differend might refer to heterogeneous elements, it nonetheless acts as unitary standard or point of reference. The events of such an understanding may be said to contradictorily move back towards the structure of understanding – by transferring a part throughout the whole and/or taking the part for the whole.

Appendix

Heidegger and the Question of Being

Aims and Objectives: The aim of this chapter is to introduce the concept of the hermeneutical circle via the question of Being. Following Heidegger's lead, the question of Being will be brought forth via the concept of the hermeneutical circle. We shall observe that Heidegger's approach to the question of Being was divided into two distinct parts or movements, and forms a complex whole. We shall thereby approach Heidegger's guiding question from different directions in order to navigate the circle directing his overall movements. The objective of this chapter is to explore the way the hermeneutical circle and the question of Being move (back) towards each other. We pursue this goal so as to pave the way for our inquiry into the problem of the criterion and its relationship to the question of Being. In order to reach our goal, we must similarly prioritise the being of the question, or the way Heidegger places historical beings within the question directing his movements. Whilst our approach shall primarily be expository, we put forth related parts in order to throw them back into question. Heidegger's questioning introduces a distinction between Being and beings – which he calls the ontological difference – and the difference is invoked to determine how the one makes the other possible and/or questionable. Heidegger approaches the ontological difference in two distinct but related ways. We shall therefore observe Heidegger initially taking *the way of meaning* – specifically, where he attempted to retrieve the *content* of the question of Being. We shall note his *turn down the path* of truth – specifically, where he attempted to retrieve the *referent* of the question of Being. Either way, the question is to what extent it is possible to find our way towards language through the hermeneutical circle.

We shall proceed in three related ways. In the first part, we acknowledge the difficulty in interpreting Heidegger, and locate this problematic within Heidegger's own conception of understanding. We attempt to get around this problem by providing a selective interpretation of pivotal texts and contextualise our understanding accordingly. In the second part, we follow Heidegger's lead by arguing that the question of being is related to the being of the question (or the way human beings are already placed in question). Given this approach, we explore the way interpretation and understanding are related to each other, and bring forward select themes in order to orient our thinking towards the hermeneutical circle. In the third part, we note Heidegger's attempt to circumvent the circle by attempting to move beyond what can be meaningfully understood or interpreted by way of language's own directives or movements. Taken together, we shall find ourselves on the way to questioning Heidegger's approach to the question of being and its relationship to language.

The Difficulty in Approaching Heidegger:

We begin by acknowledging the difficulty in approaching Heidegger. This question of approach – of drawing near, to approximate and appropriate his thought – underlines the difficulty in understanding Heidegger's own approach to the question of Being. Part of the problem in understanding Heidegger is that an interpretation of his works inaugurates the very problematic that concerns us – namely, a part/whole problematic regarding the question of the relation between interpretation and understanding. An inscription that precedes his collected writings highlights the difficulty immediately facing us. Specifically, the entrance to his collected works bears the signpost: Ways, not Works²⁶⁹⁷. Heidegger advises us to approach his collected thoughts as parts that do not add up to an intelligible whole. Or alternately, as a totality best understood as a collection of distinct elements. Each part is "merely a way–station along a way (where) the lasting element in thinking is the way".²⁶⁹⁸ Whilst the question of Being might have directed his overall movements, *thinking about* that question has taken him in various directions over time. If there is a guiding theme, it's Heidegger's attempt to move past the "language of metaphysics"²⁶⁹⁹ by thinking about the "ontological difference"²⁷⁰⁰, or the difference between Being and beings in different ways. Although it has been argued that Heidegger remained a "phenomenologist from beginning to end"²⁷⁰¹, there is the question of whether he followed the way of phenomenology to begin with – Husserl and Heidegger famously parted ways over the issue of where 'phenomenology' should begin and lead questioning.²⁷⁰² Indeed, *Being and Time* – Heidegger's major contribution to philosophy and a text generally understood as espousing a holistic approach to meaning and truth via phenomenology²⁷⁰³ – is itself comprised of various

²⁶⁹⁷ Heidegger, Martin, *Gesamtausgabe* (Collected Works), Frankfurt am Main : Klostermann, 1976-1996 *Wege – nicht Arbeiten* (Ways – not Works).

²⁶⁹⁸ Heidegger, Martin, "A Dialogue On Language", in *On The Way to Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.12.

²⁶⁹⁹ Heidegger, Martin, "Letter on Humanism" in *Basic Writings*, edited by Krell, David, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p.231.

²⁷⁰⁰ Heidegger, Martin, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans: Hofstadler, Albert, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 227.

²⁷⁰¹ Sheehan, Thomas, "What, After All, Was Heidegger About"? *Continental Philosophy Review*, 47, 2 (2014), p. 249.

²⁷⁰² Husserl, Edmund, *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger* trans and ed. by Sheehan, Thomas and Palmer, Richard (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997). Sheehan's "Introduction" quotes a young Heidegger lamenting in 1919 that he and Husserl were at a "methodological crossroads" before he even set out, p.18 and Husserl consistently found Heidegger's subsequent approach (and relationship to his own thinking) increasingly incomprehensible, p.31

²⁷⁰³ See, for example, Dreyfus, Hubert "Holism and Hermeneutics", *Review of Metaphysics*, 34, 1980, Haugeland, John 'Dasein's Disclosedness' in Dreyfus, Hubert and Hall, Harrison (eds) *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p.31-33 and Hale, Bob and Wright, Crispin (eds) *A Companion to the Philosophy of Language*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p.227.

parts which do not add up to a meaningful whole.²⁷⁰⁴ *Being and Time* not only remains incomplete, the path taken pulls Heidegger in different directions.²⁷⁰⁵ These conflicting movements have their origins in Heidegger's "quasi transcendental"²⁷⁰⁶ approach to the question of Being *in* time. Specifically, where the question of the conditions of possibility of "world meaning constitution"²⁷⁰⁷ is located within the horizon of history. Heidegger's concept of a world meaningfully constituted attempted to have it both ways simultaneously – to interrogate our understanding of being within the line at which history and culture meet and yet circumvent the circular boundary in which both appear together or move. Indeed, Heidegger's "transcendental historicism"²⁷⁰⁸ has being called a "non viable mongrel"²⁷⁰⁹ because Heidegger attempts to "historicize the Platonic dividing line"²⁷¹⁰ by turning the distinction between Being and time around (i.e. Plato's hierarchical distinction between the intelligible and visible worlds). One of the reasons Heidegger offers for *Being and Time*'s indeterminate status is that he claimed to misconceive his own question from the outset. Specifically, Heidegger's original approach was "bound to lead immediately and inevitably into error"²⁷¹¹ because he was yet to understand that there was a "thinking more rigorous than the conceptual".²⁷¹² Heidegger subsequently came to the understanding that being understood "is suicidal to philosophy"²⁷¹³

²⁷⁰⁴ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarrie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997). Of the proposed two parts consisting of an intended three divisions (pgs.63-64) only Part 1 appears, and the third division of the first part was never published. According to Heidegger in "Letter On Humanism", the missing third division was deliberately "held back" because he couldn't manage the proposed reversal from 'being and time' to 'time and being', p.231.

²⁷⁰⁵ Kisiel, Theodore, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Kisiel provides a history of the path taken, and comments on the way *Being and Time* came to be written. Specifically, *Being and Time* "is a story of the movement of drafts and redrafts, the shuffling of texts ...still bearing signs of incomplete integration, with the gaps still showing", p.312-13.

²⁷⁰⁶ Apel, Karl-Otto, *From A Transcendental Semiotic Point Of View* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), p.107.

²⁷⁰⁷ *ibid.*

²⁷⁰⁸ Guignon, Charles, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Indianapolis: Hackett University Press, 1983), p.232.

²⁷⁰⁹ *ibid.*

²⁷¹⁰ Rorty, Richard, "Heidegger, Kundera and Dickens" in *Essays On Heidegger And Others* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.70. According to Rorty, "the Heideggerian counterpart of Plato's world of appearance seen from above is the West seen from beyond metaphysics. Whereas Plato looks down, Heidegger looks back. But both are hoping to distance themselves from, cleanse themselves of, what they are looking at", *ibid.*

²⁷¹¹ Heidegger, Martin, "Letter On Humanism" in *Basic Writings*, Krell, David, (ed) (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p.231.

²⁷¹² *ibid.*, p.258.

²⁷¹³ Heidegger, Martin, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans: Emad, Parvis and Maly, Kenneth, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p.307. This text was published posthumously by Heidegger's son to commemorate the one-hundredth anniversary of the philosopher's birthday. This text is important when understanding Heidegger because it clears a way between stations. According to his son, it was therefore "guarded for many years" by Heidegger and "has been long awaited in philosophical circles", p.368.

any-way. If we interpret Heidegger correctly here, his major contribution to philosophy was to situate his own questioning outside the limits of philosophical understanding. Given that the 'task of (his) thinking'²⁷¹⁴ was to find a way to delimit what could (not) be understood, we find ourselves presented with a dilemma when interpreting Heidegger. Either we cannot (and so, should not) try to understand Heidegger's thinking, or any understanding would be a misunderstanding (his thoughts take us along various ways, and so, threaten to entangle us within a vicious circle regarding their movement or direction).

There are at least two difficulties here. The first concerns the question of interpretation and (ironically) raises the *traditional* problem of hermeneutics relating to textual criticism. If Heidegger's magnum opus is itself a "torso, a fragment of a work"²⁷¹⁵ and resembles a "patchwork"²⁷¹⁶ of irreconcilable and/or incomplete parts, the relation between part and whole remains questionable. The situation is compounded by the question of the relation between distinct texts taken as a whole. Particularly problematic is that we can only appropriate the parts that suit our purposes and can make little attempt to be definitive or unify a complex whole. Heidegger's subsequent turn towards the *being of language* exemplifies this problematic, requiring us to direct our general approach by way of "the circle"²⁷¹⁷ of understanding as "determined by language itself, by a movement within language".²⁷¹⁸ Specifically, Heidegger observes that the "fundamental flaw"²⁷¹⁹ of *Being and Time* is that he "ventured forth too far too early"²⁷²⁰ when approaching language and its relation to the question of Being. Although "the way to language"²⁷²¹ had "determined the path of my thinking from early on"²⁷²², his anticipated movements had either being "suppressed in our thematic analysis"²⁷²³ or was "held back

²⁷¹⁴ This is a paraphrase of a title of one of Heidegger's late contributions to philosophy (1964). The actual text is provocatively called "The End Of Philosophy and The Task Of Thinking" and is an attempt to rethink the question of Being as posed in 1927's *Being and Time*. It can be found in Heidegger, Martin *On Time and Being*, trans: Stanbaugh, Joan, (New York: Harper and Row), 1972.

²⁷¹⁵ We cite editor David Farrell Krell's "Introduction" to Heidegger's *Basic Writings*, p.25.

²⁷¹⁶ Philipse, Herman, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 71

²⁷¹⁷ Heidegger, Martin, "The Way To Language", in *On The Way To Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.113.

²⁷¹⁸ *ibid.*

²⁷¹⁹ Heidegger, Martin, "A Dialogue On Language", in *On The Way to Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.7.

²⁷²⁰ *ibid.*

²⁷²¹ Heidegger, Martin, "The Way To Language", in *On The Way To Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.111.

²⁷²² Heidegger, Martin, "A Dialogue On Language", in *On The Way to Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.7.

²⁷²³ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarrie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 203.

because thinking failed in the adequate saying of the turning".²⁷²⁴ Nonetheless, Heidegger provides a way forward from the outset – his conception of the hermeneutical circle turns towards the language of human beings, and so re-turns to the way language is expressed as *discourse* within the circle of understanding.

The second problem is that Heidegger is a "genuinely novel thinker who breaks with established patterns of thought"²⁷²⁵ and his language is notoriously "difficult to understand"²⁷²⁶ anyway. Given the "tortured intensity"²⁷²⁷ and/or "wilful obscurantism"²⁷²⁸ of Heidegger's *general approach*, the relation between his thought and language are amongst the "obstacles to its comprehension"²⁷²⁹. Fortunately, Heidegger provides us with a philosophical concept and interpretive principle in order to get us *on the way* to understanding the relation/s between way–stations. The concept, of course, is the route provided via the hermeneutical circle, and its occurrence can be traced back to Heidegger's initial attempt to retrieve the meaning of Being. The 'principle' may informally be called the preparatory or futural principle of interpretation²⁷³⁰, and occurs via Heidegger's subsequent attempt to retrieve the truth of Being. Although we are obviously anticipating our own movements here²⁷³¹, we will need to acknowledge the tension between Heidegger's original conception of the circle of understanding – understanding as a mode of being in which we already move and are directed – and his subsequent principle of interpretation as a directive from the future moving against traditional understanding. The tension between these two concepts will justify our own approach to Heidegger.

Specifically, Heidegger would go on to claim that his own conception of the hermeneutical circle was "superficial"²⁷³² and he attempted to question the hermeneutical "relation"²⁷³³ directing human understanding instead. The hermeneutical circle's purported 'superficiality' lies within his attempt to approach the circularity of understanding from different directions and move towards

²⁷²⁴ Heidegger, Martin, "Letter On Humanism" in *Basic Writings*, Krell, David, (ed) (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p.259.

²⁷²⁵ Rockmore, Tom, *On Heidegger's Nazism and Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p.18.

²⁷²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷²⁷ Mulhall, Stephen, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Heidegger and 'Being and Time'*, (London: Routledge, 2013), p. viii.

²⁷²⁸ Guess, Raymond, *Outside Ethics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), p.26.

²⁷²⁹ Rockmore, Tom, *On Heidegger's Nazism and Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p.18.

²⁷³⁰ We say informally because Heidegger does not wish to formalize it as such – as we shall see, the future merely prepares a way (or ways) for interpretation.

²⁷³¹ We are yet to introduce the concept of the hermeneutical circle properly, and are merely projecting the possibility of an understanding Heidegger in some way.

²⁷³² Heidegger, Martin, "A Dialogue On Language" in *On The Way to Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p. 51.

²⁷³³ *Ibid.*

a questioning of being/s (allegedly) more truthful than conceptual thought. The issue of superficiality is therefore more appropriately located within the question of the circle's own complexity – that is to say, within the problem of questioning the limits of understanding in the first place. Heidegger's attempt to *move beyond* the hermeneutical circle is an attempt to understand that which bounds and "encircles"²⁷³⁴ understanding, and so determines *its* mode of being as a circular limit or boundary. The issue of the hermeneutical *relation* is therefore perhaps best understood as the question of the "determining"²⁷³⁵ of understanding – a determination which can/not encompass and relate to the circle's own movements and directives. Heidegger concedes that the *question* of the hermeneutical circle remains "unavoidable"²⁷³⁶, and thinking is similarly bound to "follow"²⁷³⁷ its own relations and pathways. Given the way human beings understand, the question of being does not so much direct thought into "circular reasoning"²⁷³⁸ but moves towards a "remarkable relatedness backward or forward"²⁷³⁹ and "only the way back will lead us forward".²⁷⁴⁰ Irrespective of the way taken, Heidegger will maintain that understanding can never purport to understand "better", although it may understand "differently"²⁷⁴¹. Whilst understood differences must attempt to remain faithful to the original way of thinking, interpretation nonetheless requires a degree of "force against" whatever is thought, forcing an understanding in "the direction of a more originary grasping"²⁷⁴². The kind of interpretation that Heidegger understands to be relevant to questioning is "destructive"²⁷⁴³ and involves a "destructuring"²⁷⁴⁴ of traditional thought or practice. Although

²⁷³⁴ Heidegger, Martin, *Discourse On Thinking*, trans: Anderson, John and Freund, Hans, (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p.63.

²⁷³⁵ *ibid*, p.77.

²⁷³⁶ Heidegger, Martin, "The Way To Language" in *On The Way to Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco, Harper Collins, 1982), p.113.

²⁷³⁷ Heidegger, Martin, "A Dialogue On Language" in *On The Way to Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco, Harper Collins, 1982), p.51.

²⁷³⁸ Heidegger, Martin *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarrie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 28.

²⁷³⁹ *ibid*,

²⁷⁴⁰ Heidegger, Martin, *On The Way to Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco, Harper Collins, 1982), p.12

²⁷⁴¹ Heidegger, Martin "The Word of Nietzsche: God is Dead" in *Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans: Lovitt, William, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977), p.58.

²⁷⁴² Heidegger, Martin, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans: Emad, Parvis and Maly, Kenneth, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p.178. In this passage, Heidegger talks about the historical necessity of understanding the works of Kant in a different way.

²⁷⁴³ Heidegger, Martin, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, trans: van Buren, John, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p.81.

²⁷⁴⁴ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Stanbaugh, Joan, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), p.20 Note that we have cited an alternate (and more recent) translation here, one that prefers 'destructuring' to 'destruction'. This preference appears to instantiate a version of Heidegger's own principle of interpretation by interpreting Heidegger's text via subsequent poststructuralist discourse. We can also witness this difference in an initial and subsequent translation of the works that appear in Krell's editing of *Basic Writings*. In an early translation, Krell uses 'destruction' to describe Heidegger's characterization of his own research (See, Heidegger,

Heidegger claims that such a violent approach is not to be identified with a "critique...of culture"²⁷⁴⁵, he nonetheless wants to question the way human beings have fallen "back upon its world (the world in which it is)".²⁷⁴⁶ Heidegger's destructive approach might be historically incorrect (questionable), but it is "historically essential, i.e. considered as preparatory for future thinking – and only as that – (where) it is a historical referral to something totally different".²⁷⁴⁷ Thus,

In order to wrest from the actual words that which these words "intend to say," every interpretation must necessarily resort to violence. This violence, however, should not be confused with an action that is wholly arbitrary. The interpretation must be animated and guided by the power of an illuminative idea.²⁷⁴⁸

Paving the Way: On the way to the hermeneutical circle, and determining its relationship to the question of 'being'.

Heidegger's inquiry proceeds from two related presuppositions: that we "always conduct our activities in an understanding of Being"²⁷⁴⁹ and that we have somehow "forgotten"²⁷⁵⁰ the "question of the meaning of being".²⁷⁵¹ Such claims to knowledge obviously raise two related questions: what is the *question of being* and how has an ancient "theme for actual investigation"²⁷⁵² *fallen by the wayside* over time? It is no accident that *Being and Time* begins with a quote from Plato's *Sophist* – an age-old confusion paves the way for Heidegger's own investigations. Specifically, "For manifestly you have long been aware of what you mean when you use the expression 'being'. We, however, who used to think we understood it, have now become perplexed" (244a).²⁷⁵³ According to Heidegger, three dogmatic – and incompatible – "presuppositions"²⁷⁵⁴ have emerged over time despite such perplexity. Firstly, it is now believed that being is the most universal concept or is "already included in conceiving anything which

Martin *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p.209. In a revised and expanded edition, 'destruction' is reconstructed as 'deconstructing' (See, Heidegger, Martin *Basic Writings* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p.233.

²⁷⁴⁵ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarrie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.211.

²⁷⁴⁶ *ibid*, p.42.

²⁷⁴⁷ Heidegger, Martin, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans: Emad, Parvis and Maly, Kenneth, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p.178.

²⁷⁴⁸ Heidegger, Martin, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans: Taft, Richard (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965), p.207.

²⁷⁴⁹ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 25.

²⁷⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 21.

²⁷⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 20

²⁷⁵² *ibid*, p. 21.

²⁷⁵³ *Ibid*, p.20.

²⁷⁵⁴ *ibid*, p.22.

one apprehends in entities"²⁷⁵⁵ – i.e., where the universality (or transcendence) of being is itself mistaken for a class or genus. The second dogmatic presupposition is that the meaning of being is indefinable because it cannot be meaningfully defined as an entity – i.e. if the universality of being cannot be included in the conception of an entity it must remain outside the realm of understanding. The third presupposition accepted without question is that its meaning is self-evident because of the way Being is already meaningfully understood – as being already included in (or directed towards) our conception of entities. Heidegger urges that "the very fact that we already live in an understanding of Being and that the meaning of being is still veiled in darkness proves that it is necessary in principle to raise this question again".²⁷⁵⁶ The problem, however, is that we "must first work out an adequate way to formulate"²⁷⁵⁷ the question and turns towards the way in which we already meaningfully understand beings. Consequently, the question of the meaning of being tries to ask what 'Being' could possibly mean within the context of a "pre-ontological understanding of Being"²⁷⁵⁸ (a prior understanding that is implicitly shared and/or understood without question). Heidegger's "guiding question"²⁷⁵⁹, then, goes on to ask "what is the mode of being of the entity in which world is constituted?"²⁷⁶⁰ – i.e., how does the phenomenon of a meaningful world become possible and/or questionable? Given this question, "the problem of being is related – all inclusively – to what constitutes and what gets constituted"²⁷⁶¹ in a temporal existence. We therefore need to find our way back towards a more originary question about the meaning of being and we can only do this by way of "fundamental ontology"²⁷⁶² (the making explicit of what it means to be via formulating the question of the meaning of being). Fundamental ontology, however, can only "be sought in the existential analytic of Dasein"²⁷⁶³ since the "ontological analytic of Dasein in general is what makes up fundamental ontology"²⁷⁶⁴ and "existence is the determining character of Dasein".²⁷⁶⁵ Such an analysis can only meaningfully occur when the question of "being in time...functions as a criterion for distinguishing realms of Being"²⁷⁶⁶ or can seek to determine how our temporal

²⁷⁵⁵ *ibid.* Heidegger is quoting Thomas Aquinas here.

²⁷⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.23.

²⁷⁵⁷ *ibid.*

²⁷⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p.35.

²⁷⁵⁹ Heidegger, Martin, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans: Emad, Parvis and Maly, Kenneth, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p.28.

²⁷⁶⁰ Heidegger, Martin "The Idea of Phenomenology – Heidegger's Letter to Husserl" in Kisiel, Theodore and Sheehan, Thomas (eds) *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p.331.

²⁷⁶¹ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarrie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 25.

²⁷⁶² *Ibid.*, 34

²⁷⁶³ *ibid.*

²⁷⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.35.

²⁷⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.33.

²⁷⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p.39

existence comes "to have this distinctive ontological function".²⁷⁶⁷ Consequently, it is only by first questioning the meaning of our being (existence) in the world that human beings can properly understand "that entity which in its Being has this very Being as an issue".²⁷⁶⁸ The primary objective of an analysis of Dasein is to thereby "arrive at the horizon for the understanding of Being and for the possibility of interpreting it".²⁷⁶⁹ But how can human beings move (back) towards this horizon of understanding? According to Heidegger, "phenomenology is our way of access to what is to be the theme of ontology...only as phenomenology is ontology possible".²⁷⁷⁰ Heidegger approaches the question of the meaning of Being through the "phenomenon"²⁷⁷¹ of a meaningful "world itself".²⁷⁷² Heidegger calls this phenomenon the "hermeneutical situation"²⁷⁷³ or the "totality of...presuppositions"²⁷⁷⁴ determining the horizon for the understanding of Being and the possibility for interpreting our being-in-the-world. The goal is to "bring forward the entities themselves"²⁷⁷⁵ by questioning their *ways of being* there (the way the world of experience is meaningfully constituted or presupposed). In this way, the "ordinary conception of phenomenon becomes phenomenologically relevant...since our investigation will show that the meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in (an) *interpretation*"²⁷⁷⁶ of what can be understood and questioned. In so far as it is possible (meaningful, necessary) to move back and forth within a given understanding, Heidegger therefore points the way backwards and/or forwards by "presupposing"²⁷⁷⁷ the being/s in (his) question. He immediately raises the issue of relations of presupposition *within* questioning and distinguishes between the *ontological* (pertaining to beings) and the *ontical* (pertaining to entities) in order to delineate our understanding 'of what it means to be or exist' (beings) and 'of what there is or makes something what it is' (entities). Within a prior understanding, "Being is always the being of an entity"²⁷⁷⁸ and to presuppose anything is to already "understand...the ground for the Being of some other entity".²⁷⁷⁹ The question is trying to recover lost ground by moving back and forth within an understanding of beings. The idea of a way, of course, not only implies direction or movement, it suggests a path being prepared or is available for travelling upon. In this way questioning offers a way, and so, permits movement or direction. It is important

²⁷⁶⁷

ibid.

²⁷⁶⁸

ibid, p.68.

²⁷⁶⁹

ibid, p. 63.

²⁷⁷⁰

ibid, p.60.

²⁷⁷¹

ibid.

²⁷⁷²

ibid, p.91.

²⁷⁷³

ibid, p.275

²⁷⁷⁴

ibid.

²⁷⁷⁵

ibid, p.61.

²⁷⁷⁶

ibid.

²⁷⁷⁷

ibid, p.27.

²⁷⁷⁸

ibid, p. 29.

