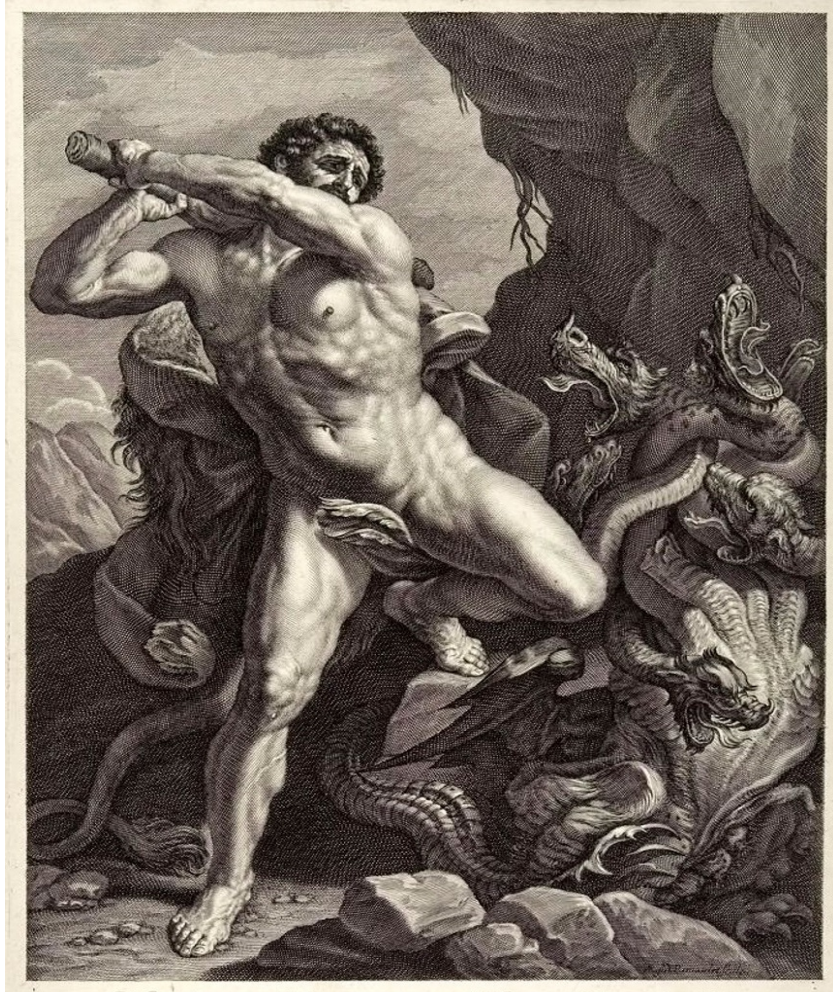# Language: Between Logic and Laughter

On the Many Headed Hydra

JJ. Chipchase - Keele University

Hercules killing the hydra by Rousselet

"It's impossible for me to say one word about all that music has meant to me in my life. How, then, can I hope to be understood?"

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to argue that the early and late Wittgensteinian philosophies are complimentary. That the commitments of the *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations* can be conceptually separated and then theoretically and neurologically anchored into the split functions of the brain. That this separation could possibly distinguish two functions of language which this author calls the descriptive and the prescriptive functions respectively. That the prescriptive function is reliant on metaphor as defined by Gibbs as *embodied simulations.* Or roughly speaking that we know what what a given metaphor means by imagining ourselves acting out that which the metaphor describes. And that allegory, religion and philosophical discourse are all communications based on the prescriptive function. Finally this paper will offer the soft conclusion that *if* the reader agrees with the authors interpretation of Wittgenstein *and* the reader agrees with that Wittgenstein. *Then* philosophy will not be seen as a set of propositions which can be true or false. But will instead be seen a way of life.

The Asymmetrical Brain, and Language

(Part I: The Theory)

"It has been suggested that the right hemisphere (RH) has a privileged role in the processing of figurative language, including metaphors, idioms, and verbal humor. Previous experiments using hemifield visual presentation combined with human electrophysiology support the idea that the RH plays a special role in joke comprehension."[1]

"A serious and good philosophical work could be written consisting entirely of jokes."

Would it be radical to suggest, similar to the prediction of the Higgs boson, that a philosopher had made such a prediction about reality? Of course, Peter Higgs used mathematics to extend his theory but the fact that this was possible suggests it's also possible to conceive of such a theory *without* mathematics. This question arose to me naturally and out of a former thought: There are lines connecting modern psychology, neuroscience, and the *two* philosophies of Ludwig Wittgenstein. Which can be chronologically surmised as first a theory of truth relating to descriptions, and word – world correspondence. Which is to say the *logical* truth as outlined in *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* and which inspired Bertrand Russell's hopes that his student might succeed where he had failed by reducing language to pure log*ic.* And second as the relative and pragmatic theory of "meaning as *use*" which means context bound and variable. Or in some sense *indeterminate.* Such variability of context pushes the picture *beyond what it is possible* to describe in a logical system. But considering both I would argue that there is a link between those commitments and the *duality of function* of our brains. And that the possibilities of explanation which are generated from this conception are useful. For example by anchoring these theories into one whole one can build something of a bridge between Idealism and Realism. Or Dualism and Physicalism. Which is handy as there must be a *reason* both remain

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1   Coulson, S. (2007) - *A special role for the right hemisphere in metaphor comprehension?*

opposed but still in tact and relevant. And if this is not reliant on *simply* a differing perspective then I am confused. As being able to determine what is considered right by *an accepted criteria* is one of the rules of this game. Without it... deciding either way seems arbitrary. But in any case allow me to unpack what I mean by "anchoring" two *differing* types of truth into the differing *functions* of the two hemispheres. Fortunately, there has been a lot of empirical research on the split functions of the brain. It has been shown, for example, that the right hemisphere is associated with *emotion, emphasis, intonation, and irony* in language (Purves et al., 2008). If we separate some of the other associated functions this list is generated (not exhaustive):

RH) Emotion, context, metaphor, present and future, object function, random.[2]
LH) Logic, detail, literal meaning, present and past, object reference, non-random.