²⁷⁷⁹

Ibid, p. 270.

to stress from the outset, then, that Heidegger is merely paving ways throughout his thinking, and such a 'pavement' is the ground upon which the *question* of being occurs. Heidegger is acutely aware that any attempt to clear the way through questioning threatens to throw into question the relations or elements within (his own) thinking. Any questioning potentially involves mutually exclusive elements, and so requires piety *in* thinking questions.²⁷⁸⁰ Thought must remain observant of and devoted to the question of its own way-making movements – by being wary of its own thinking/questioning. On the one hand, thought is preparatory in that it attempts to make a way available or accessible: questions guide thought in a particular direction and seek to uncover and access something.²⁷⁸¹ On the other hand, questions may be misguided in that they may lie over or cover up something: the very thing being thought or questioned.²⁷⁸²

Heidegger sets out to prioritise the *question of questioning* insofar as it's mode of being invariably directs the limits of questioning – i.e., makes an understanding of being both possible and/or necessary (questionable). An "inquiry, as a kind of seeking, must be guided beforehand by what is sought. So the meaning of Being must already be available to us in some way..(since)..we always conduct our activities in an understanding of Being. Out of this *understanding* arise both the explicit question of the meaning of being and the tendency that leads us towards its conception".²⁷⁸³ Further, "any interpretation which is to contribute understanding, must have already understood what is to be interpreted"²⁷⁸⁴ and so can be questioned in a meaningful way. If presupposing the being/s in question is to already understand the ground for the Being of beings, interpretation (questioning) can never be "presuppositionless"²⁷⁸⁵ and finds itself being directed (moving) accordingly. We need to proceed carefully here. Heidegger's questioning already appears to be moving in a circle and he is yet to officially 'enter' the *hermeneutical circle*. Specifically, what does Heidegger mean by 'being' within the context of his own questioning? Part of the answer is that even an "unoriented and vague"²⁷⁸⁶ understanding of being "bears...the possibility of the question within itself".²⁷⁸⁷

²⁷⁸⁰ Heidegger, Martin "The Question Concerning Technology" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans: Lovitt, William, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977), p.35.

²⁷⁸¹ According to Heidegger, preparation is "opening the way, yielding to the way... (where) the territory first comes to be through a pathway", *Contributions To Philosophy, (From Enowning)*, p.60.

²⁷⁸² According to Heidegger, "questioning builds a way" along a (conceptual) terrain and "building belongs to (a) dwelling" – that is, threatens to go hand in hand with a tendency to build on top of and occupy a territory along a pathway. See his "The Question Concerning Technology" and "Building Dwelling Thinking" in *Basic Writings*, pgs. 311 and 347- 353 respectively.

²⁷⁸³ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarrie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 25.

²⁷⁸⁴ Ibid, p.194.

²⁷⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 191.

²⁷⁸⁶ Heidegger, Martin, *History of the Concept of Time* trans. Kiesel, Theodore, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p.144.

²⁷⁸⁷ Ibid.

Consequently, "in the question which we are to work out, what is asked about is Being – that which determines entities as entities, that on the basis of which entities are already understood".²⁷⁸⁸ Approached another way, "when being is thus asked for, it involves inquiring into the basic character of the entity, what defines an entity as entity. What defines the entity as entity is its being".²⁷⁸⁹ Heidegger would latter clarify that being cannot be meaningfully understood (conceived) in terms of being-ness any-way. Being can never be accepted (questioned) as a being (entity) and must be distinguished from the beings defined as entities. Heidegger's inquiry into the question of being, then, presupposes that human beings move about in an understanding of being and that they have nonetheless misunderstood the difference between Being and being. Given that human beings cannot meaningfully answer – let alone understand the question of Being – Heidegger has decided to move us back towards questioning our understanding of being. Heidegger begins his inquiry into the meaning of being in a roundabout way – via 'the problem of the formal structure of the question of being', and the corresponding 'priority (possibility, necessity) of such questioning'²⁷⁹⁰. Put another way: "the question of being is the being of the question"²⁷⁹¹, and is made possible by the way human beings are "always already"²⁷⁹² related to (moving within) a given understanding. Unlike other beings – such as chairs and tables – human beings are ontologically distinct entities in that they can and do ask meaningful questions within a *a priori* understanding (such as 'what is the time'? or 'what is the meaning of being?'). The 'always already' is thereby accorded a *perfect a priori*²⁷⁹³ status: questioning becomes an inquiry into the conditions of it's own possibility and/or necessity (meaningfulness, truthfulness). Our prior understanding of being is said to be apriori perfect because it retains the potential to determine (question) the limits of what can be meaningfully understood. Whilst understanding might move *ahead of itself* – remains directed towards the question of its own possibilities – the question of being has nonetheless fallen by the wayside and needs to be recovered again. Heidegger, then, directs his philosophical inquiry towards the circle that enables and directs movement (questioning) in the first place – and there is no getting around (avoiding) the circle that makes such a roundabout approach possible and/or necessary.

²⁷⁸⁸ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pgs. 25-26

²⁷⁸⁹ Heidegger, Martin, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. Kiesiel, Theodore, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p.144.

²⁷⁹⁰ *ibid*, pp. 24-28.

²⁷⁹¹ Lawlor, Leonard, *Thinking Through French Philosophy : The Being of the Question* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), p.1. It is Lawlor who succinctly puts it this way by observing that "when Heidegger re-opens the question of being, he defines being itself as a question: the question of being is the being of the question".

²⁷⁹² Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 476.

²⁷⁹³ *Ibid*, p.117.

Specifically, any philosophical inquiry finds itself "constantly moving in a circle"²⁷⁹⁴, and every "attempt to argue away such circularity in philosophy leads it away from philosophy itself".²⁷⁹⁵ Indeed, it is not possible to "ask a question in a philosophical way"²⁷⁹⁶ without "having entered the circle in the first place"²⁷⁹⁷ and it is "the circular movement"²⁷⁹⁸ of a given understanding that makes questioning both possible and necessary – i.e. lets thought find its bearings and/or way. Consequently, "what is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to get into it in the right way...The circle of understanding is not an orbit in which any kind of random kind of knowledge may move...It is not to be reduced to the level of a vicious circle, or even of a circle which is merely tolerated. In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing".²⁷⁹⁹ In order to understand the way the circle directs our movements, we must therefore inquire into the being of the entity that finds itself meaningfully directed upon (moving within, relating to) it as such. Indeed, the "usual conception of intentionality misunderstands"²⁸⁰⁰ the way rational thought relates to the concepts and/or objects of its own questioning. Rather, thought is obliged to make "intentionality itself into a problem"²⁸⁰¹ since "intentional relations"²⁸⁰² are not only "related to beings themselves"²⁸⁰³, they throw into question the "relatedness"²⁸⁰⁴ and "relating-to"²⁸⁰⁵ in the first place. From whichever direction Heidegger approaches the question of Being, he will therefore continue to ask: what is – or can – the question of Being be *of* or *about* (directed upon or related to)? While Heidegger might attempt to get around the question of thinking "about"²⁸⁰⁶ Being, (his) thinking nonetheless remains faced with the problem of how it comes to be *of* or *about* such a question.

We have thus far been talking around Heidegger's conception of the hermeneutical circle, and have been moving (back) towards the question of circularity within questioning. We have done this for two related reasons – to approach Heidegger through the question of circular movements, and to highlight the manner in which Heidegger approaches the circularity of

²⁷⁹⁴ Heidegger, Martin *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* trans; McNeill, William and Walker, Nicholas, (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995) p. 180

²⁷⁹⁵ *ibid.*

²⁷⁹⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷⁹⁷ *ibid.*

²⁷⁹⁸ *ibid.*

²⁷⁹⁹ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 195.

²⁸⁰⁰ Heidegger, Martin, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans: Hofstadler, Albert, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 63.

²⁸⁰¹ *Ibid*, p.64.

²⁸⁰² Heidegger, Martin, *Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans: Heim, Michael (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 134.

²⁸⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p.132.

²⁸⁰⁵ *ibid*, p.133.

²⁸⁰⁶ Heidegger, Martin, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans: Emad, Parvis and Maly, Kenneth, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p.3.

questioning through his conception of *the way* as being directed by a 'remarkable relatedness backwards and forwards' movement. In this way, we were able to approach (bring forth) the question of being and its relation to the being of the question. We are now in a position to direct our movements towards Heidegger's conception of the hermeneutical circle proper. Although Heidegger talks about the importance of 'entering'²⁸⁰⁷ and/or 'leaping'²⁸⁰⁸ into the circle in the 'right way'²⁸⁰⁹, Heidegger's own directives are (unfortunately) misleading here. Given his own understanding, we are always already *in the circle* anyway – it can never be a question of entering or leaving but approaching (moving within) the circle from a given direction. It is therefore more a question of finding our way around the circle of understanding *through* questioning. Following Heidegger's lead, then, questioning opens or builds a way to an understanding of being, and the requirement is to find our place within the question of being. The reason, of course, is that the inquirer is already placed within the question, and so becomes an integral part of the inquiry. Specifically, "each question is itself always the whole" where a "question can be asked only in such a way that the questioner as such is present together with the question, that is, is placed in question".²⁸¹⁰ Heidegger's conception of the hermeneutical circle thereby proceeds from the following presuppositions: by finding our place within the question, we can lay bare the grounds of questioning and inquire into our own mode of being (existence as a questioning being). In asking the question of being, human beings are said to enact the limits of their own understanding and determine the possibilities of a meaningful existence. Heidegger calls this enactment or modality *Dasein* (being-there), and the question is the way the meaning of being can become a question through *Dasein*'s temporal relationship to the world. Since "*Dasein* already understands itself in terms of its existence – in terms of a possibility of itself"²⁸¹¹, the question is the way *Dasein* relates to its own possibilities (relationship to a meaningful world or a world thus made possible and/or questionable). In the following, then, we shall bring forth Heidegger's conception of the hermeneutical circle, and its relationship to the question of being in the world. We shall thereby observe Heidegger's attempt to get around the problem of the criterion by directing our understanding towards the "unitary phenomenon"²⁸¹² that invariably calls itself back into question.

In order to determine the question of the meaning of Being, Heidegger argues that we must first inquire into the meaningful existence of human beings. Whilst Heidegger obviously recognises

²⁸⁰⁷ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 195.

²⁸⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p.363

²⁸⁰⁹ *ibid*, p.195.

²⁸¹⁰ Heidegger, Martin, "What is Metaphysics", in *Basic Writings* (ed), Krell, David (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p.93.

²⁸¹¹ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 195.

²⁸¹² *Ibid*, p.78.

the "manifest circularity"²⁸¹³ in such an approach, he nonetheless maintains that we should direct ourselves towards "what we are asking about when we ask this question".²⁸¹⁴ Questioning our "mode of being"²⁸¹⁵ becomes *the question* in that what is being presupposed and questioned is that "entity – the inquirer – transparent in his own Being. The very asking of this question is an entity's mode of Being; and as such it gets its essential character from what is inquired about –namely, Being...as one of the possibilities of its Being".²⁸¹⁶ Questioning our "being in the world"²⁸¹⁷ is therefore an integral part of the question of our "being-there"²⁸¹⁸ and provides a phenomenological description of who human beings essentially are: it is what makes Dasein's existence meaningful (possible, questionable) in the first place. Presupposing the question in this way – and trying to determine the meaningfulness of our presuppositions - is not an attempt to derive an object of knowledge but points the way towards how Being itself becomes possible as a question and so "belongs to the essential constitution of Dasein itself". Such presupposing has nothing to do with laying down an axiom from which a sequence of propositions is deductively derived. It is quite impossible for there to be any 'circular argument' in formulating the question about the meaning of Being; for in answering this question, the issue is not one of grounding something by such a derivation , it is rather one of laying bare the grounds for it and exhibiting them.²⁸¹⁹

Heidegger begins to lay bare the ground of his own questioning by exhibiting "the world as a phenomenon."²⁸²⁰ According to Heidegger, the "world has already been presupposed, and indeed in various ways."²⁸²¹ Heidegger calls the 'presupposition of the world' the "worldhood of the world "²⁸²². Heidegger's concept of worldhood refers to the phenomenon of a meaningful world – it is where the being of different entities are encountered and understood "as such"²⁸²³ – i.e., as being already meaningful and/or distinguished according to different "things that are 'in' the world: houses, trees, people, mountains, stars".²⁸²⁴ The world is described as a meaningful phenomenon, then, not just because human beings reside *in* it alongside other beings – worldhood is that phenomenon which encompasses and incorporates the totality of beings, and so, necessarily includes them as part of its own description. World and beings

²⁸¹³ Ibid, p.27.

²⁸¹⁴ Ibid, p.35.

²⁸¹⁵ Ibid, p.27.

²⁸¹⁶ Ibid.

²⁸¹⁷ Ibid, p.90.

²⁸¹⁸ Ibid, p169.

²⁸¹⁹ Ibid, p.28.

²⁸²⁰ Ibid, p.91.

²⁸²¹ Ibid, p. 92.

²⁸²² Ibid.

²⁸²³ Ibid.

²⁸²⁴ Ibid, p.91.

presuppose each other to such an extent that they form a complex (or self referential) whole. Being and world therefore cannot be taken apart, and must be approached together: via the "avenue of the entities within the world and the Being which they possess".²⁸²⁵ Generally speaking, Heidegger divides the presupposition of the world into two distinct ways of being (or meaningful orientations towards the world). Specifically, Heidegger distinguishes two ways of approaching (or being meaningfully orientated to) the world. The distinction is between the *ready-to-hand* and the *present-to-hand*. The ready-to-hand refers to the way human beings are tacitly oriented to the content of their everyday experience of the world. The occurrence of 'ready' meaning presents itself within a *context of significance* that is constitutive of it as being readily available and/or handy (useful, meaningful) as such. Meaning becomes readily available and/or significant when it occurs in relation to other meaningful entities: by being part of a complex (or self referential and/or determining) whole. The present-to-hand refers to the way theoretical thought attempts to objectify the content of everyday experience: by presenting meaningful entities as objects of thought. Heidegger provides the example of a hammer to illustrate the distinction between the *ready-to-hand* and the *present-to-hand*. He observes that a tool like a hammer can be approached (understood) in two distinct ways. We could either take it in our hand and hammer away without thinking or we could present it to conscious thought and contemplate it as an object from a distance. Heidegger claims that the ready-to-hand is ontologically prior to the present-to-hand in that being ready-to-hand is the way we primarily understand (approach) meaningful entities such as hammers and nails. When human beings use a hammer they don't normally understand it as a 'handle and a heavy metal top with a flat side' – the object's physical properties disappear from conscious awareness or retreats into the background of our everyday experience of it. We relate to the hammer by way of the task literally at hand: by being orientated to the activity of hitting nails on the head and so become a part of the activity and/or relation. Consequently, Heidegger attempts to make the phenomenon of the world known by pointing to the various phenomena closest to it (of which Dasein is obviously an integral part). He calls this integrated proximity the "environment"²⁸²⁶, and characterizes the environs by virtue of its "dealings" and "concerns"²⁸²⁷. The general accessibility of meaningful beings is labelled "equipment"²⁸²⁸, and accessible beings are whatever is encountered there. Dasein is said to be equipped to deal with the world *in order to* render it serviceable, and the equipment it uses are those beings that render it as serviceable. Significant for Heidegger is the way in which an in-order-to exhibits a 'being's' referential characteristics – namely, as something being assigned *to* something. Distinct beings may or may not belong together, and the question

²⁸²⁵ *ibid*, p.92.

²⁸²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 94.

²⁸²⁷ *Ibid*, pgs. 95-96.

²⁸²⁸ *Ibid*, p.97.

of their belonging is determined by whether and how they are assigned to each other. A table and chair, for example, belong together by referring to (presupposing) each other. Nonetheless, these two things do not simply refer to each other, but point to or indicate their relationship to other things – like a house in which to situate them and a room in which to arrange them. The *kind* of being Heidegger ascribes to these beings is ‘readiness-to-hand’²⁸²⁹. It is important to stress that something being ready-to-hand generally occurs behind Dasein’s back, so to speak. The everyday occurrence of beings tends to be inconspicuous, and their inconspicuousness derives from the totality of equipment in which they occur. Dasein is – and always has been – so involved in its own dealings with the world that it does not generally identify and reflect upon the content of its own experiences. Actively thinking of or about something would be to present being/s to that consciousness that already encounters it there as such, and so, make an in-order-to merely present-to-hand (subject to objectification). According to Heidegger, Dasein’s “involvement”²⁸³⁰ with the world does not involve being consciously *directed upon* an object – rather, its mode of being consists in being *directed towards* those beings which it already forms an integral part. This ‘towards-which’ is integrated in the sense that being involved with beings involves being completely immersed within them. Being-in-the-world moves beings in the direction of a world to which they collectively belong, thereby providing a horizon (context, movement) of involvement.

Heidegger distinguishes between two kinds of reference in order to be able to refer us (back) to that referential whole which constitutes the ‘presupposition of the world’. Specifically, he refers us to “the difference between the reference of serviceability and the reference of indicating”.²⁸³¹ This difference is said to be indicative of *that* which can indicate or reveal the world, and *what* it indicates is the ways in which beings can be directed towards an indicative or serviceable whole. Heidegger, then, wants to distinguish between reference that indicates or discloses a meaningful world, and reference that makes a world thus disclosed or indicated. Signs are part of a greater whole – unlike other ‘parts’ (equipment), however, signs can reveal the whole in which they form an integral part. Indeed, signs are accorded their special status because of their part – whole function: namely, they possess the ability to *integrate* a whole (bring various parts *into* a meaningful whole), and they have the capacity to reveal an integral whole (indicate a whole with respect to its meaningful parts). An example Heidegger provides corresponds to ‘the way’ element in his thinking. The example is of a car indicating a turn, and illustrates how an indicator can help ‘show’ the way. Specifically, an indicator is an item of equipment amongst many items of equipment (a road, other travellers, traffic regulations, etc). Human beings

²⁸²⁹ Ibid, p. 101.

²⁸³⁰ Ibid, p. 111.

²⁸³¹ Ibid, p.109.

encounter this sign on their way from one place to another, and it indicates the way in at least two ways – by pointing the way, and enabling it. Heidegger emphasizes the latter over the former since having a way indicates a way to come and go. An indicator may point travellers in a specific direction, but what it essentially determines is the possibility of being orientated within an environment. According to Heidegger, Dasein is therefore always “directed and on its way.”²⁸³² Such a sign not only indicates that our movements are directed, it actively directs movement by arranging and regulating it into a world in which to move. Signs therefore ‘equip’ Dasein to deal with the world, and make it possible to bring to light the ways in which the world is dealt with (structured). Consequently, a sign is an “item of equipment which explicitly raises a totality of equipment into our circumspection so that ...the worldly character of the ready-to-hand announces itself”²⁸³³. This announcement occurs by way of being signified, since “Dasein ‘signifies’ to itself”²⁸³⁴ its own involvement with the world. We need to distinguish two elements within Heidegger’s thinking here. On the one hand, reference simultaneously involves the in/conspicuousness of beings: all beings refer to one another in one way or another, and such referencing forms a totality which may or may not become conspicuous. Signs are those beings which can refer (back) to themselves, if only because they can reveal the referential nature of the totality to which all beings belong. On the other hand, signs enable referencing to occur by letting things ‘be’ (refer to each other). Signs open up and enclose beings within a world that point to and disclose a meaningful enclosure. If being-in-the-world involves being directed towards beings, then beings are orientated by those signs which determine their relationship to (involvement with) each other. Heidegger calls this “relational character...*signifying*” and the “relational totality of this signifying...*significance*”²⁸³⁵. Indeed, *significance* is said to be constitutive of the structure of the phenomenon of the world in that it constitutes Dasein’s mode of being and finds a way in which to bring beings into signification. *Within* significance, it is therefore possible to “disclose ... significations” upon which is “founded the Being of words and of language”²⁸³⁶

Dasein discloses its significance by virtue of having being ‘thrown’ into a world with a *given* understanding. Human beings find themselves delivered over and into situations which are not only ‘there’ to be found (culture, history, discourse, etc), but are *where* they invariably find themselves to be situated. Being–there occurs existentially in that being-in-the-world is a feature of Dasein’s factual existence: being thrown involves being thrown *into* an understanding, and

²⁸³² *ibid*, p.110.

²⁸³³ *ibid*.

²⁸³⁴ *ibid*, p.120

²⁸³⁵ *ibid*.

²⁸³⁶ *ibid*, p.121.

such an understanding occurs in terms of the fact of its own existence. As a consequence, being-there entails being thrown into a 'projection' – or rather, being thrown forward into an environment that presents itself as a situation to be understood and dealt with. Being-there is *given* as existence, and the 'there' of being is received by being *in* an understanding. Given that an understanding occurs in terms of Dasein's own existence, understanding as a projection throws before itself the conditions and possibilities of its own existence. Being thrown into a projection not only indicates that Dasein finds itself orientated (moving towards one possibility after another), understanding as a thrown projection actively makes possible the original movement and dis/orientation. 'Mood' is said to be the way in which Dasein experiences an orientation, since it determines the ways in which being–there belongs to the thrownness of its own existence, and so, projects itself towards the possibility of a meaningful existence. Ontically speaking, mood belongs to the structure of being-there: it refers to the fact that Dasein is in someway directed and on its way (significant). Ontologically speaking, "bare mood"²⁸³⁷ is said to structure the 'there' of being: it determines the direction and significance of being-in-the-world. From "the ontological point of view, we must as a general principle leave the primary discovery of the world to bare mood"²⁸³⁸, and the way 'mood' lays itself bare – discovers the world – is through "the meaning of care"²⁸³⁹ (Dasein's involvement with and/or concern about its world). Indeed, mood – a particular disposition or affectedness – lays bare the ground of meaningful disclosure, since it frames a "disclosive submission to the world, out of which we can encounter something that matters to us"²⁸⁴⁰. Mood is that frame of mind which provides the world with its framework – it structures *the way* in which various parts fit together and come into being as a whole of significance. Mood paves the way in a positive and a negative sense. Positively, mood makes a world possible by laying the ground on which Dasein directs and moves itself – it determines the way we find ourselves *in* the world by attuning and orienting our being there. Negatively, it lays over the possibility of Dasein being misdirected or wayward: there remains the question of whether Dasein has being misled by its own encounters and involvements. Whilst Dasein 'opens' itself to the world by encountering it as a meaningful world, it also invariably encloses itself within its own understanding.

Following Heidegger's lead, we are finally in a position to 'enter' the hermeneutical circle in the 'right way' and turn towards the question of language. The irony, of course, is that Heidegger has gone to great lengths to argue that we are already in there, and the question was being able to move back and forth in accordance with his own way-making movements. Specifically,

²⁸³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 177.

²⁸³⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸³⁹ *ibid.*, p.370

²⁸⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

it was from within the circle of understanding that Heidegger attempts to "pursue the phenomenon of interpretation in understanding the world"²⁸⁴¹, and Heidegger's goal is to distinguish its "mode of genuineness"²⁸⁴² or authenticity by way of the question of Being. And the only way he has being able to do this is by making the circle of understanding present-to-hand – that is, by presenting it as an object of thought within his own inquiry. Heidegger goes on to question our "being there as understanding"²⁸⁴³ and argues that interpretation is understanding made explicit with respect to "its possible authenticity and totality".²⁸⁴⁴ According to Heidegger, "understanding is a basic determination of existence"²⁸⁴⁵ and a meaningful interpretation of the world is "possible only because the Dasein as existent is itself an intrinsically understanding entity".²⁸⁴⁶ The "condition of possibility"²⁸⁴⁷ for meaningful understanding is therefore determined by Dasein's own mode of being-there (involvement with a world interpreted as such). Heidegger's conception of the circle of understanding, then, directs itself (back) towards the way interpretation necessarily becomes possible and/or questionable. Heidegger claims that "as understanding, Dasein projects its Being upon possibilities"²⁸⁴⁸ and that the "projection of understanding has its own possibility – that of developing itself"²⁸⁴⁹ through interpretation. Given this approach, the question is the way we understand (interpret) "something as something"²⁸⁵⁰ within a "totality of involvements".²⁸⁵¹ Put another way, when something "is encountered within the world as such, the thing in question already has an involvement which is disclosed in our understanding of the world, and this involvement is one which gets laid out in the interpretation".²⁸⁵² The question, then, is how does an interpretation emerge within an understanding – i.e., where the "environmentally ready-to-hand"²⁸⁵³ can be meaningfully interpreted (understood) as a chair or table (amongst other things)? We need to proceed carefully here. Heidegger distinguishes between a hermeneutic 'as' and an assertive 'as', and asserts that the latter derives from the former. Heidegger proceeds to claim that all "interpretation moreover operates in the fore-structure of understanding"²⁸⁵⁴ and "appropriates

²⁸⁴¹ *ibid*, p.189.