Before I continue, it's important to note : I am not a neuroscientist. There are others who are more academically capable of bridging of this particular interdisciplinary divide. But, as a philosopher attempting to explain a theory, I feel it is important to ground this theory in the most current science one can. *Not* because I believe science can determine whether a philosophical conclusion is true or false. That is a separate argument. But rather, because it can make one's arguments more or less convincing. That the split functions of the brain will blend into one another, and it's only for ease of consideration and conceptual clarity that I am keeping them conceptually *separate.*

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2 Regarding emotional speech, context, metaphor and so on there is a veritable wealth of research showing that this is the case, although the *right only* hypothesis relating to emotion itself may have some limitations, where perhaps only *negative emotion* is solely reliant on the right, and positive is processed in both. (Smith, S. 2004.) Whereas for teleological *mapping* (and not maps): "The right hemisphere appears to be critical for dealing with novel cognitive situations... [and the] right frontal system appears to be crucial for cognitive selection driven by the external environment...[highlighting] the importance of the right frontal system in task orientation and the assembly of novel strategies." Goldberg et al. *Lateralization of Frontal Lobe Functions and Cognitive Novelty*

The Boundary Between Object/Function

Recognition & Language

It seems to me that any *complete* description of language requires the outline of at least two functional processes: Object, and function recognition. This seems clear because two of the major functions of language are object reference and function mapping. The former can be said to describe "What is" while the latter crosses to the functional "What for." For example, my daughter was playing with a stone in the garden last Saturday. She picked it up and rolled it around in her hand and scanned it with her eyes then applied pressure with her fingers. While behaving in this way she would have noticed: The stone was (a) hard, (b) rounded, (c) heavy, and (d) grey. Witnessing this I told her: "You must never throw stones. They can damage property and people." The first example is of *object recognition.* Which can be surmised as a *logical* description of the stone. Which means one can split the concept "stone" up into constituent parts and *use those parts* to define *what it is to be a stone.* Or, what a stone, and so what *the concept of a stone* must necessarily entail. Which is in this example, (a) hardness, (b) roundness, (c) heaviness and (d) greyness. These are a collection of properties that *entail* the description of a stone. The second example is of function recognition and is a *prescription.* This does not describe "How the world is" though perhaps what it *depends* on what is. But rather it is a prescription of how one ought to act. Consider two functions as operating under the surface of language, each endowed with those features that are unique to their correlate dominant hemisphere. Think of them operating on a chair in an empty room, for example. If the left hemisphere is dominant during the naming of objects, and the right hemisphere in the recognition of object function (the teleological mapping of an object, relating to our motivational states (MS hereafter)); Then one can readily imagine two functions working *together* on a single object at the point of initial recognition before couching this in language.

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These functions, assuming for this thesis that they are governed *foundationally* by the *functional differences* of our hemispheres, would be ruled by two distinct *absolute presuppositions.* One for naming and one for the ascription of function. The first is the desire to learn "What is…" which is answered by the *literal* descriptive left and the world *as is.* This is suggest because the left is *dominant* in literal comprehension. Where a literal expression fits the "is" questions *such that* only a *description* could satisfy its extension. Or perhaps we call "descriptions" whatever *logically* follows from the question: "What is?" And the second function would be ruled by the absolute presupposition: "What for…" which relies on the *possible utility* it recognises which *couples* with a pragmatic, non-literal expression. Another way of suggesting what I mean is it couples with a *holistic expression.* If we consider both[3] we generate:

Object IR: Chair → RH: (For?) Object Utility: "Chair"

LH: (Is?) Object: "Chair"

But if the prescription is attempting to answer "What for?" it must be aligned with our desires *such that* the response to "What for?" *for it to have any use* must necessarily be geared towards the satisfaction of a desired function. Okay, considering the second order description of the chair, and the second order teleological mapping of the chair which links an *objects possible utility* with *our framework of desire*: (This is what the word "chair" means in this instance.)

Object IR: Chair→ RH: (For?) Object Utility: "Chair" →Object can satisfy: the (MS) desire to rest

LH: (Is?) Object: "Chair" → Object entails: Four legs, made of wood etc.

And using lastly, an *object correspondence theory* for the descriptive and a *pragmatic theory of truth* for the prescriptive – because the former accords with the requirements of a descriptive function, which can be analytically reduced and aligns with naming and describing the world "as is." And the latter is necessary for the process producing *prescription based* value judgements

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3 You may be thinking: "How can one token express two meanings?" For a discussion on this read the section: 'Back To Semantics.'

which are variable or context dependent – one can generate two differing *frames of reference* (FoR) relating to how we stand and s*ay of ourselves that we stand* in this or that relation to the world. And so what makes either a "true" is in this sense *tied* to its own particular framework which is governed by the bounds and limitations of those *distinct* absolute presuppositions, such that we get:

Object IR: Chair →

RH: (For?) Object Utility FOR: "Chair" (is true)

→Object can satisfy the (MS) desire to rest & is generally called "Chair"

LH: (Is?) Object FOR: "Chair" (is true)

→Object entails four legs, made of wood etc., & is generally called "Chair"

It is true that: "If you feel the need to rest, you ought to sit on that chair."

It is true that: "There exists a chair. It has four legs, and is made of wood.

Finally, to ease the consideration of the IR and to show, simplistically, how either hemisphere when considering their dominant functions, would separate in this particular instance consider:
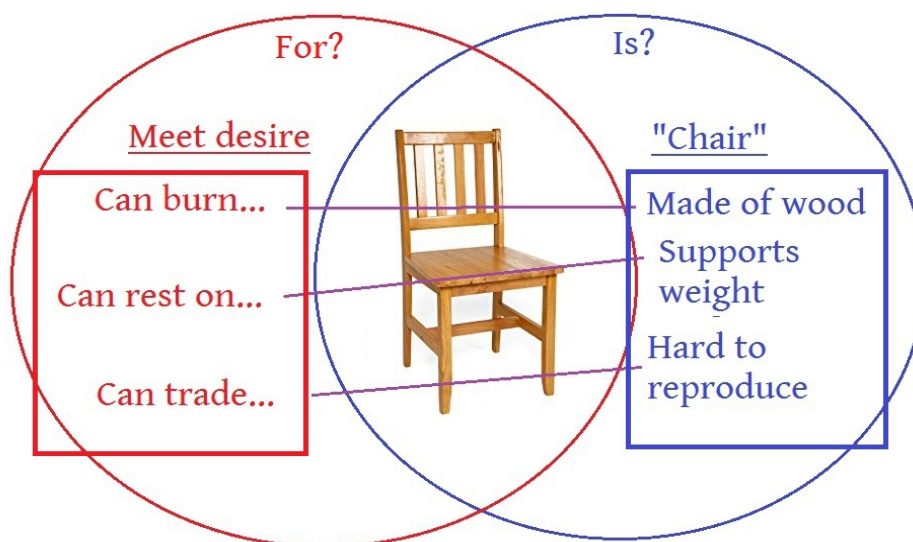
The left (the blue box) is cognitivist, analytic and it focuses on the 'known': That which characterises what I will hereafter call the *descriptive function* is thus: It references objects with concepts such that those concepts are reducible to further analytic or logical truths already contained within the *bounded parameters* of the concept. Returning to my *favourite* example when my daughter investigated the stone: We accept that what makes a stone a stone is a finite list of properties like hardness, or greyness and so on. Or to use a well worn example a "bachelor" reduces by necessity to "not married" such that the latter is *entailed* by the correct usage of the former. You can be married and not a bachelor. Or be a bachelor and not married. But you *cannot be* a married bachelor. One more example although perhaps this is archetypal is how "has legs" might be considered an analytic truth entailed by the deployment of the concept "chair." **The right (the red box) is non-cognitivist, and synthetic and it focuses on the 'random':** That which characterises the *prescriptive function* I describe thusly: Expression here cannot be reduced as their function is *context dependent* value judgements. Which means 1) That such a conception would have to be low-resolution so as to eliminate an excess of variables or white noise interference. And that mapped functions are not reliant simply on *what it is to be a chair... but also* how a person relates to that particular chair from the observers perspective: "What is *it* for?" (What can this satisfy?) Such functions *cannot* have truth conditions in the logical sense because they are by necessity unbounded by context. Whether they can have parameters of truth, or a criteria for *justified* use based on their pragmatic utility is another question. Here we might meaningfully call a large stone a chair when *the purpose* of such an expression is intended to prescribe *how to use this large stone.* Such that calling a large stone a chair is in one circumstance nonsensical an in another all together practical. **The difference between the 'known' and the 'random' in terms of truth:** The descriptive language has truth conditions which I want to say *can only* be thrown into question by logic. When we use "chair" to reference a chair we reference an object which satisfies the literal or

logical criteria of a chair *such that* it has legs or a back rest and so on. Here we have *object - word world* correspondence which accords with the known and can be broken down into constituent parts or previous truths. Whether or not this truth pertains relies on whether we have made a mistake either in logic or the world itself. With the prescriptive function however, whether one can satisfy the conditions of a prescriptive proposition is context dependent and variable. This is what one might call a general or an overarching truth. Which means it is *true* that my daughter should not throw stones if she wants to live peacefully. And it is wise to want to live in peace. But neither of these are propositions *of logic or science.* And as my daughter becomes a more competent social agent she can transgress *that* social boundary without risking peace at all. Whether we call a proposition in *this* system true depends on *whether it works* in relation to the satisfaction of a goal. With my daughter the goal was to *teach her* how to live an agreeable life. But this isn't a description of anything *tangible.* What we call truth here is predicated on how well it bends chaos to our desires. Which is never going to be predictable really. Or, whether it serves Darwin's and the later Wittgenstein's maxim poorly, or well: It all comes down to use and this truth isn't bounded.

The Early and the Late Wittgenstein

Bertrand Russell's introduction to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* states that the books purpose is to answer the logical relation between true sentences and the facts of the world. But in the introduction to *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein writes: "It suddenly seemed to me that I should publish those old thoughts (*TLP*) and the new ones (*PI*) together: that the latter could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking." (Wittgenstein, 1953.) But what did his new way of thinking concern and how can it only be seen correctly in relation to his former thoughts?

The point of the first few pages of *PI* is set against a purely descriptive conception of language, showing the limits of such a theory as espoused by Thomas Aquinas which he grounds directly in a word - world correspondence. The very first sentence of *PI* quotes Aquinas[4] to cast doubt on such a project. But he does say a similar language-game could be called a language. Only that this language fails to describe all the facets of the living thing itself. Now consider this early passage from the later book which discusses the possible function of language. To get my point across, I've colour coded them:

"Forming and testing a hypothesis— Presenting the results of an experiment in tables and diagrams— Making up a story; and reading it— Play-acting— Singing catches— Guessing riddles— Making a joke; telling it— Solving a problem in practical arithmetic— Translating from one language into another— Asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying. ... If you do not keep the multiplicity of language-games in view you will perhaps be inclined to ask questions like: "What is a question?" —Is it the statement that I do not know such-and-such, or the statement that I wish the other person would tell me . . . .? Or is it the description of my mental state of uncertainty?—And is the cry "Help!" such a description?"