²⁸⁴² *ibid*.

²⁸⁴³ *ibid*, p.192.

²⁸⁴⁴ *ibid*, p.358.

²⁸⁴⁵ Heidegger, Martin, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans: Hofstadler, Albert, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 276.

²⁸⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.277.

²⁸⁴⁷ *ibid*, 276.

²⁸⁴⁸ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.188.

²⁸⁴⁹ *ibid*.

²⁸⁵⁰ *ibid*, p. 189.

²⁸⁵¹ *Ibid*.

²⁸⁵² *ibid*, p.190-191.

²⁸⁵³ *Ibid*, p.189.

²⁸⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p.194.

understandingly that which is understood by it"²⁸⁵⁵ – i.e., enables and directs its own possibilities. Consequently, Heidegger divides the fore-structure of understanding into three interdependent parts in order to show the way understanding projects its Being upon possibilities – i.e. develops its own possibility for meaningful understanding and questioning. Heidegger calls these three parts *fore-having*, *fore-sight* and *fore-conception*, and their movements form a complex whole. In this way, "understanding does not become something different"²⁸⁵⁶ but "becomes itself"²⁸⁵⁷ through interpretation ("the appropriation of understanding").²⁸⁵⁸

Fore-having refers to the way understanding encounters the ready-to-hand "circumspectively"²⁸⁵⁹ and interprets objects meaningfully without question. It "hides in itself the explicitness of the assignment-relations (of the in-order-to) which belong to that totality"²⁸⁶⁰ and so "recedes into an understanding which does not stand out from the background".²⁸⁶¹ Since we find ourselves already moving within an understanding, fore-having is what comes before us: it moves understanding forward by making it possible against an intelligible background. *Foresight* is "something we see in advance"²⁸⁶² and is "always done under the guidance of a point of view".²⁸⁶³ Foresight reflects the way human beings see the world – it reveals the direction in which we are already moving (or the distinct ways we move about in a given understanding and/or towards meaningful possibilities). It moves our interpretation of the world into the foreground by making parts of our understanding stand out or visible. *Fore-conception* is the way in which entities are meaningfully conceived (approached) and is "grounded in something we grasp in advance".²⁸⁶⁴ Specifically, "anything understood"²⁸⁶⁵ by way of fore-having and foresight "becomes conceptualizable through the interpretation".²⁸⁶⁶ Consequently, it is the conception (interpretation) of entities that may be taken as given or questioned within understanding, and the question is determining "the way of conceiving"²⁸⁶⁷ their overall movements there.

²⁸⁵⁵ *ibid*, p.188.

²⁸⁵⁶ *ibid*, p.188.

²⁸⁵⁷ *ibid*.

²⁸⁵⁸ *ibid*, p.191.

²⁸⁵⁹ *ibid*, p.189.

²⁸⁶⁰ *ibid*.

²⁸⁶¹ *ibid*, p.191

²⁸⁶² *ibid*.

²⁸⁶³ *ibid*.

²⁸⁶⁴ *ibid*.

²⁸⁶⁵ *ibid*

²⁸⁶⁶ *ibid*.

²⁸⁶⁷ *ibid*.

Heidegger's analysis of the relationship between interpretation and understanding paves the way for his approach to assertion and language. Specifically, the phenomenon of language – and its relation to knowledge claims about the world – follows on from his interpretation of Dasein as 'being-there as understanding'. It is from within the circle of understanding that Heidegger claims that assertion is a derivative mode of interpretation, and that language – in turn – derives from the way human beings relate to (move within) an already meaningful world. In this way, Heidegger comes to "define assertion as a pointing out which gives something a definite character and which communicates"²⁸⁶⁸ through language. If we are already moving about in an understanding of Being, language gives expression to our being-there as understanding by making interpretation approachable (accessible, available, etc.) through assertions that either *uncover* or *cover over* the entities in question. Consequently, "asserting is a way of Being towards the Thing itself that is"²⁸⁶⁹ and to "say that an assertion 'is true' signifies that it uncovers the entity as it is in itself. Such an assertion asserts, points out, 'lets' the entity 'be seen' in its uncoveredness. The Being-true (truth) of the assertion must be understood as Being-uncovering".²⁸⁷⁰ It is important to stress, then, that Heidegger is not claiming that language makes a meaningful world possible here. It is the other way around: our being-in-the-world makes language meaningful and/or possible – by disclosing (making intelligible) what is already understood. The world is first disclosed through *significance* – totality of meaningful involvements – and *signification* (the words of language) expresses the meaningfulness of such encounters and (possibly) conceals the truth of the being/s in question. In "so far as understanding and interpretation make up the existential state of Being of the 'there', 'meaning' must be conceived as the formal-existential framework of the disclosedness which belongs to understanding. Meaning is an existentials of Dasein, not a property attaching to entities, lying behind them or floating somewhere as an intermediate domain. Dasein only 'has' meaning, so far as the disclosedness of Being-in the-world can be 'filled in' by the entities discoverable in that disclosedness"²⁸⁷¹ Discourse discloses the intelligibility of beings by way of articulating interpretation and understanding: language is the way in which a meaningful structure can emerge and determine itself as a structural totality. Being-in-the-world is intelligible because the totality of beings finds themselves expressed as discourse. Consequently, the "totality of significations of intelligibility is put into words. To significations words accrue"²⁸⁷². Meaning antecedes signification as language, and words proceed to attach themselves – or occur in addition to – the phenomenon of a meaningful world. Although all discourse is "about

²⁸⁶⁸ *ibid*, p.199.

²⁸⁶⁹ *ibid*, p.260.

²⁸⁷⁰ *ibid*, p.261.

²⁸⁷¹ *ibid*, p.193.

²⁸⁷² *ibid*, p. 204.

something"²⁸⁷³, we need to distinguish the *question* of how language itself comes 'about' (comes into being) and can make assertions about being-in-the-world. According to the early Heidegger, language has its basis in Dasein's own possibility for meaning, and goes on to express whatever is meaningfully possible.²⁸⁷⁴ Heidegger thereby divides assertion into three related parts – it involves a "pointing out"²⁸⁷⁵ that lets an "entity be seen from itself"²⁸⁷⁶, it gives an entity a "definite character"²⁸⁷⁷ by the way such entities can be seen (approached) through the relationship between words and it allows others to similarly see entities through the act of communicating words about them. If a person asserts *the hammer is too heavy*,²⁸⁷⁸ for example, they are already moving within a given understanding and indicating their movement (interpretation) of the situation. Such an understanding discloses the way an interpretation becomes intelligible and/or questionable – by making the ready-to-hand (or circumspect) present-to-hand (an object of thought).

Given that the being of language has its basis in being-in-the-world, Heidegger goes on to ask 'where' the 'there' of Dasein is to be found. Dasein's mode of being is said to be rooted within the "they, and is mastered by it"²⁸⁷⁹. The "world is always the one that I share with Others. The world of Dasein is a with-world"²⁸⁸⁰ and Dasein typically speaks about its world "by following the route of gossiping and passing the word along".²⁸⁸¹ Indeed, Dasein has 'fallen' into the 'they' because of language, and finds itself lost 'there'. The "they is constituted by the way things have been publicly interpreted, which expresses itself in idle talk".²⁸⁸² Discourse becomes idle (directionless, groundless, unquestioning, etc.) in that whatever is communicated typically enacts and maintains an undifferentiated mode of being. The circle of understanding is thereby closed off – and enclosed within – whatever is publicly understood and shared. Dasein presumes to understand the nature and extent of its own involvement with the world, reproducing the limits of its own understanding and/or covering up its own way of being-in-the-world. The 'They' – conceived as a public or cultural mode of being – leads the way into forgetfulness or carelessness. Heidegger describes Dasein as "falling"²⁸⁸³ into its own

²⁸⁷³ Ibid, p. 205.

²⁸⁷⁴ What "discourse is about is a structural item that it necessarily possesses; for discourse helps to constitute the disclosedness of Being-in-the-world, and in its own structure is modeled upon this basic state of Dasein", *ibid.*

²⁸⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p.196.

²⁸⁷⁶ *ibid.*

²⁸⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p.197.

²⁸⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p.196.

²⁸⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p. 210.

²⁸⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.155.

²⁸⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 212.

²⁸⁸² *ibid.*, 296.

²⁸⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.220

involvement with the world: it has become so involved with the They that it's being—there threatens to become "inauthentic"²⁸⁸⁴ with "never the possibility of extrication. In it, out of it, and against it, all genuine understanding, interpreting and communicating, all rediscovering and appropriating anew, are performed"²⁸⁸⁵ in such a way as to conceal the underlying concern. In attempting to make everything other than its temporal existence an issue, Dasein has therefore misunderstood or displaced its primordial concern: the temporality of its existence. Dasein's primary concern lies "between birth and death"²⁸⁸⁶, and that "Being towards death in which either one flees it or anticipates it form a unity... As care, Dasein *is* the between"²⁸⁸⁷. Despite the totality of Dasein's involvements, being-in-the-world therefore remains an open question, and the way it can be thrown (back) into question – become an issue – is by caring about its intermediate status. Heidegger's questioning thereby proposes to exhibit the ground on which Dasein stands and falls by referring us to something that may occur within the referential totality: the experience of anxiety, which is experienced as a nothingness. "As one of Dasein's possibilities of Being, anxiety – together with Dasein itself as disclosed in it – provides the phenomenal basis for explicitly grasping Dasein's primordial totality of Being"²⁸⁸⁸.

According to Heidegger, anxiety provides a way in which Dasein can be more authentically disclosed. Anxiety makes it possible to uncover Dasein's true mode of being-in-the world – by revealing that it's 'being' cannot remain 'there' indefinitely. Despite the fact that Dasein has made it's 'home' within the "world of its concern"²⁸⁸⁹, anxiety discloses the possibility of its own insignificance. "Nothing which is ready-to-hand or present-at-hand within the world functions as that in the face of which anxiety is anxious. Here the totality of involvements of the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand discovered within-the-world is, as such, of no consequence: it collapses into itself; the world has the character of completely lacking significance"²⁸⁹⁰. Instead of understanding the privation of meaning (the significance of insignificance), Dasein will typically attempt to compensate by falling back further into what has been publicly understood as a meaningful world. In denying itself an understanding of the possibility to which it is ultimately projected, Dasein is caught in a fundamental misunderstanding – caught between life and death, it moves towards the former by moving away from the latter. A more authentic existence, however, can *become* possible: by being resolute and following the call of

²⁸⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁸⁵ Ibid, p.213.

²⁸⁸⁶ Ibid, p.426.

²⁸⁸⁷ Ibid, p.427.

²⁸⁸⁸ Ibid, p.227.

²⁸⁸⁹ Ibid, p.322.

²⁸⁹⁰ Ibid.

conscience. "Resoluteness makes up the mode of authentic care"²⁸⁹¹ by resolving an anxious situation and returning Dasein to itself. Whilst being "closed off and covered up"²⁸⁹² remains a part of being-in-the-world, the recovery (or uncovering) of the meaning of Being opens up a "clearing."²⁸⁹³ Specifically, conscience makes a demand upon Dasein by calling out to it and summoning itself (back) towards its Being towards death. By being *resolute* (or resolved to the situation), conscience "gives us something to understand, it discloses"²⁸⁹⁴ whatever can be understood as an appeal or summons. Conscience "manifests itself as the call of care: the caller is Dasein, which in its thrownness (in its Being-already-in) is anxious about its potentiality-for-Being. The one to whom the appeal is made is this very same Dasein...and it is summoned out of this falling by the appeal".²⁸⁹⁵ Anxiety may disclose the possibility of a meaningless world but conscience may release Dasein from the possibility of being "in untruth"²⁸⁹⁶ (or concealment). Heidegger's concept of *truth as unconcealment* and *untruth as concealment* clearly presupposes the circle of understanding directing the movements of his own questioning. Consequently, there is either the way of uncovering (or recovering) the question of the meaning of being-in-the-world, or the way of covering over (or retreating) from such questioning. According to Heidegger, there "is truth only insofar as Dasein is"²⁸⁹⁷ and being "in the truth"²⁸⁹⁸ or "in untruth"²⁸⁹⁹ remains "relative to Dasein's Being".²⁹⁰⁰ The question, then, becomes: what makes truth as unconcealment possible? Such an answer can only be meaningfully determined, of course, by way of the question of Being, and Dasein can only approach this question through an understanding of the ontological difference making questioning possible and/or necessary. "It is not we who presuppose 'truth'; but it is '*truth*' that makes it all possible ontologically for us to be able to *be* such that we 'presuppose' anything at all. Truth is what first *makes possible* anything like presupposing".²⁹⁰¹

What Makes Truth Possible? Language as the House of Being.

We have thus far been elucidating Heidegger's interpretation of the question of Being, and its relationship to the circle of understanding. Following Heidegger's lead, we have been emphasising the way human beings are *placed within the question*, and directed our questioning

²⁸⁹¹ *ibid*, p.375.

²⁸⁹² *ibid*, p.265.

²⁸⁹³ *Ibid*, p.171, 214.

²⁸⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 314.

²⁸⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p.322.

²⁸⁹⁶ *ibid*, p.265.

²⁸⁹⁷ *ibid*, p.264.

²⁸⁹⁸ *ibid*, p.265.

²⁸⁹⁹ *ibid*.

²⁹⁰⁰ *ibid*, p.264.

²⁹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 270.

towards Heidegger's way-making movements. Given Heidegger's circular approach, we have privileged the question of being-in-the-world, or the way the world is already understood as meaningful and can become questionable in turn. The question of the meaning of Being takes place as an existential analytic and so occurs as an inquiry into the intelligibility (meaningfulness) of beings. Heidegger distinguishes between Being and beings in order to question the way our being-in-the-world becomes meaningful and/or questionable. Heidegger argues that the meaningfulness of beings originates in the ontological difference enabling his questioning as such. Although Heidegger covers a lot of ground, there were intersecting themes. These themes moved towards the way a meaningful world opens up and/or encloses itself within a given understanding. We thereby encountered concepts such as concealment, disclosure, care and authenticity (amongst others). Heidegger's overall goal was to clear the way – by creating an opening for a more authentic understanding. The question of language figured centrally in Heidegger's original interpretation, and he argued that language derives from the circle of understanding. The latter Heidegger, however, approaches this question in a different way – by 'tuning' the question around and arguing that the circle of understanding derives from language's own directives or movements. The relationship between Dasein and Being is reversed and Heidegger's subsequent place within the question assigns priority to Being. Instead of directing his movements towards the meaning of Being, Heidegger now moves towards the truth (or historical emergence) of Being. As we have already seen, however, Heidegger anticipates this reversal from the outset: the possibility of truth is what first makes possible anything like presupposing and/or concealment within presuppositions. Nonetheless, it is the presupposition of truth – presupposing the beings in question and determining what such presuppositions can either reveal or conceal about the history of Being – that becomes the question. The question of Being now concerns the hidden essence of truth²⁹⁰², and the question is trying to find our way towards an essentially concealed clearing. That is to say, towards the meaningful possibility of unconcealment (opening) within language. Heidegger thereby attempts to clear the way for – or seeks the clearing – in which the essence (being) of truth can emerge at a given time. According to the latter Heidegger, "Language is the house of Being in which man ek-sists by dwelling, in that he belongs to the truth of Being, guarding it".²⁹⁰³ The relation between truth and concealment, however, continues to be questionable: in what way may language's concealed essence be revealed and/or guarded?

²⁹⁰² Heidegger, Martin, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans: Anderson, John and Freund, Hans (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p.86.

²⁹⁰³ Heidegger, Martin, "Letter on Humanism" in *Basic Writings* edited by Krell, David, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p.231.

Equally revealing is that Heidegger recalls a historical presupposition to bring forth the question of the truth of Being: concealed truth as kerygma. Specifically, it is possible to observe a through line between the 'early' and the 'latter' Heidegger by way of the "traditional concept of hermeneutics".²⁹⁰⁴ Heidegger initially traced the history of 'hermeneutics' back to the philosophical discourse of antiquity and Plato's attempt to determine the best way to approach the question of truth (where poets were understood as mere interpreters of the god's words whilst philosophy sought knowledge of the relationship between words and worlds). As early as 1923, Heidegger notes that 'hermeneutics' initially referred to the process of making present or intelligible what was previously absent or unintelligible – namely, a cryptic message sent from one kind of being (the gods) to another (human beings). Hermeneutics refers to "the announcement and making known of the being of a being in its being in relation to"²⁹⁰⁵ other beings within language. The problem, of course, is that the being of language can either cover or uncover the truth in question, and it is difficult to know whether an interpretation of divine messages hides or reveals the being to be understood. Thirty-six years later, Heidegger goes on to ask the question of Being via the (kerygmatic) experience of the poet – a kerygma which may be 'received' via an understanding of the being of language. He calls on the traditional concept of hermeneutics via a reference to poetry, and re-calls that "Hermes is the divine messenger. He brings the message of destiny".²⁹⁰⁶ Further, "the relation of message and message-bearer (still) prevails".²⁹⁰⁷ The "message-bearer must come from the message. But he must also have gone toward it".²⁹⁰⁸ Heidegger's attempt to uncover the concealed truth of Being is therefore an attempt to go back towards the idea that "hermeneutics means not just the interpretation, but even before it, the bearing of message and tidings".²⁹⁰⁹ Consequently, "Heidegger's thought develops less in starts and stops and dramatic turnings, and more as a gradual recognition of the implications of pursuing an ontology of unconcealment".²⁹¹⁰ Such a *historical* pursuit becomes a *critical* area of *concern* insofar as it calls our being back into question. The "heart of history, for Heidegger, is not a sequence of occurrences but the happening of be-ing – the eruption of significance at 'inceptions' or critical junctures. Such a juncture decides the course of an epoch... (and)...brings us into our own by making all being,

²⁹⁰⁴ Heidegger, Martin, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, trans: van Buren, John, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p.6.

²⁹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p.7.

²⁹⁰⁶ Heidegger, Martin, "A Dialogue On Language", in *On The Way to Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.29

²⁹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

²⁹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, 51.

²⁹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p.29.

²⁹¹⁰ Wrathall, Mark, *Heidegger and Unconcealment: Truth, Language and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.4.

including our being, into an urgent issue. In emergency, being emerges"²⁹¹¹. We shall now briefly turn towards Heidegger's attempt to rethink his overall approach.

We need to understand in advance, however, that Heidegger moves away from systematic – analytical or conceptual – thought, and encounters a "distressing difficulty"²⁹¹² in finding a place within his own question. According to Heidegger, the "relation of Being and human being"²⁹¹³ remains "unsuitably conceived"²⁹¹⁴ insofar as the truth of Being lies "concealed"²⁹¹⁵ in its historical origin and/or destination. The question is to what extent – or in what way – can the truth of Being be understood within a thrown projection. Specifically, if disclosedness as unconcealment is taken as a condition of possibility for the occurrence of truth, what can the projection of meaning refer to (uncover) other than its own in/capacity for disclosure (possibility for meaning)? The difficulty before us, then, is twofold. On the one hand, Heidegger struggles to make sense of his own question because he alleges that the truth of Being will always be concealed or obscured when trying to find our way towards the being of language. On the other hand, it has been alleged that Heidegger's willingness to retreat into linguistic obscurantism merely reveals that such questioning was nonsense to begin with and invariably leads thought astray.²⁹¹⁶ Either way, any attempt at understanding Heidegger's approach runs the risk of concealing the true difficulty: being caught *between* conflicting interpretations or movements.²⁹¹⁷ Witness the way Sheehan attempts to make sense of Heidegger's overall approach – by oscillating between these two extremes. Sheehan readily acknowledges the "considerable confusion at the heart of the Heideggerian enterprise, and it may not be the fault of Heidegger

²⁹¹¹ Polt, Richard, *The Emergency of Being: On Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2013), p.5.

²⁹¹² Heidegger, Martin, "The Origin of the Work of Art" in *Basic Writings* edited by Krell, David, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p. 211.

²⁹¹³ Ibid.

²⁹¹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹¹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹¹⁶ Carnap, Rudolf "The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language" in *Logical Positivism*, ed. Ayer, Alfred. (New York: Macmillan, 1959). Carnap famously provided a scathing critique of Heidegger's use of language and accused him of talking nonsense under the guise of profundity. Carnap argued that Heidegger uses the word 'nothing' as if 'no thing' meaningfully referred to a 'not thing' (i.e. some thing, like the 'not') and so gets tongue tied or caught in linguistic knots. According to Carnap, "the majority of the logical mistakes that are committed when pseudo-statements are made, are based on the logical faults infecting the use of the word 'to be' in our language.", p.73.

²⁹¹⁷ Heidegger, Martin, "The Problem of a Non-Objectifying Thinking and Speaking in Today's Theology" in *Pathmarks* ed. McNeill, William (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Heidegger is acutely aware of the difference in philosophical approach, and contrasts it's "most extreme counter positions (Carnap>Heidegger). One calls these positions today: the technical-scientific view of language and the speculative-hermeneutical experience of language". Further, "both positions recognize language as the realm within which the thinking of philosophy and every kind of thinking and saying move and reside" and "the debate between the two positions has nothing less at stake than the question of human existence and its determination", p.56.

scholars. Heidegger himself said that "it remains unclear what we are supposed to think under the name 'being.'"²⁹¹⁸ Sheehan goes on to clarify Heidegger's meaning by attempting to make the question of Being "answerable"²⁹¹⁹ for itself by way of coherence and consistency. Whilst Sheehan's no nonsense approach is certainly commendable, clearing (or interpreting) away Heidegger's "silliness"²⁹²⁰ and "hyperbole"²⁹²¹ results in a questionable 'corrective' (or countermovement towards intelligibility and understatement). Sheehan is especially concerned by Heidegger's tendency to hypostatize and personalize Being and argues that "the obscurity and incomprehension that still haunts his philosophy"²⁹²² invariably "turns...into a parody of itself"²⁹²³. Sheehan laments Heidegger's free fall²⁹²⁴ into a world of his own making, and despairs that the house of being would ideally bear the sign 'abandon all hope ye who enter here'.²⁹²⁵ Sheehan encourages even the most sympathetic of interpreters to follow Virgil's advice to a distressed Dante when guiding him through the circles of hell in *The Divine Comedy*: by not speaking about the beings in question – to just look and move on.²⁹²⁶

Heidegger's own 'distress', of course, is no coincidence – it recalls the distinctive way in which Dasein is disclosed through anxiety when Dasein loses its bearings. Heidegger's subsequent questioning attempts to direct meaningful thought back to the "non-conceptual reticence of the essence"²⁹²⁷ of Being "which opens itself only to the full historical carrying out of inceptual thinking".²⁹²⁸ The authenticity of cultural experience becomes integral insofar as it is the historical relationship to language that determines whether a given culture can "begin to think"²⁹²⁹ the question of Being. The history of forgetfulness is said to have begun "with the

²⁹¹⁸ Sheehan, Thomas, *Making Sense of Heidegger* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), p.5.

²⁹¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.237.

²⁹²⁰ *ibid.*

²⁹²¹ *ibid.*

²⁹²² *ibid.*, p.xix.

²⁹²³ *ibid.*, p.11.

²⁹²⁴ *ibid.*, p.20. Sheehan intimates that Heidegger has fallen down a rabbit hole and into his own wonderland (or world of make believe) where rules of logic don't apply and nonsense literally rules the land. Sheehan even goes so far as to compare Heidegger to Humpty Dumpty "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more or less!"

²⁹²⁵ *ibid.*, p.20.

²⁹²⁶ Sheehan, Thomas, "What, After All, Was Heidegger About"? *Continental Philosophy Review*, 47, 2 (2014), p. 270.

²⁹²⁷ Heidegger, Martin, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans: Emad, Parvis and Maly, Kenneth, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p.205.

²⁹²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹²⁹ Heidegger, Martin, "Only A God Can Save Us" in Wolin, Richard (ed) *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998), p.113. In this posthumously published interview, Heidegger distinguishes cultural experience according to its alleged proximity to the question of Being. Specifically, he insists that German thought is closer to ancient Greek thought, and the issue of this proximity is grounded within the relation a given culture has to its own language. Commenting on "the inner relationship of the German language with the language of the

appropriation of Greek words by Roman-Latin thought"²⁹³⁰, where a "different way of thinking"²⁹³¹ the question of Being is "concealed"²⁹³² through the spread of another culture's language. Witness the way Heidegger, for example, projects an ontological status onto the Greek word 'polis'. Although 'polis' has been traditionally translated as 'state' or 'city', such translations merely conceal its true meaning – "the polis is the site of history"²⁹³³. The polis is where "history happens"²⁹³⁴ and the history of being is essentially "political"²⁹³⁵: the "spiritual fate of the West"²⁹³⁶ turns on the question. Dasein's "inescapable...destiny"²⁹³⁷ is said to take place "by way of the grounding of the essence of truth"²⁹³⁸ and finding its way towards a clearing opened up by Being. Human beings must nonetheless approach the emergence of Being by way of "withdrawal"²⁹³⁹ – i.e., where the truth of Being moves away from the understanding it makes possible and/or necessary (directs, calls out to, clears a way for, etc).