Wittgenstein mentions *archetypal* cases for left and right hemisphere dependent talk. And also the two types of truth functions I have been outlining thus far. The descriptive is indicated by the blue and is logical and orderly. It describes, it counts, and so on. The prescriptive is the red and produces jokes, metaphors, allegories and emotional displays like cries and so on. Now to answer Wittgenstein's question: Is such a cry to be considered a "description of my mental state"? Either the question is designed to bring you to the conclusion that certain statements... "Help!" for example... are descriptions of some mental state. But if they *are* it would cast doubt on my interpretation. Or Wittgenstein means to bring your attention to something else. Well for reasons I outline below, I don't think they are and nor do I think Wittgenstein does. And isn't it peculiar that he contrasts the description of a mental state with a cry for something?

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4. When they (my elders) named some object, and accordingly moved towards something, I saw this and I grasped that the thing was called by the sound they uttered when they meant to point it out."

It seems he is raising side by side what one might *be inclined* to call "I am in pain!" which is a description, with what he actually appears to consider it... An expression of emotion and *not* a description. Something *purely* expressive. He frames this perfectly and supports my above interpretation here:

"A child has hurt himself and he cries; and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new pain-behaviour. "So you are saying that the word 'pain' really means crying?"— On the contrary: the verbal expression of pain replaces crying and *does not describe it*." - (Section 242 *Philosophical Investigations*)

Here he hammers home the point that the sentence "I am in pain!" does not describe *anything like* a cry. The verbal expression replaces the instinctual yawp. The expression can here is analogous to the cry of a baby or the bark of a dog. Here one might object that a cry can be considered a description. But that depends on how low are you willing to set your criteria. It is analogous to a description and so I understand the challenge. But I would argue that when we use words like "describing" we should try to stick to what we generally mean by *describe*. This is precisely what differentiates a description from a slothful yawn. And otherwise *anything* can be considered a description of something and the word would lose its meaning. (With blurred lines even the bark can be said to describe *something*.) Having outlined the initial commitments of this interpretation, I will now focus on the latter system. The prescriptive function which I argue may be generated by the right hemisphere. If this were the case one then this paper predicts that *if* certain language functions are couched in the right hemisphere and operate allegorically, or metaphorical as prescriptions; that there should be some conceptual links between metaphors, allegories and prescriptions that *cannot* be explained by descriptive accounts of meaning. Such a thing would be comparable to winning a chess by the rules an constraints of checkers. Or such a thing *if this interpretation is right* – should not be possible.

What it Means to Cry

(Scales of Meaning)

"Misleading parallel: the expression of pain is a cry—the

expression of thought, a proposition.
As if the purpose of the proposition were to convey to one person
how it is with another: only, so to speak, in his thinking part and not
in his stomach."

Wittgenstein is arguing above that it a mistake to draw parallels between expression of feeling and expressions of thought. The reference "the stomach" (or the "gut") reminds me of what he calls the emotional charge of the word and also:

"Can I not say: a cry, a laugh, are full of meaning? And that means roughly, much can be gathered from them." (Section 543, *Philosophical Investigations*)

But what is gathered from a cry or a laugh such that the meaning is not produced *from the thinking part?* Here it is important to consider what Wittgenstein means by the thinking part *in contrast* with the gut. The part which feels is generally contrast by the part that thinks and if we attach our logical descriptive function to to thinking part and our prescriptive and desire driven function to the gut we can acquire a *clearer picture* of his meaning:

"I should like to say the words: "Oh, let him come!" are charged with my desire. And words can be wrung from us – like a cry." (Section 546, *Philosophical Investigations*)

To make this clearer still imagine the strict description as 0 on gradient and the purely expressive cry as a 5... It seems Wittgenstein is suggesting that there are areas between these two points which converge within the meaning of a sentence. Where descriptions and

prescriptions are used in unison to express a *complete* meaning. But how might it be possible absent something like reference to inner-states that one charges linguistic tokens with something like desire? One possible answer is intonation which is a large signifier of emotion and *is associated with the right hemisphere*. Isn't that what Wittgenstein is gesturing too here (on the same page)?

"When one says "I *hope* he comes." Doesn't the feeling give the word "hope" its meaning? ... The feeling does perhaps give "hope" its special ring: that is, it is expressed in that ring."

The *ring* he is talking about is the *literal* phonetic ring as uttered in the statement "I *hope* he comes." To see it is what *charges the statement* with the given emotion it may be useful for the reader to imagine saying this proposition first in anger and then in love. Which means it is the ring which lets the listener know the speakers orientation in terms of desire to a particular description of the world. Whether it is true or false, genuine or sarcastic, convincing or unconvincing and so on is dependent in no small part on the ring. Here "I *hope* he comes" is not *only* offering a description of some state of affairs *say* the possibility of a person entering the room, but *also* presents the speakers *emotional relation* to such a possibility. *This* is how our desires are expressed when presented with possible situations. And now we can see why it is wrong to draw a parallel! As the two *do* blend into one another. Perhaps another good example of this phenomena is when one sighs behind a word which warps the literal meaning of the proposition. For example in the proposition "*I can't wait...*" the emotional charge can move from hope to anxiety and a sigh can polarise the meaning of a proposition completely. Similar perhaps to how music expresses emotion through phonetic scales and progressions, and while there are limits to this metaphor, it seems important that a theory of meaning to *incorporate these two systems*: The tokens of meaning and the scale of meaning. And if we are being serious

the ring is only one small part of the contextual parameters of what we call meaning in language. Knowing a person is another and body language is another. This is what Wittgenstein means when he says "language is a form of life"! (And this is why those that seek the perfect logical language like Russell are doomed to fail.) And yet how can one word reference two meanings or have two senses? As we have just discussed it appears another decider of meaning is the emotional charge or the *note* of the word, which can be effectively conceptualised in this simple way: A major note may reflect the possible fulfilment of a desire (now denoted with'^'), a neutral note may reflect *what is* (which I denote '*') and a minor note may predicate a negative possibility. Thus we can generate:

"Chair ^" is defined as an object which satisfies the positive *motivational state.*

True: "If you feel the need to rest, you *ought* to sit on that 'chair^'."

"Chair*" is defined as an object which entails *necessary qualities.*

True: "There exists a 'chair*' *therefore* it has four legs, and is made of wood."

While this is a simple thought experiment it seems quite conceivable and also *somewhat* true. But here the point I am trying to show is that the word need not reference only one thing. That the token "chair" does refer to an object in the first example but an object *in relation to its function.* Which might suggest the second example refers to the object *absent function.* Or what defines *such an object as that* for our community. For example, I might say to a person asking: "What is a chair?"

You can call a chair either "chair*" which is an object with legs or a back-rest and so on. Or, "chair^" which is something for sitting. You can call a large stone a "chair^" but not a "chair*" because in certain circumstances it's sensible to call a stone a chair, and in other circumstances it isn't. For example while out walking I might say "That stone is a good chair" but I don't mean "chair*" because that doesn't fulfil the logical criteria. It is only a "chair^" roughly speaking

and in relation to my desires. Here "stone" is equal to "chair" when in relation to a prescription of actions, or when one uses a stone *as one would a chair.* One focuses on the object by its own light and the other by our light. Whether we are using the description of an object *or* the prescription depends on the initial recognition of the object, which is governed by the absolute presuppositions we are inclined to follow. For a secondary example, when describing a stone my daughter might say "They are rounded, heavy" and so on *or she might say* "Something you shouldn't throw!" The latter is generated by the prescriptive function while the former is a description of conceptual necessity. This thought experiment into the scale of meaning was only meant to serve a purpose. The purpose is to show how it is conceivable that two uses of the same token which by all *written* appearance seem equal can *in reality* have two different functions. And I am reminded here of when people exaggerate the word "real" to draw boundaries between what we call real and what's *really* real.

Philosophy, Politics, Religion and Art as
Maps of Embodied Simulations

If this theory were true, one might expect that those parts of communication which aren't purely descriptive: Philosophy, politics, religion and art... to be considered "true" or "false" based how they compel one to act in a particular circumstance and in accordance with a particular desire or goal. That they are statements of the kind: "Don't throw that stone!" And not "This is a stone." Because we are predicting they are generated from that which prescribes actions and not that which describes facts of the matter, this paper will use examples of the following: (1) Philosophy, (2) Religion, and (3) Art... and will now argue that *seen by the light of the above theory* one can see a way of making sense of the meaning of certain propositions *despite* their apparent lack of word – world correspondence, or despite their *apparent* lack of

empirical, scientific or even logical grounding.

Example 1. Philosophy - Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil

"It has gradually become clear to me what every great philosophy up till now has consisted of – namely, the confession of its originator, and a species of involuntary and unconscious autobiography; and moreover that the moral (or immoral) purpose in every philosophy has constituted the true vital germ out of which the entire plant has always grown."

Example 2. Religion – The Bible, 10th Commandment

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Example 3. Art – Picasso, The Old Guitarist (1904)

Is this example a literal representation of reality, or an emotionally driven prescription?

One of the most popular interpretations of **The Old Guitarist** suggests (a) the use of blue evokes negative emotions which suggest the guitarist is suffering, and also that the world is a place of suffering. (b) This is accentuated by the guitarists appearance. (c) The main focus, which symbolises the guitarists hope, his life and desire... is his guitar. Then what this painting *means* is: When one is suffering one can find hope in music. Historically speaking those that have suffered have found *something* in music. So there is something true here *encapsulated* by the use of these images and colours. This is akin too: "At this cross-roads, turn here" where, whether we call this type of communication "true" or "false" doesn't seem to be determined by whether it literally describes an event – a digital picture of a busker would not have *so focused* a meaning – but rather, whether what this prescription suggests successfully satisfies a given motivational state. Whether music *can* give you hope in suffering. This is similar in some ways to the morals of fictional stories, that are distilled lessons of life overarching an object – correspondence analysis, and which appear true in a different way to say a scientific proposition. Would you define **the 10ᵗʰ commandment** as a description of facts, or as a prescription of actions? Here the freed slaves are arguing and fighting and Moses stops them with ten rules as handed down by God. He stops their fighting *with rules* because what Moses expresses *shares out the balance of desires* and gives the people a *shared goal* for the betterment of the collective and of the individual.[5] This appears likely to improve both species-wide quality of life and so individual survival rates. But in driving at this point it seems clear that the story is a prescription of actions tuned-in to the fulfilment of desires, and not a description of the world as is. It is the world *by our light* and not by its own. Within this last example I will begin to form some conclusions which should lead nicely into my own. **Nietzsche's observation** not only supports my thesis in theory but also in kind. For if philosophers were as objective as some appear to think, and their subject matter was true in the substantive sense then it would be hard to imagine

5   This interpretation is taken from a talk by Jordan Peterson.

how (or why) they would include the *confessions* of their author. And *is that* hard to imagine? It would be hard to know what Nietzsche was getting at if the above description were not true, and also, why such a confession would be *unconscious*. That is a second question which would again be difficult to fathom. Why *wouldn't* it be conscious? If we consider the absolute presupposition which governs philosophical discourse to be "What for?" and not "What is?" however the *reason for this* becomes self-evident *should we accept* the above theory! What we *want* controls the aim of the questions we ask *and also* by necessity the answer we accept. Which means if I ask "What is?" the form of this question *expects* a specific type of answer. (It is *this*.) The same is true of "What for?" And since the latter is deeply entangled with one's emotions, desires, and goal orientation; philosophy *would be* a confession; it would be *autobiographical.* (It would show you my *deepest* desires.)