Heidegger originally presupposed that the "history of the signification"²⁹⁴⁰ of concepts – together with an interrogation of their "significations"²⁹⁴¹ – paved the way towards a more authentic understanding of the ontological difference. He thereby claimed that "the ultimate business of philosophy is to preserve the *force of the most elemental words* in which Dasein expresses itself, and to keep the common understanding from levelling them off"²⁹⁴² into an undifferentiated meaning of Being. Heidegger subsequently came to the understanding that he had approached language the wrong way, and that the difference between Being and beings is best understood via the question of their *belonging together* there. Specifically, where "the together is now determined by the belonging"²⁹⁴³ and they "are appropriated to each other".²⁹⁴⁴ The difficulty, then, is finding our place within the language making questioning possible (appropriate) in the

Greeks and with their thought" Heidegger claims that human beings may "begin to think" authentically if they can speak German first.

²⁹³⁰ Heidegger, Martin, "The Origin of the Work of Art" in *Basic Writings* edited by Krell, David, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p.149.

²⁹³¹ *ibid.*

²⁹³² *ibid.*

²⁹³³ Heidegger, Martin, *Introduction to Metaphysics* trans: Fried, Gregory, and Polt, Richard (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p.162.

²⁹³⁴ *ibid.*, p.163.

²⁹³⁵ *ibid.*, *ibid.*

²⁹³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 45.

²⁹³⁷ Heidegger, Martin, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans: Emad, Parvis and Maly, Kenneth, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p.13.

²⁹³⁸ *ibid.*,

²⁹³⁹ *ibid.*

²⁹⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.243.

²⁹⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.121.

²⁹⁴² *ibid.*, p.262.

²⁹⁴³ Heidegger, Martin, *Identity and Difference* trans. Stambaugh, Joan (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p.29.

²⁹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.31.

first place. Inquiry requires "the prior grant of what it is they approach and pursue with their queries. Every posing of every question takes place within the very grant of what is put in question".²⁹⁴⁵ Heidegger's 'turn' is intended to move towards a concealed clearing within language – by moving "beyond beings, not away from them but before them...In the midst of beings as a whole an open place occurs...Thought of in reference to beings, this clearing is more in being than are beings. This open center is therefore not surrounded by beings; rather, the clearing center itself encircles all that is, as does the nothing, which we scarcely know... Beings can be as beings only if they stand within and stand out within what is cleared in this clearing".²⁹⁴⁶ If Heidegger does not appear to be making much sense here that's (presumably) because the "essential nature of language flatly refuses to express itself in words – in the language, that is, in which we make statements about language. If language everywhere withholds its nature in this sense, then such withholding is in the very nature of language".²⁹⁴⁷ We "do not merely speak *the* language – we speak *by way of* it"²⁹⁴⁸ and can only do so because we have always heard language speaking to us. Consequently, the way (back) to language requires us to listen more closely to what language has been trying to say to us: to let it be and answer its call. Instead of attempting to preserve the force of the words in which Dasein expresses its being, Dasein must let the being of language speak for (express) itself. The question is determining our place and submitting to *its* expressive (or elemental) force. The way to language is to *undergo* it. Dasein must open itself to "the possibility of undergoing an experience with language. To undergo *an experience* with something — be it a thing, a person, or a god — means that this something befalls us, strikes us, comes over us, overwhelms and transforms us... the experience is not of our making; to undergo here means that we endure it, suffer it, receive it as it strikes us and submit to it...To undergo an experience with language, then, means to let ourselves be concerned by the claim of language by entering into it and submitting to it".²⁹⁴⁹ The way to language therefore also involves *foregoing* any attempt to seize control of it via assertions and statements. Instead of "explaining language in terms of one thing or another, and thus running away from it, the way to language intends to let language be experienced as language. In the nature of language, to be sure, language itself is conceptually grasped – but grasped in the grasp of something other than itself. If we attend to language

²⁹⁴⁵ Heidegger, Martin, "The Nature Of Language", in *On The Way to Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.71.

²⁹⁴⁶ Heidegger, Martin, "The Origin of the Work of Art" in *Basic Writings* edited by Krell, David, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p. 178.

²⁹⁴⁷ Heidegger, Martin, "The Nature Of Language", in *On The Way to Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.81.

²⁹⁴⁸ *ibid*, p.124.

²⁹⁴⁹ *ibid*, p.57.

exclusively as language, however, then language requires us to put forward everything that belongs to language as language"²⁹⁵⁰.

The difficulty, though, is: how can we put forward everything that belongs to language as language when Dasein is merely – and will remain – a "sign" which "points towards what draws away".²⁹⁵¹ Being is understood to be in (a) withdrawal and concealment and so "remains without interpretation"²⁹⁵²: Being refuses to come into being (thought) as it gives beings their being. Being is not only able to conceal itself with respect to the thought (revelation) of beings, it has also managed to conceal its own concealment: it remains withdrawn by being unthought (concealed) in thinking. In thinking the *question* of being, however, Heidegger is forced to ask: what is called thinking and/or calls thought forth (into being)? Thought remains directed and "on the way"²⁹⁵³ insofar as it has been called into thinking via Being's own directive (calling) and thus "directs us into thought and gives us directives for thinking".²⁹⁵⁴ In an attempt to answer the question that calls thought into being, Heidegger moves thinking back towards the language that withdraws as it speaks.

If we are to find our way back to the question of Being, we must therefore first move towards the Being of language. The move backwards can only occur as a movement forwards – on the way to that Being which enables the thinking of an original (or truthful) question. As a consequence, we shall find ourselves entangled within a "web of relations"²⁹⁵⁵ and encountering the *problematic* of a circular movement along the way: the attempt to put forward what belongs to language as language necessarily occurs *by the way* we can move back towards language. This circle "is meaningful because the direction and manner of the circular motion is determined by language itself, by a movement within language".²⁹⁵⁶ The being of language is always moving ahead of the language of being/s insofar as those beings moving within it can only move backwards or forwards at any given time. According to Heidegger, human beings cannot enter into a meaningful dialogue with language because it is language itself which really speaks and its discourse remains a "monologue".²⁹⁵⁷ It is "language alone which speaks authentically"²⁹⁵⁸

²⁹⁵⁰ Heidegger, Martin, "The Way To Language", in *On The Way To Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.119-120.

²⁹⁵¹ Heidegger, Martin, "What Calls For Thinking", in *Basic Writings*, ed. Krell, David, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p.375.

²⁹⁵² Ibid.

²⁹⁵³ Ibid, p. 379.

²⁹⁵⁴ Ibid, p.384.

²⁹⁵⁵ Heidegger, Martin, "The Way To Language", in *On The Way To Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.113

²⁹⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁵⁷ Ibid, p.134.

²⁹⁵⁸ Ibid.

and we can only talk about (understand) language "to the extent to which language has itself has us in view, has appropriated itself to us".²⁹⁵⁹ Heidegger's aim is to therefore raise the possibility of having a more authentic experience of language in order to make our 'belonging together' (appropriation to each other) less "lonesome".²⁹⁶⁰ Heidegger divides the transformative experience of language into a complex whole comprised of two parts, and attempts to determine their relationship to each other by examining the way in which each belongs together. Specifically,

The being of language: the language of being²⁹⁶¹.

Since it is language which expresses the difference between Being and beings, beings endowed with speech are obliged to adopt a "different standard" ²⁹⁶² when speaking about language. The ontological difference may be expressed via the assertion: "Language speaks".²⁹⁶³ Put in a more roundabout way, "language always speaks according to the mode in which the Appropriation as such reveals itself or withdraws"²⁹⁶⁴ and "spoken language is the delivering bond that binds by appropriating" ²⁹⁶⁵ Being and beings together. That is to say, "the essential being of language is saying as showing".²⁹⁶⁶ Heidegger's assertion about language speaking clearly raises two related questions: what does the 'saying of language' *show* us and how does the 'showing of language' say it? Perhaps the best way to make sense of Heidegger's statements here is via the interpretation that language is constitutive of our understanding of a meaningful world: the being of language is where (and how) a world comes into being and/or question. Specifically, the relation between word and world is grounded in the ontological difference and determines the way the world remains open to the possibility of an understanding. Language calls out to human beings by showing them "the way (of) appropriating"²⁹⁶⁷ and it appropriates beings by calling them "into the word". ²⁹⁶⁸ Only "where the word for the thing has been found is the thing

²⁹⁵⁹ *ibid.*

²⁹⁶⁰ *ibid.*

²⁹⁶¹ Heidegger, Martin, "The Nature Of Language", in *On The Way to Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.94. Heidegger observes that "if the whole is to be a guide word", then the colon that separates these two parts "must indicate that what precedes it opens into what follows it", *ibid.*

²⁹⁶² Heidegger, Martin "Language" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans: Hofstadter, Albert, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p.197.

²⁹⁶³ *ibid.*, p.198

²⁹⁶⁴ Heidegger, Martin, "The Way To Language", in *On The Way To Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.131.

²⁹⁶⁵ *ibid.*

²⁹⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p.123.

²⁹⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p.129.

²⁹⁶⁸ Heidegger, Martin "Language" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans: Hofstadter, Albert, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p.198.

a thing. Only thus *is* it...The word alone gives being to a thing...to bring a thing into being".²⁹⁶⁹ Language therefore *presents* a wor(l)d which would not have otherwise been called into being and/or question. By calling beings into (its) presence, the being of language makes itself conspicuous by its absence by withdrawing there. Language nonetheless offers a "vow"²⁹⁷⁰ to include human beings within its own discourse with itself, granting those that remain "needful"²⁹⁷¹ the "promise"²⁹⁷² of continuing to be part of a greater whole. But how does "no thing"²⁹⁷³ – the nothing – show us that it is speaking in "every thing"?²⁹⁷⁴ Heidegger says that saying shows the way by causing "to appear what is present, and to fade from appearance what is absent"²⁹⁷⁵ and so "everywhere lets all that is shown abide within itself".²⁹⁷⁶ Appropriation is therefore "the law"²⁹⁷⁷, and those on the way (back) to language are obliged to follow its "command"²⁹⁷⁸ into the concealed clearing. Such a possibility may occur "because it gathers mortals into the appropriateness of their nature and there holds them"²⁹⁷⁹ until an "illuminating lightening flash enters into what is and what is taken to be".²⁹⁸⁰ Consequently, true history "begins only when beings themselves are expressly drawn up into their unconcealment and conserved in it, only when this conservation is conceived on the basis of questioning regarding beings as such. The primordial disclosure of being as a whole, the question concerning beings as such, and the beginning of Western history are the same; they occur together in a 'time', which, itself unmeasurable, first opens up the open region for every measure".²⁹⁸¹

Heidegger provides a word to illuminate our understanding of authentic being-in-the-world. The question of the direction of fit between word and world is given a single name – that of "the fourfold"²⁹⁸². The meaningful presence and gathering of 'things' is expressed via a complex

²⁹⁶⁹ Heidegger, Martin, "The Nature Of Language", in *On The Way to Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.62.

²⁹⁷⁰ *ibid*, p.90

²⁹⁷¹ *ibid*.

²⁹⁷² *ibid*.

²⁹⁷³ *ibid*, p.62.

²⁹⁷⁴ *ibid*.

²⁹⁷⁵ Heidegger, Martin, "The Way To Language", in *On The Way To Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.126.

²⁹⁷⁶ *ibid*.

²⁹⁷⁷ *ibid*, p.128.

²⁹⁷⁸ Heidegger, Martin "Language" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans: Hofstadter, Albert, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p.207.

²⁹⁷⁹ Heidegger, Martin, "The Way To Language", in *On The Way To Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.128.

²⁹⁸⁰ *ibid*, p.133.

²⁹⁸¹ Heidegger, Martin, "On The Essence Of Truth", in *Basic Writings*, ed. Krell, David, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p.126-127.

²⁹⁸² Heidegger, Martin, "Language" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans: Hofstadter, Albert, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p.199. Heidegger also uses this term in the essay "The Thing", pgs. 173-4

whole that conveys the way Being and beings 'belong together' and are 'appropriated towards each other' in the wor(l)d. Specifically, where 'every thing' moves towards (or around) the 'no thing'. The fourfold, then, is an indirect reference to Being's unnameable and immeasurable movements in language – it refers to the way the nothing opens up an open region for every named being and measurement. Heidegger speaks in such a roundabout way to capture the movements of the hermeneutical circle throughout history, and calls the part/whole relation the "round dance of appropriating".²⁹⁸³ The "fourfold fulfils the bearing of the thing"²⁹⁸⁴ by granting to everything the "sufficiency of staying world"²⁹⁸⁵. And it does this by way of language's "calling"²⁹⁸⁶ everything into being there, since the whole world is "united primarily by being toward one another".²⁹⁸⁷ This 'being toward' is what happens *between* the being of language and the language of beings. It involves a "gathering, assembling, letting stay"²⁹⁸⁸ of the difference between Being and beings and "measures out, apportions"²⁹⁸⁹ the nature of the difference between them. The world that which is measured out and apportioned is given four corresponding measures or portions (names): sky, earth, divinities and mortals. Whilst these words are allowed their ordinary or everyday meaning, they point to something quite extraordinary: the possibility of an everyday (or meaningful) world. These four parts "belong together by way" of appropriation²⁹⁹⁰ and each part "mirrors in its own way the presence of the others. Each therewith reflects itself in its own way into its own".²⁹⁹¹ The "mirroring lightening each of the four, appropriates their own presencing" binding their "essential being toward one another".²⁹⁹²

In order to find the way back towards language, thinking must allow itself to be properly addressed by the call of language and be called back into it. Being called back involves *answering* the call of language, and so, following the calling of an original address – namely, by allowing our thinking to submit to what remains most "worthy of thought"²⁹⁹³ in order to be transformed and directed by it. Heidegger claims that what remains worthy of thought is poetry,

²⁹⁸³ Heidegger, Martin "The Thing" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans: Hofstadter, Albert, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p.178.

²⁹⁸⁴ Heidegger, Martin, "Language" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans: Hofstadter, Albert, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p.204.

²⁹⁸⁵ *ibid.*

²⁹⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p.196.

²⁹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹⁸⁹ *ibid.* p. 203.

²⁹⁹⁰ Heidegger, Martin "The Thing" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans: Hofstadter, Albert, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p.179.

²⁹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁹² *ibid.*

²⁹⁹³ Heidegger, Martin "Words", in *On The Way To Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.156.

if only because it remains devotional to the way-making movement of language. Poetry permits the possibility of transforming our relation to language by showing us the way/s in which thought is related to the circle's movements and directives. The attempt to experience language as language is possible via a consideration of the way in which poetry 'listens' to language 'speak', and so, receives its address as a call to thinking. Heidegger calls upon poetry not just because he thinks it provides privileged access to language – rather; language is thought to be the original (and long forgotten) poem.²⁹⁹⁴ Everyday speaking is said to have lost its poetic dimension and poetry offers the possibility of a return to the being of language. This obviously requires the question: how does poetry return thinking to such an understanding? By lighting up the clearing in such a way as to "throw us around"²⁹⁹⁵ the round dance of appropriation. Being-thrown-around the fourfold occurs so suddenly or violently it can throw into question the experience of language, thereby transforming a given relationship to it. The whole is revealed *through* its part/s and the parts are revealed with respect to a complex whole. One of the poems Heidegger considers is Stefan George's "Words".²⁹⁹⁶

WORDS

Wonder or dream from distant land
I carried to my country's strand

And waited till the twilit morn
Had found her name within her bourn-

Then I could grasp it close and strong
It blooms and shines now the front along...

Once I returned from happy sail,
I had a prize so rich and frail,

She sought for long and tidings told:
"No like of this these depths enfold."

And straight it vanished from my hand,

²⁹⁹⁴ Heidegger, M "Language" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans: Hofstadter, Albert, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p.208.

²⁹⁹⁵ Heidegger, Martin, "The Nature Of Language", in *On The Way to Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.57.

²⁹⁹⁶ Heidegger, Martin "Words", in *On The Way To Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.140.

The treasure never graced my land...

So renounced and sadly see:

Where word breaks off no thing may be.

As the *name* of the poem indicates, language is thought via the relationship it bears to itself²⁹⁹⁷. Heidegger's interpretation of the poem emphasises the 'significance' of the last stanza, where a renunciation invokes an experience pointing towards the nature and limit of a 'word'. The poem's saying shows us what cannot be pointed to (or shown) through language: the nothing. 'Word's' renunciation, however, is not asserting the existence of some 'thing' in language – namely, that 'nothing' exists as such. Heidegger points to where 'no thing may be' as an instance of saying as showing – namely, the renunciation shows the boundary or limit between naming and what is (or can be) named. Naming "demarcates" and "circumscribes"²⁹⁹⁸ the content of (a) being by calling it into being, whilst the renunciation "gets the relation to the word underway toward that which concerns every saying as saying".²⁹⁹⁹ It points to a nearness that is furthest, and is enigmatic in the way in which it can bring near what remains furthest. It thereby shows the way - making movement of saying in that the being of words typically bestow being (or presence) but remain absent via the bestowal. In other words, it points to the otherness of Being – as being something other than words. The poet understands language because he cannot understand it, and so renounces his claim to identify the being of language with the being of his own understanding. The word marks the boundary between Being and beings, and points to the intersection between them. Saying and Being belong to each other, and the movement towards each other points to the way in which each point to and/or move away from each other. Consequently, Being can only refer to (name) the possibility of truth within a concealed clearing. The question of Being itself becomes questionable there: thought must invariably renounce its own claim to questioning and cross (back) over into thinking. In letting thought be spoken to so as "not to ask (further) questions"³⁰⁰⁰ of the being of language, the language of being/s finally understands that Being has no answer which can be understood in advance. Thinking merely prepares beings for the "readiness"³⁰⁰¹ of Being, readying them for the arrival of *an* understanding. Indeed, thought true to its own calling is obliged to cross out Being as a word,

²⁹⁹⁷ Although he does not invoke the structure of the fourfold here, Heidegger begins his account of language by presenting an absence – the departure of the gods.

²⁹⁹⁸ Heidegger, Martin "Words", in *On The Way To Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), pp. 143 and 144 respectively.

²⁹⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 150.

³⁰⁰⁰ Heidegger, Martin, "The Nature Of Language", in *On The Way to Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.75.

³⁰⁰¹ Heidegger, M 'Only a God Can Save Us', *Philosophy Today*, p. 278, 1976.

where the crossing out "points into the four areas of the fourfold and of their gathering at the point of (the) intersection."³⁰⁰²

Critical Discussion

Aims and Objectives: The main aim of this section is to critically discuss Heidegger's conception of the circularity of questioning, and its relation to the circle of understanding. Following Heidegger's lead, we shall prioritise the question of being and its relationship to the being of the question. Part of our aim to appropriate Heidegger so as to move beyond him, and we attempt to do this by questioning the appropriateness of Heidegger's own movements. We shall pursue this aim by returning to themes and questions outlined in our Introduction regarding the problem of the criterion and/or an inquiry's circular ontological commitments. The main objective is to determine our place within the circle making questioning both possible and necessary. In order to move back and forth as such, we therefore need to question the way we move about within a given understanding. Following Heidegger, such an approach becomes an inquiry into the conditions of the circle's own possibility and/or necessity. By throwing back into question the possibility and/or necessity of our movements, we shall bring forth the question of the status of Heidegger's own inquiry. Although Heidegger does not purport to offer a critique of reason or society, his conception of the *history of being* nonetheless places objects of inquiry within question. Consequently, the requirement is to determine the question of Being's historical status, and assess its role within the circle of understanding. Specifically, what is the question of Being's ontological commitments, and how do such commitments determine our place within questioning? We shall argue that Heidegger's fundamental ontology provides an answer that needs to be thrown back into question. In arguing that the Being of Dasein is *care*, Heidegger inadvertently raises *concerns* about the being of his own questioning. We therefore move against Heidegger in order to find our way around his leading question.³⁰⁰³ We follow Heidegger's lead through three related parts, and urge that the corresponding movements form a complex whole. In the first part, we question Heidegger's attempt to account for the relationship between meaning and truth, and observe the tension within his own questioning. In the second part, we question the role *the They* plays in Heidegger's interpretation of the intelligibility of cultural experience, and do so via a consideration of attempts to make it more

³⁰⁰² Heidegger, M, *The Question of Being*, p.83, trans: Wilde, J and Kluback, W, Albany: New College University Press, 1958. We have slightly modified the translation here – Wilde and Kluback prefer the term quadrangle to fourfold, and we have introduced the change to ensure greater parity between other translations of Heidegger's concept.

³⁰⁰³ We mean 'leading' in two related ways – as Heidegger's guiding question, and as a question which indirectly and/or subtly guides human beings to respond in a particular way.

meaningful and/or truthful. In the final part, we turn towards the fourfold, and argue that it's 'turning' remains a historical warning.

Turning Towards (appropriating) Heidegger.

We begin by reiterating the difficulty in interpreting Heidegger, and acknowledge that Heidegger thought it was 'suicidal' to locate (his) 'philosophy' within the bounds of human understanding anyway. The difficulty in moving towards Heidegger is evident in two main ways – Heidegger approaches the circle of understanding from different directions and his movements have led to many conflicting interpretations over time. We shall briefly take each difficulty in turn.

As we've already seen, Heidegger approaches the question of Being from two directions – by way of the question of the *meaning of Being* and by way of the question of the *truth of Being*. Nonetheless, Heidegger's questioning continues to move within the circle directing his movements as such. Heidegger's way-making movements continually turned on the possibility of appropriation insofar as he attempted to appropriate (move towards, understand) the question of Being or urged that moving within an understanding of being was only possible because Being and beings were appropriated (moved towards, were directed to) each other. The question of appropriation therefore turns on – and returns to – an appropriation of the question in that it calls understanding (back) *into* question. Either way, the possibility of responding to such a call was said to enable a back and forth movement within the circle of understanding: re-calling the question of Being involved calling out to beings from different directions – via the meaning of being and the truth of being respectively. Answering such a calling allegedly involves being called *back* into the possibility of an authentic understanding, and whatever can/not be understood begs the question: what calls *forth* thinking (makes understanding possible, authenticated, directs thought into appropriate action, etc)? In turning to this question, we shall attempt to find our way around the circle of understanding, and appropriate Heidegger's question accordingly. Following Heidegger, such an approach should be understood as a preparatory for further understanding, guiding us (back) through that questioning already prepared or travelled upon. Whilst Heidegger's thinking can hardly be said to be stationery, the way around this circle may nonetheless be understood via recurrent themes and movements. Specifically, Heidegger finds his way around the question of Being by dividing his questioning into distinct yet related parts. The *question* remained structured around the problem of the relation between meaning and truth, and his questioning exhibited a corresponding part/whole problematic. Indeed, it was Heidegger's thinking of this relationship that divided his own questioning into distinct movements, thereby throwing into question the

nature of the relation between part and whole. It is for this reason, of course, that there is a tendency within the literature to divide Heidegger's thinking into separate parts – namely, the 'early' versus the 'latter' Heidegger, a division apparently signified by his own use of the term 'turn' (Kehre). The implication is that we can either turn this way or that way, but we cannot return to Heidegger either way. As Heidegger himself observes, however, the notion of a turn is integral to the way in which the question of Being remains structured around the problem of the relation between meaning and truth, where questioning calls beings (back) towards a part/whole problematic. Understanding has its "innermost occurrence and its widest reach in the turning"³⁰⁰⁴ around the question. Being called upon re-turns us to Being's own movement, requiring thinking beings to fall back upon their "guiding questions and the circle of under-standing... Turning holds sway between the call (to the one belonging) and the belonging (of the one who is called). Turning is counter-turning."³⁰⁰⁵ Furthermore, the division into early or latter questioning tends to divide Heidegger's thinking into temporal parts not encouraged by Heidegger's own emphasis upon temporality as *being* the horizon of Being. If we recall, Heidegger's approach actually *begins* with a 'turn', where questioning turns back upon itself in order to question the pathway/s of thinking and/or its place within the question of Being. As Scharff observes, "clarification of the being-question is made dependent upon turning the seemingly closed and unreflective circularity of everyday understanding into a radically deepened sense of hermeneutical circularity... In its beginningless (i.e., circularly situated) beginning (i.e., point of departure), philosophy turns towards a hermeneutic of Dasein."³⁰⁰⁶ Understanding Heidegger's relationship to the question, then, similarly involves a relatedness backwards and forwards, where his own questioning can guide us by re-turning us to the overall problematic of understanding. Indeed, only the way back can lead us forward into understanding.