"And moreover that the moral (or immoral) purpose in every philosophy has constituted the true vital germ out of which the entire plant has always grown."

In this context I would argue that this means the aim of the philosopher or the desire they are attempting to fulfil *by* their philosophy (continuing with the autobiographical theme). Which is akin to saying: The questions which the desire of the philosopher reaches out to grab *are the seed by which* their philosophy grows. And every flower grows along a different angle toward the sun. *Again* we are speaking of what the philosopher wants or desires *as the foundation* for their philosophy. What is *in relation to what one want*s and not *what is in itself.* One problem still untouched is precisely how the prescriptive language *might refer* to such prescriptions. One possibility is the theory of metaphors *as embodied simulations.* For example Gibbs argues that when we comprehend metaphors like "Teachers are tour guides" we construct "embodied simulations of what it must be like to be a tour guide" and use this information to "further constrain what the metaphor implies." Meaning we imagine "what it would be like to be a tour

guide." But further Gibbs also argues somewhat convincingly that we *feel what it would be like* when we *imagine what it would be like.* He begins by theorising that *if* a person "understood metaphors by engaging n embodied simulations... then moving their bodies in ways relevant to the actions mentioned should enhance the creation of these simulations." He then conducted an experiment where people (1) *Watch* a bodily action relevant to the metaphor (seeing another person stretching regarding "stretching for understanding") (2) *Imitate* the relevant bodily action (stretch *themselves*) and (3) *imagining conditions relevant* to the metaphor (*imagine* stretching). Under all three conditions "78% of these referred to additional bodily actions and consequences of these actions relating to the main verb in each metaphorical phrase." For example when given "the phrase *put your finger on the truth*"" one participant replied "being able to touch the truth... relate to it... actually see it is a physical thing that can be examined." Gibbs argues that this demonstrates that "moving the body in relevant ways enhances embodied simulations compared to [experiments] where no movement was performed." Which provide evidence for his thesis that when we comprehend a metaphor part of what we do is to simulate and literally feel the implications of what is being suggested. And in doing so we can gain a better understanding of what precisely is being suggested.

Wittgenstein on Frazer's Golden Bough
(Philosophical Occasions)

Now I will argue that something *like* metaphors as embodied simulations and their truth conditions regarding prescriptive actions are raised by Wittgenstein in his analysis of Frazer's *Golden Bough.* In *Philosophical Occasion*s he argues that our inclination to view cultural practices through the scientific lens obliterates their original meaning and makes their intended purpose *appear* barbaric:

(1) "I read of a Rain-King in Africa to whom the people prayed *when the rainy period comes.* But surely that means that they do not believe he can really make it rain..." Otherwise the people would pray to him during the summer months when they needed rain the most. Similar to how he notes that rituals which are meant to bring about daybreak are almost exclusively carried out in the morning when the sun is beginning to rise; and surely the primitive people *must* have noticed this. But if they truly believed in the causal efficacy of such a ritual they would also perform it in the night. They don't. They merely "burn lamps" Or,

(2) "The same savage, who stabs the picture of his enemy apparently in order to kill him, really builds his hut out of wood and carves is arrow skilfully, and not in effigy." (Page 125) And again!

(3) "Burning an effigy, kissing a picture of one's beloved. That is obviously not based on the belief that it will have some effect on the object which the picture represents. It aims at satisfaction and achieves it. Or rather ; it *aims* at nothing at all. We just behave in this way and then we feel satisfied." (Page 123) One more for good luck!

(4) "When I am furious about something, I sometimes beat the ground or a tree with my walking stick. But I certainly don't believe the ground is to blame or that my beating can help anything. All rites are of this kind. Such actions maybe called instinct-actions." (Page 137)

The point that is being raised *over and over again* is: If you take such behaviours to be directed at a literal description of reality *they will seem* barbaric or senseless. The actions of something less human than ourselves, or perhaps something alien. However if you consider these prescriptions as expressions of desire, or as a method of – like Moses – visually arranging or ordering community wide sets of desires... Such that the information contained within these expressions is *simulated by the person within their imagination.* Then the conclusion one draws is more accurate and explains a variety of human behaviour. The rain dance comes to express one's desire for rain. And it can also make such an event valuable in the eyes of the community by having those who understand such simulations *feel why these prescriptions* ought to satisfy their desires. Consider why in every ritual there seems to the aim of some desire, or perhaps what is being expressed is not an aim but the aim is the expression. This seems true not only of

rites but of religions and philosophies. That what their authors are expressing their beings as Nietzsche puts it[6]. And is that so strange? Think of music or art. Do we not think of these as a part of their composer or as an *expression of their soul?* Though that's a funny word I might say "She plays like she is expressing her soul" without *believing in* souls and really I've made no contradiction. Again and again in these examples we hit the same sediment! (The same rock.) We are not speaking as though our words *needed* to map physical reality. That isn't what we are interested in. This message which connects these three art forms (and *my interpretation* of them) is apparent in these examples:

1. If you do not desire suffering, you can find hope in music. (Art)

2. If you do not desire people to covet, agree as a community not to covet. (Religion)

3. When people philosophise, they show you the extension of their desires. (Philosophy)

Are these propositions, these *distilled* meanings of those examples: Descriptions, that are to be considered objective or logical analysis of reality. Or prescriptions of actions regarding one's and others set of desires? The only example that may present difficulty is Nietzsche. But since he is philosophising *and claiming that philosophy is an extension of desires... He* is telling us what he is doing and this accords with our prediction. But perhaps these are the outliers, specifically within the branch of philosophy. That other philosophies are not autobiographical but are objective. The point remains an is true and within the confines of this paper I admit that a final proof has not been given; only an idea of what this interpretation considers philosophy to be from many differing angles. This will be the final paragraph before the conclusion an will explore a similarity regarding a particular view of ethics which I first encountered in *Philosophical Occasions* by Wittgenstein and later in *On the Genealogy of Morals* by Nietzsche. It will pull all of the threads of this paper together in one yank, and in doing so it hopes to leave the

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6   This is based on Jordan Peterson's interpretations of Nietzsche.

reader with a direct impression of the authors intent. For that is where the truth of philosophy – if there is such a thing – lies.

Wittgenstein & Nietzsche on Ethics

Within the aforementioned book Nietzsche argues that it is a mistake to paint a picture of morality without its history in the foreground. Within our particular framework attempting to define morality by the analytic standard makes no sense. And from his critique I would suggest Nietzsche is arguing a similar line to what an adherer to prescriptive function would predict. Unlike the descriptive which can break down reference into analytic truths, the prescriptive *cannot* be broken down in such a way. What's more attempting to capture the *essence* of morality absent its historical (see: actionable, functional) roots is a mistake from the prescriptive vantage point *precisely because* prescriptions are not communicated in logical or absolute terms. Whereas the analytic view invents for itself an impossible divide which it then suggests that we can cross. The analytic view could be described as looking for the essence of ethics and isn't this view so clearly doomed from the start? Well, in this regard you need not take my word for it. There are libraries full of books attempting and failing at giving *one* accepted description of an absolute moral truth. Similarly, though it may seem arrogant to claim for example: "Science can have no bearing on philosophical conclusions." I do not believe it is any more arrogant than saying: "The kilogram can not distinguish for a person their height." For science to remain science, or the language of the natural, and for philosophy to remain philosophy, or the language of the functional... The two must remain separate in their conclusions *by necessity*. Just as the metrics of height and weight must *only* receive answers in their initial metric. Which reminds me of Collingwood's discussion on the absolute presuppositions which govern the posing of a question. But where did Nietzsche think the root

of morality dug itself? Perhaps that can shine a light on whether his philosophy can consistently fit with this framework. Or more accurately, whether his philosophy fits well within the collage of philosophies this paper is attempting to pull together. In his book he argues that morality stems from a historical account of the aristocracy praising their own value and looking down on the plebeians (the simpletons, the commoners). Of their valuing *their* worth and by contrast the worth or worthlessness of others. Initially they did so without derogatory implications, or perhaps it is better to say without malice aforethought:

"I was given a pointer in the right direction by the question as to what the terms for 'good', as used in different languages, mean from the etymo-logical point of view… The best example for the latter is the German word 'schlecht' (bad) itself: which is identical with plain, simple – compare 'schlechtweg' (plainly), 'schlechterdings' (simply) – and originally referred to the simple, the common man with no derogatory implication, but simply in contrast to the nobility." (Page 4) Which he argues causes a revolt *against* such aristocratic language, and such contrasts (from Beyond Good and Evil): "The slaves revolt in morality begins with the Jews: a revolt which has two thousand years of history behind it and which has only been lost sight of because – it was victorious …" Where the nature of the revolt is described thus: "'Only those who suffer are good, only the poor, the powerless, the lowly are good; the suffering, the deprived, the sick, the ugly, are the only pious people, the only ones saved, salvation is for them alone, whereas you rich, the noble and powerful, you are eternally wicked, cruel, lustful, insatiate, godless, you will also be eternally wretched, cursed and damned!'" (Page 17) Here the aristocratic *good* was polarised in rebellion as the value judgement "What is desirable" culturally shifted from nobility or wealth to their *antithesis*. Which raises the question: Were the expressions which came to pass these judgements of the form: "Do not throw stones!" or "This is a stone."? Well isn't what we decide to value and therefore what we desire *more*

generally ascribed positive or negative *historical truth conditions* by their *shifting order* of utility? But really what we are speaking of is what *we value or desire.* And so morality by these lights is *likely* prescriptive and not descriptive. It appears to be valuing something but *not* in the analytic or descriptive sense of the word. Which is evidenced by the fact that analytic propositions can be said to entail what is logically necessary. Or that this analytic truth "all bachelor are unmarried" is a priori true by virtue of the concepts used. And no moral proposition appears to be *a priori* true. "Killing is wrong" is a good example because this proposition *is not* true or false in virtue of the concepts used. Which suggests it's not a descriptive sentence at all. Highlighting the dependence of any moral judgement on *unbounded contextual parameters* which ought to show that *the act* is valued under *the constrains of context* and that there is no u*niversal moral proclamation* that tomorrow, cannot be turned over or turned to dust. This is not the case with descriptive truths. And so while those theories of reference which focus on analytically reducible concepts like "chair" or whatever *can* appear to promise solutions to philosophical problems. By means of deconstructing certain concepts to their bounded analytical constituent parts, and then like a mathematician, arranging them to some particularly harmonious order. They will always fall short when *crossing into* the philosophical or metaphorical, the vague, or the allegorical as there are no *bounded truths* if the variables are value judgements relating to desires. There is something here of the divide between Continental and Analytical philosophy. Or perhaps the polarised nature of the political landscape. Okay, so how does Wittgenstein define of ethics? In P*hilosophical Occasions* Wittgenstein gestures at a definition of Ethics by presenting a "collage" of examples and asking the listener to consider what is familiar between them. Namely:

1. Enquiry into what is valuable. 2. Enquiry into what is good. 3. Enquiry into what is really important. 4. Enquiry into the meaning of life. 5. Enquiry into what makes life worth living. 6. Enquiry into the right way of living.