The difficulty in understanding Heidegger is apparent in a related way. Although Heidegger's questioning received its directives from the circle of understanding, the question remains: where was it directed? Specifically, what was its 'object' (the goal to be reached and/or thought to be reachable in some way)? Whilst the difference between Being and beings might have been "the central thought of Heideggerian philosophy",³⁰⁰⁷ determining its "intentional horizon"³⁰⁰⁸

³⁰⁰⁴ Heidegger, Martin, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans: Emad, Parvis and Maly, Kenneth, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p.286.

³⁰⁰⁵ Ibid, p.286/7.

³⁰⁰⁶ Scharff, C. Richard, "Heidegger's Path of Thinking And The Way of Meditation In The Early Upanisads" in Sprung, Mervyn (ed) *The Question of Being: East/West Perspectives* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978), p.68.

³⁰⁰⁷ Haugeland, John "Truth and Finitude: Heidegger's Transcendental Existentialism" in Mark Wrathall and Jeff Malpas (eds) *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus, Vol 1*, (Cambridge: MIT Press 2000), p.47

³⁰⁰⁸ Okrent, Mark, *Heidegger's Pragmatism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p.286.

remains an area of concern. The object of Heidegger's thought is a concern insofar as it raises the problem of intentional relations and/or objects within *questioning*. That is to say, Heidegger's central thought needs to be understood (approached) as being directed at, or about, the 'object' in question and so related to (moving within) a given intentional horizon.³⁰⁰⁹ Witness the widespread difficulty in trying to determine the direction of Heidegger's way-making movements. It has been argued, for example, that Heidegger was (primarily) a phenomenologist,³⁰¹⁰ a transcendentalist,³⁰¹¹ a pragmatist,³⁰¹² a hermeneutic thinker,³⁰¹³ a linguistic idealist³⁰¹⁴ and a mystic.³⁰¹⁵ It has also been suggested that interpretations can be generally divided into two competing tendencies – as either "bald aestheticism"³⁰¹⁶ or "hermeneutic narrativism".³⁰¹⁷ The difficulty in securing the intentional horizon of Heidegger's thinking has therefore not prevented other thinkers from moving towards it. An understanding (appropriation) of Heidegger can be found across distinct philosophical circles or movements – including Sartre's existentialism³⁰¹⁸, Gadamer's hermeneutics³⁰¹⁹, Rorty's pragmatism³⁰²⁰ and Derrida's deconstructionism.³⁰²¹ Part of the difficulty in interpreting Heidegger is that he appears to oscillate between conflicting movements towards 'beings', or attempts to approach the question of Being from two different directions simultaneously. On the one hand, Heidegger insists on the "phenomenological

³⁰⁰⁹ Crane, Tim, *The Objects of Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Crane provides a recent attempt to explain the intentionality of thought via the traditional problem of being able to think about non-existing things, and argues (via phenomenology) that intentionality presupposes direction of the mind upon an object of thought, or an intentional object. We cite his 'objects of thought' accordingly – i.e. to have an object of thought need not commit us to the material existence of an object like 'Being' (although Crane invariably tries to explain intentional inexistence via the mind's relationship to existing beings).

³⁰¹⁰ Sheehan, Thomas, "What, After All, Was Heidegger About"? *Continental Philosophy Review*, Vol. 47, No. 2, 2014, p. 249.

³⁰¹¹ Dahlstrom, Daniel, "Heidegger's Transcendentalism", *Research in Phenomenology* Vol.35, No.1, 2005, pp.29-54.

³⁰¹² Rorty, Richard, "Heidegger, Contingency, and Pragmatism" in *Essays On Heidegger And Others* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.27-49.

³⁰¹³ Zaborowski, Holger, "Heidegger's Hermeneutics: Towards A New Practice of Understanding" in Dahlstrom, Daniel (ed) *Interpreting Heidegger: Critical Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.15.

³⁰¹⁴ Lafont, Cristini, *Heidegger, Language, and World-Disclosure* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.xvii.

³⁰¹⁵ Magnus, Bernd, *Heidegger's Metahistory of Philosophy* (Berlin: Springer, 1970), p. 141.

³⁰¹⁶ Crowell, Steven, "Facticity and Transcendental Philosophy" in Jeff Malpas (ed) *From Kant to Davidson* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.101.

³⁰¹⁷ *ibid.*

³⁰¹⁸ Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (Pocket Books, 1978)

³⁰¹⁹ Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Truth and Method*, trans: Joel Weinsheimer and Donald Marshall, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1996).

³⁰²⁰ ³⁰²⁰ Rorty, Richard, "Heidegger, Kundera and Dickens" in *Essays On Heidegger And Others* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³⁰²¹ Derrida, Jacques, "Implications" in *Positions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), Derrida readily acknowledges that "what I have attempted to do would not have been possible without the opening of Heidegger's questions", p.9.

conception of phenomenon"³⁰²² or as "that which shows itself"³⁰²³ in the world of experience. Such a conception directs itself "to the things themselves"³⁰²⁴ and is "opposed to all free floating constructions and accidental findings".³⁰²⁵ The concept of phenomenon therefore needs to be "understood from the beginning as that which shows itself in itself",³⁰²⁶ and asks how "time itself manifests itself as the horizon of Being?"³⁰²⁷ Heidegger initially purports to understand 'phenomenon' *without presuppositions* – and thereby attempts to question the conditions of possibility for objects of experience via the distinction between Being and beings. Specifically, where 'beings' involves a *self showing* or *letting things be* by way of (the question of) Being. The Being of entities occurs *prior to* the beings in question and must be distinguished from any given interpretation (experience) of them. Heidegger's *presuppositionless* approach questions 'beings' in their "ontological constitution"³⁰²⁸, or the way beings are constituted *throughout* time. Heidegger's phenomenological conception of phenomenon is transcendental insofar as it pursues ontology within the horizon of temporal unity and/or continuity, and so places itself at the limit of understanding. On the other hand, Heidegger insists that being-in-the-world is a thrown "projection"³⁰²⁹ and that human beings always experience the world "as something interpreted".³⁰³⁰ Consequently, whatever is understood there is "disclosed as possible significance"³⁰³¹ and so "throws before itself the possibility as possibility, and lets it *be* as such".³⁰³² Heidegger's recourse to the "*perfect tense a priori*"³⁰³³ of an already always meaningful world attempts to bridge the divide between the *transcendent* – that which occurs prior to or independent of experience – and the *immanent* (that which operates within experience or comes through it). According to Heidegger, an always already world is possible (meaningful) because it "characterises the kind of Being belonging to Dasein itself".³⁰³⁴ The world, however, is only possible because of the ontological difference and Being cannot be identified with beings or being-in-the-world as such. Specifically, Being is "no class or genus of entities, yet it pertains to every entity. It's 'universality' is to be sought higher up...Being lie beyond every entity and every possible character which an entity may possess. Being is the

³⁰²² Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarrie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 60.

³⁰²³ *Ibid.*

³⁰²⁴ *ibid*, p.50.

³⁰²⁵ *ibid*,

³⁰²⁶ *ibid*. p.54.

³⁰²⁷ *ibid*, p.488.

³⁰²⁸ *ibid*, p.79.

³⁰²⁹ *ibid*, p.185.

³⁰³⁰ *ibid*, p.192.

³⁰³¹ *ibid*, p.184.

³⁰³² *ibid*, p.185.

³⁰³³ *ibid*, p.117.

³⁰³⁴ *ibid*.

transcendens pure and simple".³⁰³⁵ As their condition of possibility, "Being can never be explained by entities but is already that which is 'transcendental' for every entity".³⁰³⁶ Given this approach, an "'aporia"³⁰³⁷ remains within Heidegger's "transcendental hermeneutics"³⁰³⁸ – namely, via Heidegger's insistence on the "primacy of practice"³⁰³⁹ when raising the question of Being and attempting to "acquire a priori knowledge of being"³⁰⁴⁰ by determining our place within the question. The impasse – or contradictory approach – results from Heidegger's attempt to move *beyond* every entity and every possible character which an entity may possess *through* characterisations (interpretations) of the entities themselves. In other words, is it possible to pursue a transcendental ontology through historical vagaries and/or contingencies? Put another way: how can we bypass our knowledge of the world of experience when it necessarily occurs within the context of interpretations that remain historically determined and/or arbitrary? Perhaps the question is not so much methodological but adopting a questionable approach in the first place – i.e., one determined by obliqueness or misdirection. Indeed, it is arguable whether Heidegger was ever really interested in being a traditional (rational) philosopher from the outset, and concealed his true objectives within the question of Being. Specifically, Heidegger's philosophical questioning has its origins in "theological-speculative thinking"³⁰⁴¹ and he subsequently conceded that "without this theological background I would never have come upon the path of thinking".³⁰⁴² Further, "a confrontation with Christianity reticently accompanied my entire path"³⁰⁴³ insofar as "the most inwards experiences and decisions remain foundational"³⁰⁴⁴ and would ideally "remain outside the domain of publicness".³⁰⁴⁵ Despite Heidegger's attempt to cover his tracks, "subterranean quakes have been at work in the pathway of my inquiry"³⁰⁴⁶, and his way-making movements have all circled "around the sole question: whether god is fleeing from us or not, and whether we...still experience this flight

³⁰³⁵ *ibid*, p.62.

³⁰³⁶ *ibid*, 251.

³⁰³⁷ Blatner, William, "Ontology, the A Priori, and the Primacy of Practice: An Aporia in Heidegger's Early Philosophy", in *Heidegger's Transcendentalism* (eds) Steven Crowell and Jeff Malpas (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press), p. 23.

³⁰³⁸ Bubner, Rudiger, "Is Transcendental Hermeneutics Possible?" in Manninen, Juha and Tuomela, Raimo (eds) *Essays on Explanation and Understanding* (Dordrecht: D.Reidel Publishing, 1976,), p.69.

³⁰³⁹ Blatner, William, "Ontology, the A Priori, and the Primacy of Practice: An Aporia in Heidegger's Early Philosophy", in *Heidegger's Transcendentalism* (eds) Steven Crowell and Jeff Malpas (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press), p.10.

³⁰⁴⁰ *Ibid*.

³⁰⁴¹ Heidegger, Martin, "A Dialogue On Language", in *On The Way To Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.10.

³⁰⁴² *ibid*.

³⁰⁴³ Heidegger, Martin, "My Pathway Hitherto" in *Mindfulness* trans: Parvis Emad and Thomas Kalary (London: Continuum, 2008), p.368.

³⁰⁴⁴ *ibid*, p.369.

³⁰⁴⁵ *ibid*.

³⁰⁴⁶ *ibid*, p.368

genuinely".³⁰⁴⁷ Theological speculation was also his introduction to hermeneutic inquiry in this background brought forth the question of the relation between (the) word and world. Nonetheless, Heidegger was acutely aware that exploring philosophical questions within theological terms – or put another way, approaching theology thorough philosophy – was an "absolute square circle".³⁰⁴⁸ And yet there is no getting around the problem that Heidegger's transcendental hermeneutics pulls him in two different directions simultaneously – towards the absolute (limitless, unconditioned) and the contingent (limited, conditioned). Heidegger appears to have set out to secularise theological terms such as *calling*³⁰⁴⁹ and *falling*³⁰⁵⁰ and ended up moving towards the language of negative theology.³⁰⁵¹

The immediate question before us, however, is the role the quasi-transcendental plays within the circle (or historicity) of understanding. We shall briefly approach this question through conflicting interpretations in order to direct our own understanding. According to Adorno, Heidegger's "transcendence is an absolutized immanence, obdurate against its

³⁰⁴⁷ *ibid.*

³⁰⁴⁸ Heidegger, Martin, "Phenomenology and Theology" in *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.53.

³⁰⁴⁹ Motyer, Stephen, "Call, Calling" in *Elwell, Walter (ed) Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2001)*. As Motyer observes, "this prominent biblical term is used with particular theological significance in three ways: in connection with worship, with election, and with vocation", p.199. Motyer goes on to count its many instances throughout scripture, and specifies the ways calling is used there. Specifically, to "call on" God or the Lord is a frequent biblical expression: it occurs fifty-six times in total (Old Testament, 45; New Testament, 11); on four occasions it is applied to other gods. It often appears in the fuller form, "call on the name of" (31 times). The highest concentration is in the psalms (16 times)... The *basic meaning, always present, is simply to utter the name of God* (*Psalm 116:4 ; Zech 13:9*). But it can mean more broadly to pray (*Psalm 17:6 ; John 1:6 ; Matt 26:53*), and indeed can signify a whole act of cultic worship (*Gen 12:8 ; 1 Chron 21:26*). Further, "call is one of the biblical words associated with the theme of election. In both Hebrew and Greek, "call" can be used in the sense of "naming" (*Gen 2:19 ; Luke 1:13*), and in biblical thought to give a name to something or someone was to bestow an identity" by being called into being as such. Finally, answering a calling is be called into and/or to accept a vocation. The "notion of appointment to office, which we observed in Isaiah, is also taken up in the New Testament. When Paul was "called by grace, " it meant not just his conversion but also his appointment as apostle to the Gentiles (*Gal 1:15*). He is therefore "called to be an apostle" (*Rom 1:1 ; 1 Cor 1:1*)... May we extend the idea of vocation also to cover secular employment? Luther took this step, radically teaching that any work may be a "calling" from God. Some have argued that Paul uses the word "calling" in something like this sense in 1 Corinthians 1:26 and 7:17, 20: "each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him" (*7:20*). Here "called" clearly refers to conversion, but "calling" could refer to the socioeconomic state of the convert", pgs, 199-200.

³⁰⁵⁰ Genesis 3: 1-8. The book of Genesis details, of course, the Fall of humanity, and inaugurates humankind's move away from God via an original sin (inherited guilt by way of an act of disobedience resulting in corruption and mortality). The act of disobedience occurs when Adam and Eve partake of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden, and they find themselves falling into a world of sin and decay. The problem of knowledge in Book of Genesis, then, derives from a falling away from God's original creation.

³⁰⁵¹ Lowith, Karl, *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth Century Thought* trans: David Green (New York: Doubleday, 1967). According to Lowith, Heidegger's questioning "is in its very essence a theology without God", p.207.

own immanent character".³⁰⁵² Further, historicized beings are called on to "conceive Being as the absolute"³⁰⁵³ because they "cannot conceive it"³⁰⁵⁴ as an entity. Heidegger thereby follows Plato's lead by attempting to "heal the concept of 'Being' of the wound of its conceptuality, of the split between thoughts and their contents".³⁰⁵⁵ Adorno accuses Heidegger of enabling a vicious circle – or "looping the loop"³⁰⁵⁶ – because of his attempt to "conceive Being without entity".³⁰⁵⁷ The conceptual "sleight of hand"³⁰⁵⁸ is said to occur via Heidegger's "ontologization of the ontical"³⁰⁵⁹, or throwing the Being of entities into question by creating a historical divide between Being and beings. Heidegger's goal is to allegedly bring forth a "cult of Being"³⁰⁶⁰ by questioning the authenticity of cultural experience – and so retreat into the "old Platonic austerity"³⁰⁶¹ of the "one pure thought"³⁰⁶² in order to recapture (the concept) of Being's "evaporating aura"³⁰⁶³ within history. Although Adorno's interpretation of Heidegger is clearly unsympathetic, it does highlight the way Heidegger attempts to "historicize the Platonic dividing line"³⁰⁶⁴ by reversing its direction and enabling the possibility of back and forth movement between *level/s* of understanding. Heidegger might attempt to cross 'Being' out – i.e., interpret the concept as being inexpressible or wordless – but the question of Being is directed towards the possibility of a crossing (movement) between the inconceivable and the conceptual. Like Plato before him, Heidegger argues that human beings move about within an understanding of being, and distinguishes between the intelligible and the phenomenal in order to question the nature of the relationship between them. Unlike Plato, however, Heidegger does not attempt to transcend – move beyond, climb above – time to determine the Being of beings. The temporal world is the 'absolute' (horizon). Being is transcendental in that it is thought to be immanent and/or imminent – it determines beings by moving within time. The question, however, is whether it is even intelligible to conceive an ontology that points beyond (or exists prior to) phenomenal and/or factual existence – i.e., is it possible to introduce a dividing line between Being and beings in history? This is, of course, where Heidegger perfect tense a priori is supposed to play a constitutive role in understanding. Lafont provides a much more sympathetic

³⁰⁵² Adorno, Theodor, *Negative Dialectics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 2004), p. 106.

³⁰⁵³ Ibid, p.104.

³⁰⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵⁵ Ibid, p.70.

³⁰⁵⁶ Ibid, p.115.

³⁰⁵⁷ Ibid, p.p.116.

³⁰⁵⁸ Ibid, p.121.

³⁰⁵⁹ Ibid, p.119.

³⁰⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 98.

³⁰⁶¹ Ibid, p.121.

³⁰⁶² Ibid, p. 87.

³⁰⁶³ Ibid, p.99.

³⁰⁶⁴ Rorty, Richard, "Heidegger, Kundera and Dickens" in *Essays On Heidegger And Others* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.70.

interpretation than Adorno, and acknowledges that the ontologization of the ontical clarifies Heidegger's transcendental approach.

According to Lafont, Heidegger substitutes the "ontological difference for the empirical/transcendental dichotomy"³⁰⁶⁵ in order to distinguish between the "ontological structures of Dasein *in general* and its historical, *ontic* concretizations".³⁰⁶⁶ The question, however, is whether it is possible (meaningful) to distinguish between the structure and event/s of Being when the distinction between the ontological and the ontical emerges (is disclosed) within the historicity of understanding – i.e., remains contingent upon our understanding of being/s *in time*? Approached from another direction: in what way is Heidegger's transcendence an absolutized immanence, and does it undermine (move against) the question of its own conditions of possibility? This is, of course, where Heidegger's "a priori perfect ('the always already')"³⁰⁶⁷ plays a "quasi transcendental"³⁰⁶⁸ role and so paves the way for the question of being in the world. Specifically, within

the framework of transcendental philosophy it would be impossible (meaningless) to contend that something empirical (factual) is also at the same time transcendental. But this is precisely the quasi-transcendental status that Heidegger ascribes to world-disclosedness, to the particular world-disclosure in which Dasein is thrown. He can do this in virtue of the possibility of affirming that a world-disclosure is something ontic (factually given, a cultural product) but at the same time always already ontological (i.e., symbolical). On the other hand, precisely this possibility points to the implausibility of Heidegger's attempt to ascribe a transcendental status, in the strong normative sense of the term, to those cultural products simply by virtue of their symbolic nature.³⁰⁶⁹

Lafont's interpretation attempts to make sense of Heidegger's approach by equating the ontological with the symbolical, and she wants to argue that the "understanding of a referential totality, like every understanding, must be clarified on the basis of the structure of the sign".³⁰⁷⁰ Heidegger's questioning should therefore be understood as *quasi* transcendental: the question of Being is transcendental insofar as it is raised within the context of the given language making beings possible and/or questionable – i.e. it emerges within the language that gives us (discloses) a world as already meaningful (useful). Consequently, Heidegger's approach to the

³⁰⁶⁵ Lafont, Cristini, *Heidegger, Language, and World-Disclosure* (New York: Cambridge University Press), p.18

³⁰⁶⁶ *ibid*, p.17.

³⁰⁶⁷ *ibid*, p.18.

³⁰⁶⁸ *ibid*, p.xiii.

³⁰⁶⁹ *ibid*, p.18.

³⁰⁷⁰ *ibid*, p.32.

world of experience must be similarly taken as a given: *as if* it meaningfully referred to a world over and above the immediately given and/or culturally received. Heidegger's transcendental approach may thereby be thought of as qualified (limited or restricted) to the 'things' that appear within a "equipmental totality"³⁰⁷¹ since the structure of the sign indicates the way language is used to refer to beings in the world. By ontologically "committing himself to the generalized primacy of equipment"³⁰⁷², Heidegger is said to ontologize the ontical through his "conception of language as a tool"³⁰⁷³. Heidegger's "analysis of signs focuses on and explains a particular kind of reference, namely signifying"³⁰⁷⁴ and that "the world as a whole of significance is therefore of symbolic nature".³⁰⁷⁵ Lafont goes so far as to claim that Heidegger's conception of the ontological difference commits him to the understanding that meaning determines reference – i.e. the way entities are understood determines which entities can be meaningfully referred to in a given language.³⁰⁷⁶ The intelligibility of the world, then, is said to be linguistically determined through signs, and the world of significance is only possible (meaningful, truthful) because it "can arise only on the level of culture, which is characterised by symbolic structures".³⁰⁷⁷ Although this is a noteworthy attempt to clarify Heidegger's transcendental approach to the question of Being³⁰⁷⁸, it unfortunately approaches Heidegger's *phenomenological conception of phenomenon* from the wrong direction. As we've already seen, Heidegger insists on approaching the question of the meaning of Being by way of that 'which shows itself in itself', and he originally attempts to move past the "philosophy of language"³⁰⁷⁹ – with its analysis on the process of signifying by signs or any other symbolic means – in order to "inquire into the things themselves".³⁰⁸⁰ The ontological constitution of being cannot be identified with the way beings are linguistically constituted and/or signified as such. A sign's constitutive role "consists in showing or indicating"³⁰⁸¹ our way around the circle of understanding, and so should not be understood as directing the circle's movements. It's true, of course, that Heidegger assigns

³⁰⁷¹ *ibid*, p.31.

³⁰⁷² *ibid*, p.32.

³⁰⁷³ *ibid*.

³⁰⁷⁴ *ibid*, p.40

³⁰⁷⁵ *ibid*, p.48.

³⁰⁷⁶ *ibid*, p.xv.

³⁰⁷⁷ *ibid*, 47.

³⁰⁷⁸ Lafont's interpretation of Heidegger is best understood as a reconstruction so as to make his *overall* approach to language more consistent and coherent. Specifically, it is notable for making Heidegger's subsequent moved towards 'the being of language' intelligible via his prior analysis of signs. Lafont interprets the latter Heidegger through the earlier Heidegger in order to reconcile distinct approaches. Lafont's own approach is therefore intended more as a corrective as opposed to a straightforward exposition.

³⁰⁷⁹ *Ibid*.

³⁰⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p.209-210.

³⁰⁸¹ *Ibid*,

signs a "special status"³⁰⁸² within the circle – they are said to provide an "ontological clue"³⁰⁸³ for "characterising any entity whatsoever"³⁰⁸⁴. In other words, signs point to or indicate something other than themselves – namely, a *conception of phenomenon* which shows the question of the meaning of Being in itself. Heidegger distinguishes between *signs* and *significance* and his analysis of signs as "items of equipment"³⁰⁸⁵ is distinct from the way he is "led to the concepts of saying and speaking, to which we had purposely given no attention up to that point".³⁰⁸⁶ It is the circle of understanding that points the way to language insofar as discourse is the "articulation of intelligibility"³⁰⁸⁷ and the "totality of significations"³⁰⁸⁸ gets "expressed in language".³⁰⁸⁹ The being of language was originally said to be dependent upon our being in the world and that to meaningfully speak about our involvement with it is "derived from interpretation"³⁰⁹⁰ that is "grounded in understanding".³⁰⁹¹ The phenomenon of language, then, is not only approached in a different way to signs, Heidegger asserts that language comes *after* what is already prior to it (understanding) and that the occurrence of understanding (interpretation) has its origins in being able to meaningfully speak about the world of significance thrown before it. Discourse "underlies both interpretation and assertion"³⁰⁹² and the "existential-ontological foundation of language is discourse or talk".³⁰⁹³ Language is not so much an item of equipment but the way in which Dasein becomes equipped to deal with (express) its concerns. Let's briefly contrast "an example of a sign"³⁰⁹⁴ Heidegger brings into the foreground of understanding – a sign indicating a car turning. An indicator signals the "direction of the vehicle will take"³⁰⁹⁵ and is "constituted by reference or assignment"³⁰⁹⁶. An understanding of the sign's significance – of what is meaningfully involved here – can only be meaningfully understood, of course, within the totality of involvements that *already* refers or directs our understanding in some way. Such a signal is "an item of equipment which explicitly raises a totality of equipment into our circumspection so that together with it the worldly character of the ready-to-hand announces itself"³⁰⁹⁷ and so "achieves...an orientation within our

³⁰⁸² p, 110.
³⁰⁸³ Ibid, p. 110.
³⁰⁸⁴ Ibid, p.109.
³⁰⁸⁵ Ibid, p.108.
³⁰⁸⁶ Ibid, 203.
³⁰⁸⁷ Ibid
³⁰⁸⁸ Ibid, p.204
³⁰⁸⁹ Ibid.
³⁰⁹⁰ Ibid, p.203
³⁰⁹¹ p.195
³⁰⁹² Ibid, p.204.
³⁰⁹³ Ibid, p.203
³⁰⁹⁴ Ibid, p.108.
³⁰⁹⁵ Ibid, p.109.
³⁰⁹⁶ Ibid.
³⁰⁹⁷ Ibid, p.110.

environment".³⁰⁹⁸ It would be meaningless to indicate a turn unless there already exists a context of intelligibility (significance), and such "giving way, as taking direction"³⁰⁹⁹ receives its directives from elsewhere: within a totality of involvements that is already on the way or directed in turn. The way we understand a referential totality is *derived* from significance and not the other way around. Within "significance...there lurks the ontological condition which makes it possible for Dasein, as something which understands and interprets, to disclose such things as significations; upon these, in turn, is founded the Being of words and of language".³¹⁰⁰ Whilst an interpretation might *find its way into* language, it must already be "disclosed in our understanding of the world"³¹⁰¹ and so the "totality of significations of intelligibility is put into words. To significations, words accrue".³¹⁰² In other words, meaning does not so much determine reference but it is the way in which the meaningful refers (back) to that totality that determines a self referential whole.