He goes on to make the distinction that he does not mean "valuable" monetarily, nor "good" as in proficiency of skill, nor "really important"as it pertains to one's daily life. Or "right" as a description of accuracy. He then raises how "right" is used in ethics side by side with the literal definition to draw out what he means. Thinking of ethics as the absolute right road he says: "Now let us see what we could possibly mean by the expression "*the* absolutely right road." I think that would be a road which *everybody* on seeing it would, with *logical necessity*, have to go or be ashamed for not going." Which means a true moral imperative is one that can be called *the absolute* right road, *a priori* or with logical necessity such that what we *gesture toward* when we make such judgements is not *descriptively possible.* While Moses made a good go of it for his time it is impossible simply due to *the individuality of our species* to conceive of a *universally agreed* upon moral statement – which is the aligning of our desires - *such that* that moral truth could never be questioned. Such that it *wouldn't make sense* to question it. Before this *absolute* example each of our human desires would by necessity agree. And not only historically even though that would be impressive! But no, in the future also! He goes further and brings together the similarities between "ethical" and "religious language" when he says:

"We seem constantly to be using similes[7]. But a simile must be the simile for *something.* And if I can describe a fact by means of a simile I must also be able to drop the simile and to describe the facts without it. Now in our case as soon as we try to drop the simile and simply to state the facts which stand behind it, we find that there are no such facts."

How does this accord with our theories use of embodied simulations? If *these* are the similes Wittgenstein is gesturing towards then there *would be* no facts behind them. What we drop is the the metaphor itself as a method of simulating what someone uses to express their

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7   One example he gives before this is: When we say "This is a good fellow" although the word good here doesn't mean what it does in the sentence "This is a good football player" there seems to be some similarity." page 42

meaning. For example "*Put your finger on the truth*"" is imagining physically or feeling being able to "touch" or "relate to" or to "actually see as a real thing" that which is being expressed. You simulate *doing something* with the prescription. Furthering this line he suggests that within an entire description of the world, say within a book that contained "all the facts" - that within this book there could be no ethical judgements. With which he surmises:

"I see clearly... not only that no description that I can think of would do to describe what I mean by absolute value, but that I would reject every significant description that anybody could possible suggest, *ab initio*, on the grounds of its significance. That is to say: I see now that these nonsensical expressions were not nonsensical because I had not yet found the correct expressions, but that their nonsensicality was their very essence. For all I wanted to do with them was just to go beyond the world, and that is to say beyond significant language." (page 44)

What this appears to mean contextually and with this papers interpretation of Wittgenstein is: Philosophical propositions must over-arch single instances in order to set an *ideal goal orientation* for what is by logical necessity *unobtainable*. Which is the correlation of all humans desires into a complete ethical treaty.

The book which concluded the subject entitled: "On Ethics."

The Conclusion (A Confession)

This paper has struggled to ground a theory of meaning that explains both the aphoristic gesturing of Wittgenstein's two philosophies with the apparent meaning of strict descriptions with bounded truth conditions, and also "the nonsensical" or the metaphorical or the pragmatic. It has found in Nietzsche and Wittgenstein a view of ethics which combines a historical and philosophical theory that accords – by this authors interpretation and that is an *admitted issue* – with the duality of language as extended by this thesis. And finally it theorises a possible explanation of that dualities biological grounding. Also the possible ways in which a word can come to mean more than one thing. Or how prescriptions might express actions through embodied simulations. Finally this was used in a very small way to examine certain non-descriptive or humanity driven practices. There is further work required to investigate the problems this paper could not cover. For example (this list is *not at all* exhaustive):

1) Whether further research into the sciences can provide more robust evidence into the correlation between the split function of the brain and the split function of language.

2) Whether one *can* ground descriptive language consistently in biological processes, the deeper one goes into the science.

3) Whether one *can* ground prescriptive language consistently in biological processes, the deeper one goes into the science.

4) Whether all philosophies (or *which* if not all) align with this interpretation.

5) How this authors interpretation of Wittgenstein aligns with the standard interpretation.

6) How this authors interpretation of Nietzsche aligns with the standard interpretation.

7) How this authors *intended meaning* is interpreted.

And so on and so forth. To meet the first three issues is really a matter of research and time and I intend to do all I can in this regard (as well as leaving the door open for another philosopher to do the same). The latter are philosophically geared and will require not only study but style and skill. One can hope such things come with time. Finally, it is suggested by the author that the logical conclusion of this work might offer a small but new conceptual landscape for the oldest philosophical method. Namely, *if* philosophical discourse is a prescription based on utility of action... then *the final result* of this philosophical outlook is clear and can be presented in axiomatic form:

That *if* philosophy is not a description of some state of affairs. But prescribes how to act in order to satisfy absolute desire. Where absolute desire entails the balancing of personal and group desire *a posteriori* and *a priori.* Then for something like a final proof regarding philosophical argument; the proof is in the pudding. How one lives *dictates* one's philosophy. That is outcome of *all* philosophical speculation and where *all* justification must end. Because that which concerns the meaning of life can only be answered by its mode.
The way in which one lives.

Within these axioms there are the seeds of all of the ancient Greek philosophies. Which can only flower on the borders of sense and nonsense.
Or, between logic and laughter.

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