This returns us, then, to the circle of understanding, or the way a meaningful whole raises the question of "the structure of self referentiality".³¹⁰³ Following Heidegger, we must determine the way a self-referential whole throws its own directives and movements (back) into question. Specifically, any move towards (quasi) transcendental questioning necessarily moves within the complex whole directing (structuring) its movements as such, and so becomes an inquiry into the conditions of its own possibility (existence, occurrence). As Bubner observes, the "transcendental presupposition"³¹⁰⁴ is directed by the question of its own being and so attempts to uncover "the conditions for the possibility...of understanding"³¹⁰⁵ by determining the limits of its own "ontological commitment".³¹⁰⁶ Specifically, knowledge that may be referred to as (quasi) "transcendental takes as its subject, together with the general conditions of knowledge, the conditions of its own genesis and functioning".³¹⁰⁷ The question, however, is whether a self-referential structure can determine the rational status of its own objects and events: is it even meaningful (intelligible, possible) for reason to question itself in this way? Bubner recognises the problem of transcendence as absolutized immanence, and locates this problematic within the tension between the structure and the event of understanding – i.e., within the possibility of

³⁰⁹⁸ *ibid.*

³⁰⁹⁹ *ibid.*

³¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p.121.

³¹⁰¹ p.191

³¹⁰² *ibid.*, 204.

³¹⁰³ Bubner, Rudiger, "Is Transcendental Hermeneutics Possible?" in Manninen, Juha and Tuomela, Raimo (eds) *Essays on Explanation and Understanding* (Dordrecht: D.Reidel Publishing, 1976,), p.69.

³¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p.61.

³¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p.69.

³¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p.63.

³¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p.462.

affirming understanding as something ontical (historically determined, a cultural artefact) whilst committing to the position that it is also ontological (self referential and/or determining). The problem of grounding transcendental questioning invariably raises the question of whether 'knowledge' merely refers to the limits of our own understanding. Heidegger's concept of the hermeneutical circle was introduced, of course, to circumvent the problem of begging such a question. Heidegger's questioning purported to get around the problem of "circular reasoning"³¹⁰⁸ by directing our understanding towards that "unitary phenomenon"³¹⁰⁹ calling itself back into question. Given the fact that we already always move within an understanding of being, Heidegger's questioning prioritizes the "remarkable relatedness backward or forward"³¹¹⁰ within the circle of understanding. Questioning relations of presupposition remains integral and what was being "presupposed"³¹¹¹ and "questioned"³¹¹² was that "entity – the inquirer – transparent in his own Being. The very asking of this question is an entity's mode of Being...and one of the possibilities of its Being".³¹¹³ Heidegger thereby argues that we cannot make complete sense of – or completely refer to – the events of our own understanding. The circle of understanding turns against itself by calling its own movements and directives (back) into question. The divide between the structure and event of understanding raises the question of Being insofar as meaningful interpretations struggle with making sense of their own genesis and functioning.

The Structure of the Hermeneutical Circle: As we've seen, Heidegger's original questioning emerged out of the everyday understanding in which we already move and find ourselves directed. In interrogating our being-there, Heidegger attempted to lay bare the grounds for the understanding that made such movement possible, and questioned the structure of meaning in accordance with the circle's directives. The circle of understanding was said to arise out of and fall back on the ground in which it already moved – and so it remain directed by the relations that Dasein found itself encircled by and/or entangled within. Consequently, Heidegger's interpretation of the hermeneutical circle purports to uncover the ground on which the distinction between the structure and event of understanding can/not be found(ed). If interpretation brings forth the possibility of a meaningful world by way of the language of beings, however, it is difficult to understand what other kind of meaning (being) can be brought forth or held back t/here. That is to say, what can/not be understood other than a given understanding, and un/covers accordingly?

³¹⁰⁸ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time* (New York: State University of New York Press. 1996), p.27.

³¹⁰⁹ p.192.

³¹¹⁰ *ibid*, p.28.

³¹¹¹ *ibid*, p.27.

³¹¹² *ibid*.

³¹¹³ *ibid*.

Note that Heidegger claims to be able to bring forth the distinction between Being and beings *through* that understanding passed down and levelled off into an undifferentiated mode of being. Whilst the structure of meaning is built up and held in being within language, it may nonetheless also be broken down and *thrown into question* within a given understanding. According to Heidegger, the circle of understanding can meaningfully bring forth the question of its own genesis and functioning, and the question is determining the direction of fit between its meaningful structure and event(s). We immediately encounter a problem regarding the intelligibility of Heidegger's questioning in that it invariably return us – or turns on – the question of the relation between part and whole. The *problem* is understanding how language can come to 'possess' (convey, withhold) content distinct from its referent – whether it can intelligibly *be* (say) anything other than what it is already *of* or *about* (beings). Correspondingly, the *question* is if language does possess content distinct from its referent – here, understood as a totality of significant beings – what can/not Being mean other than what it is already and always about (refers to)? If meaning 'attaches' itself to language, how does something prior to and independent of it (content) come after and depend upon it (attach itself to referents which meaningfully structure and lie over the content as such)? Given that 'the They' is integral to Heidegger's account of the structure of understanding, it is significant to note that it is generally understood to be "confused"³¹¹⁴ and "incoherent".³¹¹⁵ Significantly, both interpretations independently call for the need to "reconstruct"³¹¹⁶ Heidegger's account of authenticity in order to render the relation/s more *appropriate* (meaningful, true). Perhaps what is most interesting about the proposed reconstructions is that they inadvertently return us to the question of the intelligibility of the dividing line between the One and the many. To take each in turn.

The One and The Many : Dreyfus and Phillipse.

Dreyfus begins to clarify Heidegger's early position by way of the latter Wittgenstein. According to Dreyfus, Wittgenstein's notion of rule following helps lay the ground that human beings 'fall' (back) upon. Dreyfus proposes to clarify Heidegger's position by first questioning the translation of *das Man* – instead of what has being traditionally understood as 'the They', Dreyfus interprets it as 'the One'. He hopes to be able to clarify the question of Being here by bringing the Being of the 'there' (back) into the question. Specifically, the question of being is explicated via the attempt to ask: who goes there? According to Dreyfus, it is many beings (*Dasein*) *acting as*

³¹¹⁴ Dreyfus, Hubert. *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), p.143.

³¹¹⁵ Phillipse, Herman. *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p.352.

³¹¹⁶ *ibid*, p.360.

One, where the who of the there is encountered by being-there (in language). Dreyfus attempt to make sense of Heidegger's conception of 'The They' occurs by way of language as a form of life, and so insists on the ontological primacy of social practice in the formation of a meaningful world. Consequently, Dreyfus argues that "One is what one takes over"³¹¹⁷ and *becomes* and interprets the circle of understanding in the following way: there would be no norms without self interpreting beings, and no self interpreting beings without norms.³¹¹⁸ In other words, meaningful understanding is only possible because of *the way* it is determined through language: via criteria customarily ruling over action. Such clarification throws into question the problem underlying Heidegger's entire questioning – namely, *how* the intelligibility of beings can get obscured within the circle of understanding. Given that Heidegger ontologizes the ontical via the "constituting activity"³¹¹⁹ of Dasein, Dreyfus is understandingly confused by the way *language as world disclosure* can also somehow meaningfully conceal the "phenomenal structure of the world".³¹²⁰ Significantly, Dreyfus finds himself asking a question that he does not understand – namely, "why say that in everyday life intelligibility gets obscured, rather than in public practice everything gets what intelligibility it has?"³¹²¹ In some way, the answer should already be intelligible to him: to avoid identifying the question of the meaning of Being with the everyday intelligibility of beings. It is worth noting in advance that Dreyfus has since questioned his original interpretation of Heidegger here. Whilst Dreyfus has continued to ask "could anything be more intelligible than everyday intelligibility?"³¹²², he has been forced to concede that he originally misunderstood Heidegger and that there exists a "more primordial understanding"³¹²³ that cannot be interpreted away. Nonetheless, Dreyfus's "serious mistake"³¹²⁴ remains illuminating in that it throws into question the intelligibility of his own approach. Let's begin, then, by citing the two Wittgenstein quotes that structure the event of his understanding.

So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?" -- It is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life.³¹²⁵

³¹¹⁷ Dreyfus, Hubert. *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), p.159

³¹¹⁸ *ibid.*

³¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.141.

³¹²⁰ *ibid.*, p.142.

³¹²¹ *ibid.*, p.156.

³¹²² Dreyfus, Hubert, "Could Anything Be More Intelligible than Everyday Intelligibility? : Reinterpreting Division I of *Being and Time* In the Light of Division II" in James E. Faulconer and Mark A. Wrathall, eds, *Appropriating Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 155.

³¹²³ *ibid.*, p.156

³¹²⁴ *ibid.*

³¹²⁵ Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), Sec, 241, p.88e.

As if giving grounds did not come to an end sometime. But the end is not an ungrounded presupposition: it is an ungrounded way of acting.³¹²⁶

Dreyfus is able to interpret Heidegger through Wittgenstein because of Heidegger's claims that "the world of Dasein is a with-world. Being-in is being with others"³¹²⁷ and the "common sense of the They knows only the satisfying of manipulative rules and public norms and the function to satisfy them".³¹²⁸ Dreyfus's appropriation turns on the way a given understanding becomes "appropriate"³¹²⁹ through social "norms and the averageness they sustain"³¹³⁰ in language. Consequently, self-interpreting beings can only understand the world as meaningful through "norming activity",³¹³¹ and the ground such actions move upon are "shared background practices"³¹³² that cannot be meaningfully questioned (brought forth) as such. Nonetheless, their mode of being may be understood as authentic by way of language's own instrumental efficiency (language's ability to get many beings to think as One through its tacit rulings). Norming activities involve the question of linguistic means to linguistic ends: they presuppose the use of language as the means for appropriating and authenticating its own ends. The question of the intelligibility of beings, then, corresponds to the way Dasein *should* stand in relation to its own actions: rule following determines the way language conceives its objects and there is nothing to understand beyond socially prescribed objectives.

Dreyfus thereby assigns himself the understanding that "the only deep interpretation is that there is no deep interpretation."³¹³³ Such an interpretation, however, barely scratches the surface of Heidegger's conception of understanding and fails to clear up the question of the meaning of Being. Dreyfus's interpretation does not so much encircle itself but runs intelligibility (back) into the ground by concealing an allegedly deeper truth. As Heidegger clarifies elsewhere, *Dasein falsely believes that it is "at home in the immediate circle of beings...At bottom, the ordinary is not ordinary; it is extra-ordinary"*.³¹³⁴ According to Dreyfus, however, the question of the intelligibility of being/s comes down to the one and same thing: following one

³¹²⁶ Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *On Certainty* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975) Sec. 110, p.17e.

³¹²⁷ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarrie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.155.

³¹²⁸ *ibid*, p.334.

³¹²⁹ Dreyfus, Hubert. *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), p.151.

³¹³⁰ *ibid*, p.153.

³¹³¹ *ibid*, 162.

³¹³² *Ibid*, 151.

³¹³³ *Ibid*, p.157.

³¹³⁴ Heidegger, "The Origin Of The Work Of Art" in *Basic Writings*, ed. Krell, David, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p.179.

another's lead in order to accommodate one another. Dreyfus's emphasis upon rule following as meaning constituting returns us to the problem of the criterion. Specifically, what is the rule for following a rule? We invariably find ourselves faced with the possibility of the *inherent* meaninglessness (arbitrariness) of given rules and the practices they rule over (regulate, constitute, etc.). The problem is: to what extent should the One accommodate itself to rulings that could have gone – and may still go – *either way*. That is to say, do rules meaningfully refer to anything other than their own following and/or directives? We invariably find ourselves moving within a circle again and are now forced to ask about *their* mode of being (source of normativity, authenticity, etc.). Such a concern directs us towards the question of which rules should be thought socially appropriate (meaningful, authentic) in the first place and determines how the corresponding practices might become questionable (meaningless, problematic) in turn. Significantly, it was Wittgenstein who was originally concerned about the *paradox of rule following*, or the possibility that any action could be made to follow from an arbitrarily given rule.

This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule. The answer was: if everything can be made out to accord with the rule, then it can also be made out to conflict with it. And there would be neither accord nor conflict here.³¹³⁵

Wittgenstein attempted to resolve the paradox by arguing that understanding a rule occurs without an interpretation – we simply follow them without question insofar as they follow on from practices already directing our actions. Nonetheless, Kripke famously drew a more sceptical conclusion from Wittgenstein's line of questioning and argued that the arbitrariness of rules leads to the paradox "that all language, all concept formation, to be impossible, indeed unintelligible."³¹³⁶ The circle of understanding is interpreted as meaningless because the paradox remains "unanswerable".³¹³⁷ The paradox of rule following is therefore said to throw into question the very intelligibility of the constitution of meaning: rules invariably rule themselves out by undermining the very ground on which we move. According to Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein, "there can be no such thing as meaning anything by any word. Each new application we make is a leap in the dark; any present intention could be interpreted so as to accord with anything we may choose to do. So there can be neither accord, nor conflict".³¹³⁸

³¹³⁵ Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), Sec. 201, p.81e.

³¹³⁶ Kripke, Saul, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*. An Elementary Exposition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), p.62

³¹³⁷ *ibid*, p.66.

³¹³⁸ *ibid*, p.55.

Philipse similarly questions the intelligibility of Heidegger's "concept of the They or the One"³¹³⁹. Specifically, "why does Heidegger argue that we are not (really being) ourselves if we behave according to common rules and roles?"³¹⁴⁰ Philipse attempts to make Heidegger's reasoning more authentic (in accord with itself) by questioning the role *the many* – being-with-others – allegedly plays in the determination of our being-in-the-world. Philipse agrees with Dreyfus that Heidegger's approach to "traditional rules of conduct and standardised social roles"³¹⁴¹ is incoherent. The question is: in what way? According to Philipse, Heidegger attempts to have it both ways and that following Wittgenstein is completely inappropriate³¹⁴² if one's form of life is "the result...of fallenness or falling".³¹⁴³ Although Heidegger's interpretation of the authenticity of our being might insist on the ontological primacy of the meaning "constituting function of shared practices"³¹⁴⁴, Heidegger is said to deliberately "blur"³¹⁴⁵ the important distinction between *rule following* (principles regulating social action) and *unquestionably following* one another's lead (conforming with conventional thought or behaviour). Such a levelling off within our understanding is thought to be part of Heidegger's covert theological "strategy"³¹⁴⁶ – to implicitly "wager"³¹⁴⁷ that the question of the authenticity of our being-there really lies *elsewhere* (in a transcendent realm – by being one with God.) It "is only when we realise that our real true self is not of this world"³¹⁴⁸ that we can authentically be in it. We therefore need to pave the way for a more appropriate being "which is *not* of this world".³¹⁴⁹ The only way we can "make sense"³¹⁵⁰ of Heidegger's concept of authenticity, then, is by accepting the possibility that Heidegger was the one really being inauthentic here. Consequently, Philipse turns Dreyfus's conception of relation between the one and the many around, and notes that the many – the One Being who we all are – may be better understood (or translated) as "the multitude"³¹⁵¹ that has somehow "taken away and usurped"³¹⁵² one's true being. The question, then, is the way Heidegger introduces a dividing line – via the ontological difference – in the circle of understanding: how can there be a meaningful divide within the circle directing its own way-

³¹³⁹ Philipse, Herman. *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p.346.

³¹⁴⁰ *ibid*, p.349.

³¹⁴¹ *ibid*, p. 263.

³¹⁴² *Ibid*, p.350. Dreyfus's "answer to this question is interesting, but it will not do as an interpretation" of Heidegger's incoherent account of the intelligibility of beings.

³¹⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 351.

³¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.350.

³¹⁴⁵ *ibid*.

³¹⁴⁶ *ibid*, p.234.

³¹⁴⁷ *ibid*, p.225.

³¹⁴⁸ *ibid*, p.351.

³¹⁴⁹ *ibid*.

³¹⁵⁰ *ibid*, p.350

³¹⁵¹ *ibid*, p.349

³¹⁵² *ibid*

making movements? Philipse moves towards Heidegger's concept of being-towards-death in that it turns on the questions: how can our understanding of being-in-the-world authenticate itself via the privation of meaning and in what way may everyday intelligibility be meaningfully understood as inauthentic (thrown into question) there? Not insignificantly, the traditional problem of one over many is reintroduced via a reversal in direction here. Specifically, if the question of the meaning of Being is distinct (divisible, separate) from beings in some way, how can Being participate (determine, be in) many other beings and remain a meaningful unity over and above what has fallen away and covered over Being as such? Philipse's argues that the answer is buried so deep within *Being and Time* that we need to turn towards Heidegger's concept of "authentic being towards death"³¹⁵³ to unearth it.

Philipse asks if "death is Dasein's ownmost possibility", how does my own death "enter into my Dasein as a possibility of my being"?³¹⁵⁴ As we've already seen, Dasein is said to be caught between life and death, and it attempts to conceal its indeterminate (or finite) status by retreating into The They. By being with others, we invariably lose our way of being in the world. According to Heidegger, however, it is our being towards death (finitude) that makes our being in the world possible in the first place. Specifically, "with death, Dasein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being"³¹⁵⁵ and bringing ourselves to face the finitude of human existence ensures the possibility of a more authentic life. Given our potentiality for Being, Dasein "cannot outstrip the possibility of death. Death is possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein"³¹⁵⁶, and when anxious "Dasein finds itself face to face with the 'nothing' of the possible impossibility of its existence".³¹⁵⁷ Philipse claims that Heidegger is talking in a circle here, and asks how the inevitability of our non-being can "enter into my Dasein as a possibility for my being"?³¹⁵⁸ To some extent, the answer should already be intelligible : death can make our being possible (more meaningful) insofar as Dasein remains "the possibility of Being-free for its ownmost potentiality-for-Being".³¹⁵⁹ As Heidegger maintains, "higher than actuality stands possibility".³¹⁶⁰ Dasein should therefore actively move "against falling back behind itself"³¹⁶¹ (existing social reality) and reclaim its ownmost possibility by becoming answerable

³¹⁵³ *ibid*, p. 353.

³¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p.354.

³¹⁵⁵ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarrie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.294.

³¹⁵⁶ *ibid*,

³¹⁵⁷ *ibid*, p.310.

³¹⁵⁸ Philipse, Herman. *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p.345.

³¹⁵⁹ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarrie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.183.

³¹⁶⁰ *ibid*, p.63.

³¹⁶¹ *ibid*, p.308

(responsible) for its being in the world. Dasein can only reach its highest state (or possibility for being) by accepting its being–towards-death and facing up to its existential guilt (fallen state, inauthenticity). Dasein is "essentially guilty"³¹⁶² in that its Being is always in question and it must be able to answer for itself in some way. The truth of our temporal existence "must be understood as a possibility, it must be cultivated as a possibility, and we must put up with it as possibility, in the way we comport ourselves to it".³¹⁶³ Philipse questions Heidegger's ontological commitment to being-towards-death in different ways, but perhaps the most integral is the way "roles and rules are conceptually connected with *substitutability*".³¹⁶⁴ That is to say, where it is possible for the many to exist without one person, but one cannot exist – be substituted for – the many (meaningful practice built up and held in being through roles and rules). The possibility of being substituted for another means that it is possible for a person to be (act, serve) in the place of others. Being with others, however is not similar possible in death: human beings cannot be (act, serve) in the place of others *there*. According to Philipse's interpretation of Heidegger, we can only really "become ourselves whenever the possibility of substitution breaks down"³¹⁶⁵ and this possibility can only occur via (the fear of) certain death. As Heidegger directs us, "death reveals itself as that *possibility which is one's ownmost, which is non-relational, and which is not to be outstripped*"³¹⁶⁶.

Phlipse claims that Heidegger "confuses our attitude toward our own death for death itself"³¹⁶⁷, and urges that his "secular analysis of the phenomenon of human existence"³¹⁶⁸ is "misleading"³¹⁶⁹ or the result of a conceptual sleight of hand.³¹⁷⁰ On the one hand, Heidegger attempts to convince human beings that their form of life is "inauthentic, and that authenticity

³¹⁶² *ibid*, p.353

³¹⁶³ *ibid*, p.306.

³¹⁶⁴ Philipse, Herman. *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p.360.

³¹⁶⁵ *ibid*.

³¹⁶⁶ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarrie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 294. Put another way: a) death can only be experienced as *one's own* since no one can die in another's place b) our being there can only *stand before itself* once our being with others completely breaks down and c) death outstrips all other possibilities in that it becomes the limit and/or standard by which all other possibilities can be meaningfully determined (questioned, authenticated, etc).

³¹⁶⁷ Philipse, Herman. *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p.365. He reminds us, for example, that our being-with-others ensures that death *is* relational and can never meaningfully be our own. One cannot experience death since one is dead and (of course) it is only through another's death that 'death' becomes possible (meaningful) in the first place. Whilst we all die, it is the experience of another's death that makes one fearful, anxious and/or grief stricken. Another person's death becomes a substitute – or acts as a surrogate – in that their death takes away the significance of our roles and/or being in the world.

³¹⁶⁸ *ibid*, p.374.

³¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.367.

³¹⁷⁰ *ibid*, p. 371.

consists in anticipating death with dread" and "facing up to existential guilt".³¹⁷¹ On the other hand, despite claiming that death "means a total annihilation"³¹⁷² of our being, Heidegger attempts to pave the way for the afterlife as "my most distinctive possibility"³¹⁷³ in that our being-towards death may reveal our true (mode of) being in the world. Whilst Philippe's interpretation is superficially plausible, it interprets away Heidegger's corresponding emphasis upon answering the call of conscience when trying to live an authentic life. Such a part/whole relation cannot be talked around since it presupposes the very being in question – namely, how can human beings answer the call of conscience and/or become authentic in this world?

To some extent, these questions are only intelligible within prescribed rules and roles. According to Heidegger, the call of Dasein summons to itself its own possibility for being: it becomes a calling back into our selves in order to be called forth again. The call back "points forward"³¹⁷⁴ and "if we take the call this way and orient ourselves by it, we must first ask *what* it gives us to understand".³¹⁷⁵ It is important to stress, however, that being called back involves a reversal – it involves "summoning one's ownmost Self"³¹⁷⁶ from "the tasks, rules and standards"³¹⁷⁷ of everyday intelligibility and so comes from "beyond"³¹⁷⁸ the one lost in the many. Further, Heidegger insists that the call is wordless and is summoned "into the reticence of itself"³¹⁷⁹ The "call dispenses with any kind of utterance. It does not put itself into any words; yet it remains nothing less than obscure and indefinite. Conscience discourses solely and constantly in the mode of keeping silent".³¹⁸⁰ In other words, the call of conscience can only be answered without words and gives one something to answer for – our being "*guilty!*"³¹⁸¹ for having fallen into the world. Conscience is said to "manifest itself as an attestation"³¹⁸² and invariably makes Dasein answerable for its fallen state. Specifically, if being in the world involves one falling into the many, the "they are guilty in the very basis of their Being, and this being-guilty is what provides, above all, the ontological condition for Dasein's ability"³¹⁸³ to question itself and/or answer the call of conscience. Consequently, our "Being-guilty cannot be defined by morality, since morality

³¹⁷¹ Ibid, p.372.

³¹⁷² Ibid, p.373.

³¹⁷³ Ibid.

³¹⁷⁴ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarrie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.325.

³¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p.326.

³¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p.325

³¹⁷⁷ Ibid, p.312.

³¹⁷⁸ Ibid, p.320

³¹⁷⁹ Ibid, p.318.

³¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

³¹⁸¹ Ibid, p.326

³¹⁸² Ibid, p.334

³¹⁸³ Ibid, p.332

already presupposes it for itself".³¹⁸⁴ That is to say, our conception of 'good' and 'evil' is only intelligible because of "Dasein's falling Being"³¹⁸⁵ in the first place. And "*only because Dasein is guilty in the basis of its Being* and closes itself off from itself as something thrown and falling, is conscience possible, if indeed the call gives us this Being-guilty as something which at bottom we are to understand."³¹⁸⁶ Nonetheless, the question becomes: how can we understand the call of conscience without calling on (bringing forth, moving back towards) the rules and roles thrown into question?

Witness the way Heidegger calls upon language to recollect the question of Being. Heidegger claimed, of course, that the task of thinking was to "preserve the force of the most elemental words in which Dasein expresses itself, and to keep the common understanding from levelling off"³¹⁸⁷ into meaninglessness. Heidegger's use of the word *force* is particularly meaningful here – it draws attention to the *power* of language (or the way language can act upon other human beings). Although Heidegger questions the authenticity of cultural practice, he nonetheless invokes the authority of "the law"³¹⁸⁸ when bringing forth the directive of appropriation – and goes so far as to urge that language users are forced to follow language's "command"³¹⁸⁹ back to itself. Heidegger directly calls upon words that presuppose rules of conduct within society – i.e., where the rule of law similarly directs and/or constrains the many to act as one. Appropriation is said to have the *force of law* behind it and so may be regarded as legally binding and/or naturally determined in some way. Specifically, the concept of a 'law' is always already meaningfully posited as a *given* (embedded as an everyday fact or social principle, operating within and governing nature, etc.). Phenomenologically speaking, a law describes the way/s in which beings relate to the natural or social world: as something laid down, followed and enforced. Its corollary is that of 'order', be it 'natural' or 'social'. Laws exhibit the 'presupposition of the world' in so far as they 'bring forth' the understanding that there is a world ordered and authenticated as *such*. In short: laws *appropriate* (assign, secure, determine) behaviour in accordance with what is understood to be *appropriate* (just, correct, regular). The concept of 'authority' appears to be integral here, especially the way/s in which it relates to its "cognates 'author', 'authentic', 'authority, and 'authorize'."³¹⁹⁰ Setting aside the question of *what* authenticates a law – i.e., how 'authority' comes into and/or is held in being – laws purport to be

³¹⁸⁴ *ibid.*

³¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*

³¹⁸⁶ *ibid.*

³¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p.262.

³¹⁸⁸ Heidegger, Martin, "The Way To Language", in *On The Way To Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.128.

³¹⁸⁹ Heidegger, Martin "Language" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans: Hofstadter, Albert, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p.207.

³¹⁹⁰ Miller, David, (ed) *Blackwell Encyclopedia Of Political Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p.29.

about (describe, explain) the *well being* of given roles and relationships. Not insignificantly, Heidegger also appropriated the elemental word *law* in a particularly questionable social context. Within the dual role of professor of philosophy and rector of Freiburg University, Heidegger called on other Germans to "fulfil its historical mission"³¹⁹¹ by following the law of history brought forth (enacted, enforced) through Hitler. According to Heidegger, the "*Führer* himself and alone is today and in the future German reality and its law"³¹⁹² since Hitler had managed to awaken the will in an "entire people and has welded it into a single resolve".³¹⁹³ Many years later, Heidegger continued to privilege German linguistic norms or practices because of their alleged proximity to the question of Being. Heidegger insisted that modern German thought was closer to ancient Greek thought, and the issue of this proximity (authenticity) was grounded within the relation a given culture has to its own language. Commenting on "the inner relationship of the German language with the language of the Greeks and with their thought"³¹⁹⁴ Heidegger claims that we can only "begin to think"³¹⁹⁵ if we can speak German – i.e. follow prescribed linguistic rules connected to external social roles and/or relations. Whilst it is possible to question whether Heidegger's invocations of *the law* and/or the authenticity of German culture involves a thoroughgoing "fascism"³¹⁹⁶, there can be little doubt that the "authoritarian sense or nonsense of Heideggerian philosophy lies in its jargon and its linguistic gestures".³¹⁹⁷ Terms like *calling* and *falling* are equally significant in that they refer (back) to the history of their own significations by way of their relationship to religious practice. The power of words was, of course, famously invoked in another way – Heidegger attempts to clear the way towards the question of being via "innovative but often obscure language".³¹⁹⁸ Indeed, Philipse ventures that "the appearance of novelty and profoundness was produced by a spectacular apparatus of verbal fireworks and hocus pocus, which dazzles the reader and tends to paralyse the capacity for lucid thought".³¹⁹⁹ Sorren cautions that Heidegger's "evocative

³¹⁹¹ Heidegger, Martin, "The Self Assertion of the German University" in Wolin, Richard (ed) *The Heidegger Controversy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), p.38.

³¹⁹² Heidegger, Martin, "German Students" in Wolin, Richard (ed) *The Heidegger Controversy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), p.47.

³¹⁹³ Heidegger, Martin, "German Men and Women!" in Wolin, Richard (ed) *The Heidegger Controversy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), p. 49. Heidegger also claims that "our people is submitting to that essential law of human existence to which every people must first give allegiance if it is still to be a people", p. 48.

³¹⁹⁴ Heidegger, Martin, "Only A God Can Save Us" in Wolin, Richard (ed) *The Heidegger Controversy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), p.113.

³¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*

³¹⁹⁶ Edwards, James, *The Authority of Language : Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and the Threat of Philosophical Nihilism*, (Tampa: University South Florida Press, 1990), p.133.

³¹⁹⁷ Sollner, Alfons, "Left Students of the Conservative Revolution" *Telos* Vol 61, 1984, p.59.

³¹⁹⁸ Watts, Michael, *The Philosophy of Heidegger* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. viii.

³¹⁹⁹ Philipse, Herman. *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p.371.

linguistic magic"³²⁰⁰ leads to a fatalistic and/or submissive attitude – the "gesture of founding meaning"³²⁰¹ doesn't so much ask us to beg the original question but to prostrate ourselves before the question of Being. Glover concurs that Heidegger's questioning invariably forces human beings to their knees: his use of language is more about being deferential and directing thinking into an "impenetrable fog, in which ideas not clearly understood have to be taken on trust"³²⁰². Such an "incommunicative mode of thought is linked to being dictatorial"³²⁰³ since the question of Being cannot be meaningfully questioned (rationally assessed via accepted norms) as such. We need to proceed carefully here. Heidegger approached language from different directions and the question of its 'forcefulness' needs to be distinguished. Heidegger originally claimed that we needed to move past the incapacitating effects of everyday language in order to find our way back to the question of the meaning of Being: the call of conscience's silent discourse with itself was thereby prioritised. Heidegger subsequently urged, however, that the requirement was to let language truthfully speak for itself: to listen to its silent calling and allow ourselves to be overcome. Whichever way he approached the question, however, language remained forceful in that particular words would ideally command our attention or action. Heidegger went so far as to attribute *significance* to the etymology of select words – such as truth,³²⁰⁴ calling³²⁰⁵ and way³²⁰⁶ – in order to direct his way-making movements.³²⁰⁷ Calling on

³²⁰⁰ Sollner, Alfons, "Left Students of the Conservative Revolution" *Telos* Vol 61, 1984, p.59.

³²⁰¹ *ibid.*

³²⁰² Glover, Jonathon, *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p.375.

³²⁰³ *ibid.*, p.376

³²⁰⁴ Heidegger, Martin, *Parmenides trans: Andre Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992). During the course of this lecture on Parmenides' famous poem, Heidegger tries to find his way back to the essence of truth via an interpretation of the word *aletheia*. The word truth is understood to be a translation of *aletheia*, and Heidegger attempts to retrieve 'truth's' more original or primary meaning via an etymological analysis of the ancient Greek word as it originally occurs in "Parmenides' doctrinal poem", p.2. Heidegger thereby arrives at the understanding that since truth originally means unconcealment, Being can only meaningfully occur if a world is disclosed or brought out "into the open that is lighted by itself" (clearing, true history, etc.), p.162-163.

³²⁰⁵ Heidegger, Martin, *What is Called Thinking* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968). According to Heidegger, "The Greek verb *keleuein* properly means to get something on the road, to get it underway. The Greek noun *keleuthos* means way. And that the old word "to call" means not so much a command as a letting-reach, that therefore the "call" has an assonance of helpfulness and compliance, is shown by the fact that the same word in Sanskrit still means something like to invite", p.117.

³²⁰⁶ Heidegger, Martin, "Why Poets?" in Young, Julian and Haynes, Kenneth (eds) *Off the Beaten Track* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Heidegger notes the etymological connection between way and weigh, and claims that it is only possible to get underway because the weight of a given concern or directive "is able to tip the balance one way or another into the play of motion", p.210.

³²⁰⁷ Schalow, Frank, "Language and the Etymological Turn of Thought", *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, Vol 18, No.1, p.196. As Schalow notes, Heidegger's etymological approach "transposes history's concerns in such a way that a slightly different shade or nuance of orientation can lend new depths to what is mostly familiar, dramatically expanding the range of connotations".

the etymological connection between *thinking* and *thanking*, Heidegger thinks we should all be mindful of "the soundness of language"³²⁰⁸ (its well being) and gratefully follow its lead (back) towards the truth of Being. Throughout his thinking, then, Heidegger took it upon himself to call out to other human beings in order to perform the task of thinking, and one of the ways he did this was by invoking terms with cultural import and/or historical significance. He thereby performed the task of thinking by asking others to similarly answer the calling of Being, and he summoned them through that language already acting upon them in a forceful way. Heidegger's recall allegedly occurred as a "mutual calling of origin and future"³²⁰⁹, and human beings were said to answer the call of Being by bringing "together what is concealed within the old".³²¹⁰

The Problem of Criterionless: Heidegger's attempt to square the circle of understanding.

The question, however, is: how can anyone answer a mutual calling (follow the call back to Being in order to be called forth towards beings)? Specifically, by what criteria can we all move back and forth as such? If we recall, Heidegger originally raised the problem of the criterion in order to underline the question of the *circular relation* between the content and referent of his own question. He did this in order to pave the way throughout his questioning. The problem of uncovering what was *in* question was divided into distinct yet related parts – by way of the question of the *meaning* of Being and/or via the question of the *truth* of Being respectively. Either way, the question of the relation between meaning and truth was an attempt to get around the problem of circular questioning. Heidegger's aim was to avoid an arbitrary beginning/ending to his overall approach, and he attempted to do this by following the lead of the circle of understanding human beings already moved within. He thereby emphasised the existential *structure* of the question of Being and the corresponding priority or *occurrence* of such questioning. The question of being-in-the-world allegedly paved the way towards a more authentic understanding in so far as it was possible to approach the question of Being from two different directions (via the route of meaning and truth respectively). Given this overall directive – or back and forth movement – Heidegger was able to circumvent the problem of circularity. He 'began' his questioning in the way that he 'ended' it: by *turning it back upon* those beings already placed within question. By being placed within the question – and correspondingly, trying to determine our place within it – Heidegger thereby prioritised the relation between the structure and/or events of his own questioning. The difficulty with Heidegger's characterization of a 'mutual calling' (the call back to be called forth), however, is that it directs beings into the

³²⁰⁸ Heidegger, Martin, *What is Called Thinking* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p.140.

³²⁰⁹ Heidegger, Martin, "A Dialogue On Language", in *On The Way To Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.12.

³²¹⁰ *ibid*, p.36.

very situation that Heidegger sought to circumvent: the problem of an arbitrary beginning/ending.

From the perspective of the meaning of the question of Being, the notions of answering 'the call' and being 'resolved' remain *indeterminate* (or meaningless) within Heidegger's account. Their content and/or status are left an open question, and remain open to questioning. As Polt observes, however, if "conscience speaks by remaining silent"³²¹¹, it seems "to give us no standards whatsoever"³²¹² to question (rationally assess) the call back to move forwards. We can be resolved, but only "towards what I don't know".³²¹³ The question of Being, therefore, requires us to ask: by what criterion can we meaningfully understand the content and/or authenticity of a given calling? Further, does the question of Being authenticate the possibility for a *conflict of interpretations* regarding the meaning and/or authenticity of 'the call'? If not, how do human beings resolve a conflict of interpretations regarding the meaning and/or authenticity of competing callings? Is it possible that the 'mutual calling' of a given conscience may be *mutually exclusive* callings, and if so, is the question of their authenticity equally open to questioning and/or authentication? Indeed, *how* do human beings arbitrate – resolve, move between – what is possibly an equally arbitrary understanding of one another's calling? The problem of the criterion threatens to become "the problem of criterionlessness"³²¹⁴ in that there does not appear to be a rational standard for questioning our respective places within the question of Being. To some extent, Heidegger's notion of resolve is meant to resolve the problem of indeterminacy – by locating the call of Being within the movements of history. History becomes *the way* to determine the content and/or status of 'the call': the unfolding of events call out to human beings in some meaningful way and they must be similarly resolved to act (answer) accordingly. Such a resolution, however, merely displaces the problem of the criterion – or criterionless – onto *turns* of events *beyond* human understanding or control. As Edwards notes, human beings remain at "the mercy of history" (Being)³²¹⁵ and the question is determining the authenticity of their calling and/or resolve within events subject to back and forth movements (questioning). Specifically, history's way-making movements can either be understood (followed) in two competing ways: as being entirely arbitrary (wayward) or as irreducibly determined (inescapable). Either way, determining our place within the question of Being is displaced elsewhere: onto history as governing movement or principle.

³²¹¹ Polt, Richard, *Heidegger: An Introduction* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), p.92.

³²¹² *ibid.*

³²¹³ *ibid.*

³²¹⁴ Wolin, Richard, *Politics Of Being*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p.57.

³²¹⁵ Edwards, James, *The Authority of Language : Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and the Threat of Philosophical Nihilism*, (Tampa: University South Florida Press, 1990), p.130.

From the perspective of the question of the truth (history) of Being, human beings find themselves displaced in a different way – they are now left at the mercy of the language calling out to them throughout history. Whatever our resolutions, only *so called* 'Being' can be truly resolute there (self directed and/or determined via way-making movements that cannot be completely understood or controlled as such). If the question of the truth of being necessarily occurs within a referentially opaque context determining the historical significance of events threatens to become entirely questionable (arbitrary, opportunistic, unresolvable, etc.). Specifically, if it is not possible to refer to the turn of events via two related terms – Beings and beings respectively – how do we determine the nature (truth value) of their belonging together and/or moving away from each other? Heidegger argues, of course, that it is language that speaks, and that we may find our way back to it "through thinking and poetising".³²¹⁶ Nonetheless, we are now required to ask: by what authority does Heidegger speak for language and where does he direct it (or us)? According to Heidegger, poetry is the way in which language truly and/or indirectly speaks to thought: it gathers entities and let's them show their true significance there. That is to say, (interpretations of) poetry reflects the mood (being) of the times, and so opens up a clearing in which to understand the history of Being. Such an approach, however, merely reintroduces the problem of the criterion. Specifically, by what criteria do we select poetry without presupposing the being in question, and how do we determine the status of any given (or potentially conflicting) interpretations? As Davis notes, Heidegger's selective thinking appears to be more "pretext than text"³²¹⁷ in two related ways – Heidegger selects texts that confirm his preconceptions about the question of Being, and then goes on to provide interpretations in accordance with his own questioning.³²¹⁸ This returns us to Heidegger's relationship to Nazism. Our aim here is *not* to presuppose this relationship as given, but to bring about the question of relations of presupposition. Whilst the being of Heidegger's questioning and his (ontological) commitment to Nazism might merely be a

³²¹⁶ Heidegger, Martin, "Only A God Can Save Us Now" in Wolin, Richard (ed) *The Heidegger Controversy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), p.107.

³²¹⁷ Davis, Colin, *Critical Excess* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), p.22.

³²¹⁸ *ibid.* Although Davis does not use the term confirmation bias, he does appear to be describing the phenomenon of selective thinking (the act of finding what one is already looking for via a preference for hypothesis consistent interpretations). Davis reminds us, for example, of Heidegger's preference for Holderlin's poetry, and cites a common objection made by other interpreters (such as Werner Brock, Julian Young, Robert Bernasconi, Allen Megill and Paul de Man) that Heidegger misreads Holderlin in accordance with his own presuppositions.

"contingent"³²¹⁹ event, the question remains: contingent upon what?³²²⁰ The only possible (meaningful) answer is that it was contingent upon his being-in-the-world.³²²¹

We shall approach this question in a roundabout way, and turn towards a sign that directs our own questioning. Specifically, we shall move about within an understanding of being signifying the totality of our involvement with the world. Following Heidegger's lead, we shall find ourselves moving (back) towards an understanding "already directed and on its way"³²²², and allow a referential totality to "become accessible in such a way that our concerned dealings take on an orientation and hold it secure"³²²³. As Heidegger directs us, "a sign to mark something indicates what one is 'at' at any time. Signs always indicate primarily 'wherein one lives, where one's concern dwells, what sort of involvement there is with something'".³²²⁴ On our way to determining the significance of the *swastika*, we must remain concerned about the role such a "primordial"³²²⁵ 'sign' occupies within historical thought. As we shall argue, the *swastika* paves the way back and forth in so far as it indicates the way the world 'turns' (moves, shows itself) and so signifies the question of our involvement with events taken as a complex whole. The *swastika* announces the worldhood of the world by directing us back towards a referential totality called (back) into question. Specifically, the *swastika* is significant for our purposes in that it is the "original wheel of time"³²²⁶ and simultaneously "depicts time forward and time backward".³²²⁷ Either way, the "fourfold movement of the *swastika* suggests the circling of the square and the squaring of the circle"³²²⁸ and so is directed towards the question of its own possibility. This near

³²¹⁹ Rorty, Richard, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity: Essays on Heidegger and Others* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.111

³²²⁰ Habermas, Jurgen, "Work and Weltanschauung: The Heidegger. Controversy from a German Perspective" in *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historian's Debate* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1989), p.145. Although Habermas denies that there is an "internal connection" between Heidegger's questioning and his relationship to Nazism, he nonetheless concedes that external historical forces appropriated his thinking. We adopt a more round about approach – the question of being-in-the-world does not permit a distinction between internal and external connections and emphasizes the relationship between word and world.

³²²¹ Rorty, Richard, "On Heidegger's Nazism" in *Philosophy and Social Hope* (London: Penguin Books, 1999). In this essay, Rorty seems to concede the point in reverse – by invoking a possible worlds scenario. In this possible being in the world, there are different contingencies or "chance events", (p.190) that might have shaped Heidegger's relationship to Nazism (such as actively opposing Nazism and being persecuted for his beliefs). Nonetheless, it is a moot point – Heidegger aligned his mode of being with Nazism in this world.

³²²² *ibid*

³²²³ *ibid*, p.111.

³²²⁴ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarrie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.111.

³²²⁵ Mees, Bernard, *Science of the Swastika* (New York: CEU Press, 2008), p.3.

³²²⁶ Charron, Ram Swami, *The Book of Yantras* (Raleigh: Lulu Press, 2012), p.105.

³²²⁷ *ibid*.

³²²⁸ Stevens, Anthony, *Ariadne's Clue: A Guide to the Symbols of Humankind* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), p.185.

universal sign³²²⁹ has come to signify something particularly significant within the *Western world* and so has equipped it with a given understanding: the Final Solution. Posing as an answer to a question, the finality of such a 'resolution' is itself *beyond* understanding³²³⁰ and is now interpreted as "a symptom or a warning signal"³²³¹ within the West. Consequently, an inquiry into the (original) question's "phenomenal core... extends in many directions, affecting among other things those hermeneutic principles on which the study of society and culture is founded"³²³². What needs to be understood, however, is that the swastika had been "appropriated"³²³³ by the Nazis and *historicized* beings must attempt to understand "the consequences of misappropriation".³²³⁴ Whilst the swastika is amongst the most conspicuous signs within recent history, an interpretation of it is conspicuous by its absence within Heidegger's thinking.³²³⁵ Nonetheless, there are three things to note with respect to it. Firstly, the swastika was *traditionally* understood as being the most primary or originary sign known to beings.³²³⁶ Prior to its appropriation by the Nazis, its occurrence has been traced back to prehistory and its presence may be found within cultures all around the world. Prior to the Nazi appropriation, its "migration"³²³⁷ around the world was said to require a philosophical question regarding its origin, meaning and movements.³²³⁸ Secondly, there was an attempt to *appropriate history* in the form of the swastika, and such an attempt coincided with the question of proximity

³²²⁹ Images of the swastika have manifested themselves in both the Eastern and Western parts of the world, ranging from Hindu to Celtic cultures. Its presence can be found amongst indigenous Americans and within ancient Greece. It is a sign common to both Buddhists and Christians, and its presence can be discerned across a range of apparently disparate cultures (Egypt, Iceland, India, China, Europe, etc).

³²³⁰ Diner, Dan, *Beyond The Conceivable: Studies on Germany, Nazism and the Holocaust*, p.1, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), p.1.

³²³¹ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans: Macquarrie, John and Robinson, Edward, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.110.

³²³² Ibid.

³²³³ Quinn, Malcolm *The Swastika : Constructing A Symbol*, (London, Routledge, 1994), p.2

³²³⁴ Ibid, p1.

³²³⁵ Lowith, Karl, "My Last Meeting With Heidegger in Rome, 1936" in Wolin, Richard (ed) *The Heidegger Controversy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998). According to Lowith, Heidegger could nonetheless be seen wearing the swastika ("party insignia") when visiting him in Rome, and that Heidegger appeared to signify (announce) his involvement with the Nazis without question. Specifically, "*Heidegger did not remove the Party insignia from his lapel. He wore it during his entire stay in Rome, and it had obviously not occurred to him that the swastika was out of place while he was spending the day with me*", p.141.

³²³⁶ Wilson, Thomas, *The Swastika: The Earliest Known Symbol and Its Migrations*, (Smithsonian Institution Report, Washington, 1894). Note the date of original publication. Wilson was an American archaeologist who sought to gather as much data about what had been uncovered (or recovered) on coins, pottery, etc throughout the world.

³²³⁷ Ibid, p. 952.

³²³⁸ Wilson was puzzled by the near universality of this sign, and tended to assume a common point of origin in order to account for its presumed migratory status. He explicitly says that its presence around the world becomes a question for "philosophers", *ibid*, p. 778.

to an original culture or language.³²³⁹ The re-turn towards this sign was seen as a retrieval of a primary relationship to history. Indeed, there *continues* to be a struggle over the question of its significance. People calling themselves the Friends of the Swastika have attempted to 'turn' back the hands of time by 'turning' the sign around in order to re-call its primary or originary meaning.³²⁴⁰ The act of turning back (or reappropriation), however, remains misguided insofar as they're are two signs of the swastika : one moving clockwise, the other counterclockwise. Either way, it's back and forth movements bring us to the question of the swastika's etymology and/or signification. According to interpretations that predate Heidegger's thinking³²⁴¹, its *content* coincides with the question of being-in-the-world. Whilst interpretations conflict as to what is exactly called for here, it is generally understood to 'turn' on this question, and itself signifies the problem of how to turn towards the question of being in time. Specifically, it is derived from the Sanskrit word *svastika*³²⁴² and signifies two possible modes of being. Primarily composed of 'su' (good) and *asti* (being), it can be either taken to mean 'well being' – *it is, to be* – or as a way of 'being well' – *so be it*. The content of the swastika therefore signifies the question of one's involvement with the world in two possible modes: actively or passively. As either attempting to bring about well-being or as a way of resigning oneself to whatever has been brought about.³²⁴³ Either way, the swastika traditionally signifies auspiciousness and is an invocation to take care and/or to be cared for.³²⁴⁴ The *referent* of the sign points to a structure (or structuring) of events: it is typically understood *to be* referring to the chain of being in the form of "the revolution of the wheel of life"³²⁴⁵ and as signifying a fourfold in the "sense of the configuration of a movement split up into four points, related to the poles and four cardinal directions"³²⁴⁶. Generally speaking, the significance of this relationship is divided into distinct

³²³⁹ Schliemann, Heinrich, *Troy and Its Remains: A Narrative of Researches and Discoveries Made on the Site of Ilium and in the Trojan Plain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Perhaps the most famous example is Schliemann's excavation of Troy. Specifically, the discovery of the ancient and/or 'migratory' swastika was appropriated as confirmation of Germany's relationship to its own language and/or history. Indeed, the uncovering of swastikas on pottery at Troy and Germany was identified as a sign pointing to the origin and migration of Western civilization itself. We "must draw attention to the fact" that images of the swastika can be traced back to Troy and "the primitive Trojans, therefore, belonged to the Aryan race", p.157.

³²⁴⁰ ManWoman, *Gentle Swastika: Reclaiming The Innocence*, (London: Flyfoot Press, 2000).

³²⁴¹ Wilson, Thomas *The Swastika: The Earliest Known Symbol and Its Migrations*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Report, 1894).

³²⁴² Ibid, pgs. 768-769. If we recall, Heidegger cited Sanskrit (and Greek) as a way of determining the original meaning of 'call'. According to his re-call, 'call' originally meant to get something on the way by providing a way in which to be situated and directed.

³²⁴³ Wilson, Thomas, *The Swastika: The Earliest Known Symbol and Its Migrations*, pgs.768–774, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Report, 1894).

³²⁴⁴ Ibid, p.800. As Wilson notes, "it is construed to mean long life, a multitude of blessings, great happiness, etc....In modern and well as ancient times, this sign stood for blessing, good wishes, and by slight extension, for good luck".

³²⁴⁵ Cooper, J.C *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols*, (London, Thames and London, 1978), p.165.

³²⁴⁶ Circlot, Juan, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), p.323.

way-making movements: as involving an attempt to circle the square, or square the circle.³²⁴⁷ Our concern, however, is not the question of how the swastika *should* be understood, but note that it already (and has always been) related to the question of being and time.

Adopting a Heideggerian move, the relationship can be understood both etymologically and phenomenologically, and may be appropriated accordingly. The signification of the swastika can be regarded as indeterminate in that it has come to occupy an 'in between' status within history. On the one hand, it moves beings towards (and conveys the movement of) life. On the other hand, it moves us back to the occurrence of death. In many parts of the world, it continues to be a sign of 'well being'. In other parts, it has come to be (mean) death personified. Caught between this part/whole problematic, the swastika may be understood as signifying the *question* of being and time itself. Consequently, we should endeavour to locate this question/movement on "the boundary or limit"³²⁴⁸ of understanding. Whilst such a delimitation need not pave the path towards the Final Solution, it may nonetheless clear a way backward and enable us to ask whether events "might have taken another turn"³²⁴⁹. One way to determine the movement of our own question is to highlight the way Heidegger responded to an attempt to clarify the nature and extent of his own 'involvement' with Nazism. Specifically, when the possibility of this question was raised during the course of a proposed interview, Heidegger found himself at a loss for words. Discussing it would cause him anxiety. Faced with the question, he urges that they "cross it out"³²⁵⁰. Despite his intentions, this response inadvertently returns us to the question of Being. Such a crossing places us at the intersection of our questioning. Perhaps most importantly, however, is the way this question intersects with the phenomenon of interpretation and the corresponding way-making movement of Being itself. Specifically, what is at issue here is the way we interpret Heidegger's understanding of the question. Heidegger's questionable relationship to Nazism can be summed up in the following way:

³²⁴⁷ Cooper, J.C *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols*, (London: Thames and London, 1978). Interestingly, Wilson favors a fourfold or quadrant view, although he acknowledges that the evidence gathered permit either interpretation.

³²⁴⁸ Quinn, Malcolm, *The Swastika: Constructing A Symbol* (London: Routledge, 2005), p.9.

³²⁴⁹ Diner, Dan, *Beyond The Conceivable: Studies on Germany, Nazism and the Holocaust*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), p.2. It should be understood that we appropriate Diner in accordance with our own questioning, and it is quite conceivable that he might understand the purported approach to be entirely inappropriate.

³²⁵⁰ Neske, Gunther and Kettering, Emil (eds) *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism: Questions and Answers*, (New York, Paragon House, 1990), p.100. If we wanted to take the parallel further, we may note that Heidegger is reputed to have had a nervous 'breakdown' over the question of his involvement, a situation hinted at by his own inability to refer to the anxiety it had caused him. Specifically, "It ..it is all so difficult for me...I have had quite a few experiences... I've alluded to some to you... We'll cross it out", *ibid.*

The works that are being peddled about nowadays as the philosophy of National Socialism have nothing to do with the inner truth and greatness of this movement.³²⁵¹

Note that Heidegger is accusing other avowed Nazis of misinterpreting what he understands to be the 'inner truth and greatness of this movement'. Works that bear that name have apparently 'erred' along the way: they are to be understood as inauthentic since they have been led astray. Given his own understanding, however, errancy is part of the way-making movement (inner truth and/or history) of Being.³²⁵² Untruth does not so much presuppose a falsity (or falsification) of Being but reveals the way (the question of) Being may be hidden or concealed within questionable presuppositions.³²⁵³ Consequently, the question is not whether Heidegger really was (or remained) a Nazi. Rather, the question involves understanding the question itself – namely, *where* such questioning might lead. Or to appropriate the question in Heidegger's own words: Ways, Not Works.³²⁵⁴

Attempting to understand the inconceivable has led to a *crisis*³²⁵⁵ concerning the historization of Nazism and its relationship to the swastika. The very presence of this sign has come to structure our understanding of history – and yet, intelligibility remains conspicuous by its absence. Nazism's historical significance appears to be concealed "by a language that seems unable to express"³²⁵⁶ it in thought, resulting in a "clearcut inability to offer (a) meaningful interpretation".³²⁵⁷ Its very inappropriateness – the problem of formulating a criteria even remotely appropriate to it – therefore seems to "warrant the critical indictment *failure of thought*."³²⁵⁸ Apart from the problem of being 'beyond' understanding, we nonetheless find

³²⁵¹ Heidegger, Martin, *An Introduction To Metaphysics*, trans: Manheim, Ralph, (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p.199. We italicize the pivotal terms in this infamous quote.

³²⁵² Heidegger, Martin, "On The Essence Of Truth", in *Basic Writings*, ed. Krell, David, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p.129-30. Specifically, any given criteria will be characterised by its own misunderstanding, especially if it leads itself – or is led into – untruth proper: the concealment of beings as whole. Heidegger urges, however, that errancy is part of the whole truth (or history of being), since any given interpretation of the relation between the revealing-concealing of Being belongs to the essence of truth itself: the revelation of Being as a whole. Indeed, "errancy is the open site for and ground of error. Error is not just an isolated mistake but rather the realm (the domain) of the history of those entanglements in which all kinds of erring get interwoven", p.133.

³²⁵³ Heidegger, Martin, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans: Emad, Parvis and Maly, Kenneth, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), pgs.249-259.

³²⁵⁴ These are, of course, the words the open Heidegger's collected works and act as a sign post to his overall movements.

³²⁵⁵ Kren, George and Rappoport, Leon. *The Holocaust and the Crisis of Human Behaviour*, (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980). The authors go so far as to talk of an "open wound" that cannot be appropriated into "normative thought structures" by way of "Western history and culture", p.12.

³²⁵⁶ *ibid*, p.18.

³²⁵⁷ Kren, George and Rappoport, Leon, "Failures of Thought in Holocaust Interpretation" in Dobkowski, Michael and Wallimann, Isidor, (eds) *Towards the Holocaust: The Social and Economic Collapse of the Weimar Republic*, (London: Greenwood Press, 1983). p.377.

³²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 378.

ourselves 'before' an event that calls out for an understanding. Part of the difficulty is attempting to specify the *content* of that which it points back to and calls forth – namely, the phenomenon of Nazism. The crisis concerns – amongst other things – understanding what National Socialism was *of or about*, who may be thought answerable, and why it found expression within the Fuhrer principle and/or Final Solution.³²⁵⁹ Despite the problem of understanding, it is minimally understood that Germany somehow interpreted itself to be on a "special path"³²⁶⁰, and that National Socialism invoked the way forward via the experience of a "community of fate"³²⁶¹ in a "turn towards authenticity".³²⁶² The swastika was called upon in order to authenticate this re-turn towards 'fatality'. Whilst the swastika signifies the problem of understanding our relationship history, it also returns us the question of its own signification. Trying to determine the 'significance' of the swastika – the meaning of its appropriation, and/or the appropriation of its meaning – is obviously a route fraught with difficulties. By finding our place within the question, we may nonetheless lay bare the grounds of our questioning and find our way around (situate our own relations of presupposition). The question of its 'significance' is therefore best understood as preparatory in that it may clear a way – by directing us into thought and giving us directions for further thinking.

Throughout his thinking, Heidegger attempted to place thought at the intersection between Being and beings. Heidegger called this dividing line the ontological difference, and his questioning attempted to move towards the point where Being and beings were understood to divide and/or cross one another (out) in language. Specifically, Being and beings intersect by moving in opposite directions and/or cross in passing – at the "crossing place"³²⁶³ where they pass through or lie across each other. In this way, Being and beings were said to belong together and are appropriated (move) towards each other in a given understanding. Heidegger thereby "historicises the Platonic dividing line" in order to cross it (out). Following Plato, the ontological difference is an attempt to relate levels of being to depths of understanding, and is

³²⁵⁹ See, for example, Broszart, Martin. "A Plea for the Historization of National Socialism" in Baldwin, Peter (ed), *Reworking the Past: Hitler, the Holocaust, and the Historian's Debate* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990). Broszart observes that the "question of the historicity of National Socialism, of whether historical understanding must halt helplessly in the face of the Nazi phenomenon, has become more and more important", p.82. The problem, however, is whether it is possible to formulate criteria adequate to the task of understanding something inconceivable.

³²⁶⁰ Ibid, p.79.

³²⁶¹ Ibid.

³²⁶² Ibid, 82.

³²⁶³ Heidegger, Martin, *Holderlin's Hymn The Ister* trans. William McNeil and Julia Davis (Blomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), p128.

similarly divided into a "fourfold"³²⁶⁴ topology across Plato's dialogues³²⁶⁵. Unlike Plato, however, Heidegger does not recollect the question of Being via a distinction between transcendent objects and phenomenal experience. Instead of the traditional problem of the One over many, Heidegger approaches Being and becoming from a different direction – from across a historical divide. Being placed at such an intersection was said to point thought towards a fourfold, directing our being-there in accordance with (the question of) Being's own way-making movements. The intentionality of thought – being directed upon a given content and/or object – is therefore about being given directions or directives within language and/or the historical practices in which a linguistically determined understanding moves. Witness the way Heidegger calls upon four particularly significant words to direct the question of our being-there. He answers a (higher) calling by way of what is already called into being (so called or named in the world). Specifically, Heidegger's conception of the fourfold leads thinking to the *earth* which grounds and/or moves it, to the *sky* which provides thought with its intentional horizon or movement, to those *mortals* capable of thinking the question of Being and devoting themselves to its movements, and to those *gods* which call thinking back into question. Language provides the compass by directing thought around a given understanding, and it encompasses understanding by moving in for different directions simultaneously. Heidegger points the way back and forth by crossing Being out, and such a fourfold is an attempt to locate human beings at a historical crossroads (along a pathway that simultaneously points in four different directions by directing/recalling the question of Being's own way-making movements).

The question of Being becomes a complex whole insofar as Being and beings remain on the way: as either moving towards a given understanding and/or calling whatever is understood back into question via the fourfold (turning, divide, etc). Now this obviously begs the question: what can the fourfold possibly be (mean, refer to)? It has been noted that that a "crucial turning point"³²⁶⁶ within Heidegger's thinking typically receives "little attention"³²⁶⁷ and that this "rarely discussed"³²⁶⁸ concept lies beyond conventional understanding. It should therefore be thought appropriate to enquire into its mode of being. Given Heidegger's approach to the question,

³²⁶⁴ Hahn, Robert, "A Note On Plato's Divided Line", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 1983, p.235.

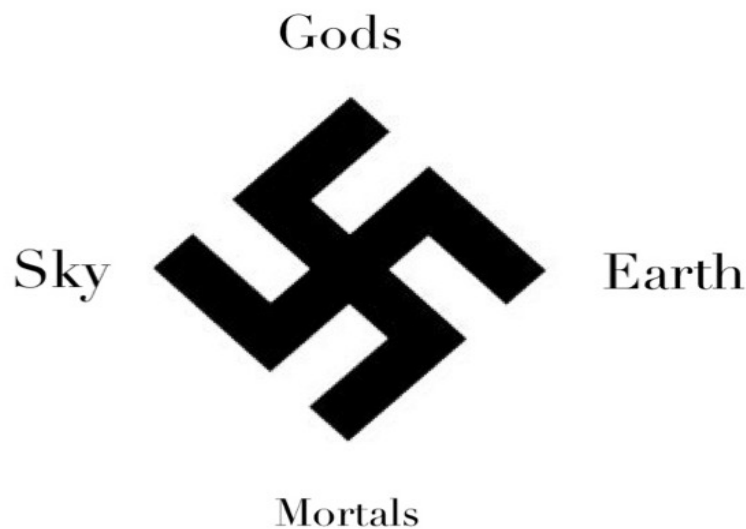
³²⁶⁵ The most famous example, of course, is in *The Republic* (509d–511e), where Plato divides levels of being into distinct stages of knowledge: Understanding, Thought, Belief, and Imagination. See also (amongst other places) *The Philebus* (23b–32b) where Plato introduces a "division of everything that actually exists" into four different kinds of being that are in reality "one and many". Below we cite Gorgias 508 a – a text that Heidegger appears to have appropriated in its entirety when mapping out his own fourfold.

³²⁶⁶ Mitchel, J. Andrew, "The Fourfold" in Davis, W. Brett (ed) *Heidegger: Key Concepts* (Durham: Acumen Publishing, 2010), p.215.

³²⁶⁷ Kockelmans, Joseph, *On the Truth of Being* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p.96.

³²⁶⁸ Harman, Graham, *The Quadruple Object* (Washington: Zero Books, 2010), p.220.

however, such an appropriation can only occur in the form of "reflections"³²⁶⁹. This latter term is particularly appropriate for our purposes. As we shall argue, the fourfold is Heidegger's roundabout attempt to give expression to the quasi-transcendental: it brings forth the way each part reflects (determines, mirrors) the whole.



Heidegger calls on the fourfold to bring forth the question of *dwelling* – being – in the wor(l)d.³²⁷⁰ The concept of the fourfold is also encountered elsewhere – in Heidegger's conception of language as the *house of Being*. Language is the "Saying of the world's fourfold"³²⁷¹ in that it is the "relation of all relations"³²⁷²: it is where Being dwells and how our being-in-the-world turns. The fourfold is tacitly offered at the criteria for determining *the way* Being and beings intersect – i.e., turn towards and/or move away from each other. By way of the fourfold, Being and beings dwell together and may therefore be called (back) into question there. It cannot be thought insignificant that Heidegger thought it appropriate to call upon words with distinct significations ('callings'). Being might remain wordless, but the fourfold re-collects four words in particular. The fourfold calls forth our entire way of being in the wor(l)d), and moves us back towards language's way-making movements. The totality of beings dwell together out of their "originary

³²⁶⁹ Ibid, 94.

³²⁷⁰ Heidegger, Martin "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans: Hofstadter, Albert, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p.149.

³²⁷¹ Kockelmans, Joseph, *On the Truth of Being* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p.94.

³²⁷² Heidegger, Martin, "The Nature Of Language", in *On The Way To Language*, trans: Hertz, Peter, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1982), p.107.

oneness"³²⁷³, although we cannot possibly give any "thought to the onefold of the four".³²⁷⁴ Whilst Heidegger thinks it appropriate to cross out the word 'Being', the crossing (out) nonetheless directs understanding via "terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted".³²⁷⁵ The fourfold reveals itself to be a *cosmology* insofar as thinking beings are called upon to interpret their wor(l)d with respect to *the way* each part forms a complex whole. Such a quasi transcendental is not to be understood as an explanation of the way the wor(l)d is ordered: it is the way of understanding itself and determines the nature of the direction of fit between word and world – i.e. the way each so called part mirrors the whole. The fourfold's cosmology is reflective in the same way that microcosm and macrocosm reflect each other – i.e. *as above* (gods, sky), *so below* (mortals, earth). Not insignificantly, Heidegger's invocation of a fourfold is mirrored in the Platonic recollection of Being as an ordered ("lawful")³²⁷⁶ whole, where four parts are collectively called the "world order".³²⁷⁷ The cosmos is said to be composed of "heaven and earth, gods and men"³²⁷⁸, and such a fourfold turns on the question of the world's *well-being*³²⁷⁹ or "what's appropriate with respect to human beings".³²⁸⁰ The movement of the fourfold therefore turns on the "type of care"³²⁸¹ to be *called for*³²⁸² or (back) into Being and/or question.

Throughout his questioning, Heidegger called out to beings in order to perform the 'task of thinking'. Heidegger's intervention moved the directedness (or intentionality) of thought in two distinct directions – towards the meaning and truth of Being respectively. Taken together, their respective movements turned (back) towards each other. Within this 'turning', we witnessed the ways Heidegger moves *through* and *to* language – by re-turning to the circle of understanding. Consequently, the lasting element in Heidegger's thinking is *the way* in which Being and beings can turn (back) towards each other throughout time. Heidegger thereby historicises the Platonic

³²⁷³ Heidegger, Martin, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans: Hofstadter, A, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p.149.

³²⁷⁴ Ibid, p.149-150.

³²⁷⁵ Whitehead, Arthur, *Process and Reality*, (New York: Free Press, 1978), p.3. Although we are quoting Whitehead completely out of context here, we do so because (like Heidegger), Whitehead's 'speculative philosophy' is looking for a way in which to delimit understanding.

³²⁷⁶ Gorgias, 504d

³²⁷⁷ Gorgias, 508a.

³²⁷⁸ Ibid.

³²⁷⁹ According to the Gorgias dialogue, the "way" of being-in-the-world involves be-ing "organized and having order...when in a certain order, the proper one for each thing, comes to be present in it that it makes each of the things there are, good", 507 e. The issue of its well being occurs by way of bodily "health and strength", where "states of organization...comes into being" as such. 504 b and c respectively.

³²⁸⁰ Ibid, 507 b

³²⁸¹ Ibid, 521 a.

³²⁸² Ibid, 526e-527e. These passages are very explicit about the need to "call on all other people" to answer the higher calling of a new world order (returning the fourfold to a state of well being).

dividing line in two related ways. On the one hand, he similarly divides Being and beings into distinct parts forming a complex whole, and ontologically commits himself to the question of the world's care (concern for its well being and/or potentiality for Being). On the other hand, Heidegger topological arrangement locates the question of Being – its unity and division – within turns of events, and so attempts to 'take care' via Being's own way-making movements. The question we briefly return to, then, is Being towards death via a fourfold's 'turning' (the swastika's back and forth movements or sense of direction).

According to Heidegger's final address to the world – a posthumously published interview where he calls out to human beings from beyond the grave – "only a god can save us"³²⁸³ now. During this interview, Heidegger attempts to lay to rest the question of his commitment to Nazism by indirectly calling on the fourfold. We shall not concern ourselves with the question of the nature and extent of Heidegger's 'guilt' – such a determination lies beyond our understanding. We shall note, however, that Heidegger's continued – and infamous³²⁸⁴ – silence about the Holocaust may nonetheless be interpreted along Heideggerian lines. Specifically, if discourse is the articulation of the meaningfulness of being, then such an inconceivable event may be expressed via the mood of keeping silent: we can all understand why the Holocaust would render any speaker speechless. The Holocaust remains *beyond the conceivable* because understanding founders (breaks down, falls away) within conventional discourse. Despite the intelligibility of being summoned into the reticence of itself, we also need to recall that Heidegger invariably gives language the final say by speaking *in* silence. The house of Being discourses solely by being silent and/or reticent about its directives (questions, movements and/or place of dwelling). In other words, Heidegger can conveniently displace the question of guilt onto the truth (or history) of Being – and inconceivable events somehow become intelligible via Being's own (questionable) appeals or summoning.³²⁸⁵ The events in question may therefore be located

³²⁸³ Heidegger, Martin, "Only A God Can Save Us" in Wolin, Richard (ed) *The Heidegger Controversy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), p. 107.

³²⁸⁴ See, for example, John Caputo's "Heidegger's Scandal: Thinking and the Essence of the Victim" in Rockmore, Tom and Margolis, Joseph, (eds), *The Heidegger Case: On Philosophy and Politics*, (Philadelphia : Temple University Press, 1992). Caputo interprets Heidegger's silence as a "scandal" and urges that "Heidegger failed to hear everything that calls, failed to respond to everything that addresses him, failed his responsibility as a thinker", p.266.

³²⁸⁵ Heidegger, Martin, "Only A God Can Save Us Now" in Wolin, Richard (ed) *The Heidegger Controversy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), p.111. According to Heidegger, National Socialism had answered the call of Being by moving in the right "direction. But those people were too far limited in their thinking to acquire an explicit relationship to what is really happening today". In other words, the Nazis didn't go far (back) enough: mass murder, totalitarian rule and world domination was a 'limitation' in understanding. So what was "really happening" when the world turned on its axis? Heidegger maintains that it needed to "achieve an adequate relationship to the essence of technology" and forcibly resist the call of democracy and communism. Consequently, the Nazi's were merely following Being's directives when mobilizing their forces against the pitfalls of modernity. Unfortunately, Heidegger does not see a contradiction between Nazi ideals and Nazi methods – i.e.,

beyond understanding and interpreted away. Witness the way Heidegger indirectly calls on the fourfold to direct thought and/or complete our understanding. We can only take care (understand appropriately) insofar as the gods can care for us (appropriate our understanding). Our being-in-the-world becomes contingent upon whether an absent god can be moved to show concern for our being-there (well being, salvation, etc.). Specifically, the "sole possibility that is left for us is to prepare a sort of readiness, through thinking and poetizing, for the appearance of the god or the absence of the god in the time of foundering; for in the face of the god who is absent, we founder".³²⁸⁶ Heidegger calls on the gods – or God – to take care of us now, and so moves the question of Being towards the possibility of divine intervention and/or an eschatological event. Heidegger thereby squares the circle of understanding by turning the question of being and time around. The historicity of understanding now turns on the question of whether the gods will remember mortals and deliver them from their limited conception of themselves. Heidegger clearly takes it upon himself to speak to (and for) mortals from beyond death – but only so he can obscure their place within a leading question. The question, then, is not whether the question of Being directs thought towards the swastika but whether it can prevent human beings from moving (back) in its direction.

Summary

We have critically discussed Heidegger's conception of the circularity of questioning, and its relation to the circle of understanding. Following Heidegger's lead, we prioritised the question of Being and its relation to the being of the question. We thereby attempted to determine our place within the circle of understanding in which we already moved and were directed, and so, questioned the ways in which questioning becomes possible and/or necessary. The goal was to determine the limits of Heidegger's ontological commitment to the historicity of understanding, or the way in which our being-there allegedly followed the question of Being's own directives or movements. We argued that Heidegger's fails to historicise the Platonic dividing line when turning it on its head. By displacing the question of Being into history, Heidegger's attempt to return to a point of origin – or an originating reference point – invariably falls by the wayside. Specifically, we argued that there was an impasse within Heidegger's transcendental historicism, and we approached this aporia in distinct but related ways. By insisting on the primacy of historical practice in the determination of meaning and/or revelation of truth, we found that Heidegger could never transcend (move beyond) what was meaningfully understood and/or *in* question there. We approached the impasse through conflicting interpretations of Heidegger's way-making movements, and explored the way a self-referential (or determining) whole could

the attempt to reclaim a more originary or primary history was only possible (intelligible) via modernity (the use of instruments of mass destruction, state controlled media, etc).
³²⁸⁶ *ibid*, p.107.

be meaningfully determined and/or questioned in accordance with the circle's own directives and movements (rulings). We thereby found ourselves entangled within Heidegger's interpretation of the circle of understanding, and sought to extricate ourselves via a reconsideration of Heidegger's conception of cultural rules and roles. We observed that a variant of the problem of the One over many recurred in Heidegger's conception of the They or the One. We found ourselves moving within a vicious circle when questioning the status of rules within the historicity of understanding. Specifically, what was the rule for following a rule across social rules and practices, and by what rules can we question the status of rules governing (legitimizing, directing, authenticating) cultural experience? We observed that the problem of the criterion gave rise to the problem of criterionlessness within Heidegger's interpretation of understanding. We argued that the question of Being was a leading question in two related ways – that it was subtly directed towards eliciting given responses and that respondents were being led to follow questionable directives. As a consequence, Heidegger's questioning invariably left human beings at the mercy of (interpretations of) history and/or language –i.e., there was no rational way to determine the status of its way-making movements or resolve conflicting interpretations as to its directives. We turned towards a fourfold – the swastika – to reflect on the *significance* of this possibility, and argued that it was relevant to the question of Being via an etymological and/or phenomenological approach. We argued that the swastika's back and forth movements signified the phenomenon of being *in* time, or being-towards life and death. By simultaneously moving towards past and future, the swastika called its own directives back into question via Heidegger's own involvement with Nazism.

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