Wittgenstein on Practice and the Myth of the Giving
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<u>1. Introduction.</u>

      A. There's a supposed problem that contemporary philosophers have been much concerned with. We can call it <u>the problem of content</u>; it might just as well be called <u>the problem of aboutness</u>. Part what is at issue is whether it really is a problem or not. Consider such representational items as beliefs, desires, intentions, experiences as of this or that, utterances, and so on: all have content or are about something. How do such items manage to be have one specific content rather than another, to be about something determinate? This seems to be necessary if it is to be possible to perceive or believe something determinate about the world, which could be true or false, and also if it is to be possible to desire or try or intend to do something in particular, which you might succeed or fail at. We need to understand how it is determined what a perceptual experience, belief, intention, etc. is about, what its content is, if we are to understand how there can be a distinction between being correct or successful in relation to one content, as opposed to mistaken in relation to another content. The distinction between success and failure should have application both to perceptual experience and the cognitive attitudes, and to intentional action; so the supposed problem arises, if at all, in both categories.

      B. Of course Wittgenstein didn't use this terminology. But it is generally thought that his later philosophy, and especially the rule-following considerations, have an important bearing on this supposed problem--even if it is not generally agreed exactly what that is. He develops twin critiques of two philosophical doctrines he seems equally opposed to, Platonism and psychologism. During the course of these critiques, he seems to take as a central target of attack a certain tendency, the tendency to postulate intermediaries between mind and world, such as interpretations, as if these would help us to understand

how mental states manage to acquire contents that are about the world in determinate ways. It's now very familiar that Wittgenstein reveals the futility of such intermediaries for purposes of understanding content and aboutness. He exposes what we can call the regress of interpretations. This expose we can regard as part of Wittgenstein's negative response to the problem of content: he's showing us that certain standard moves get nowhere.

It is disputed whether the positive part of his response to the problem amounts to taking it seriously and **solving** it, or rather to **dissolving** it, making us see it is not really a problem at all, unless we're in the grip of certain misleading pictures. But whichever way we end up interpreting him, his positive response to the problem has seemed to many in some way to turn critically on appeals to practices, to uses and forms of life. An issue here is whether the appeals to practice contribute to a solution or to a dissolution of the problem. It's fair to say the negative part of Wittgenstein's view has had more attention than the positive part.

C. Let's begin by rehearsing briefly the negative part of his response to the problem--which will be very familiar. We'll then consider questions about the positive part of his response: what exactly is the role of his appeal to practice? Why does the appeal to practice get us anywhere at all with respect to the problem of content? How can it help either to solve, or to dissolve, the problem? In order to understand the force of these questions, we need to trace the way in which the supposed problem of content arises equally for both the relation of belief and perceptual experience to their objects, on the one hand, and for the relation of trying and intention to their objects, on the other hand. That is, we have to appreciate the way the supposed problem arises in parallel, symmetrically, on the side of perceptual content and on the side of intentional content. (By the way, the phrase 'intentional content' is used throughout in the nontechnical sense of the content of intentions.) The general form of the question is this: given the symmetry of the supposed problem with respect to perception and belief on the one hand, and to action on the other, what explains Wittgenstein's apparently asymmetrical appeal to practice? Given the symmetry, how can practice have an asymmetrically basic role in the correct view of content and aboutness? There seems to be a mismatch between the symmetry of the supposed problem and the asymmetry of his

response. We'll consider some possible answers to these questions briefly at the end. But the main point here is not so much to answer them as to articulate them.

2. Mind, world, and the regress of intermediaries.

A. It has been suggested that, in describing how mind and language make contact with the world, Wittgenstein's task is to steer between Platonism, on the one hand, and psychologism or mentalism or Cartesianism, on the other hand (Baker and Hacker 1984b, p. 58). Platonism responds to the puzzle of aboutness by appealing to some intrinsic power of objects themselves, whether these are the ultimate worldly objects or rather abstract objects like rules. This mysterious power of the objects of mental states is a power somehow to draw the mind unto themselves, in a way that solves the problem of content. If the question arises of whether someone meant add two rather than quad two, and so of whether he's wrong about addition or right about quaddition, it is in some way answered by the superior status of addition in this respect. Wittgenstein seems to reject this notion that objects or rules have intrinsic mind-drawing powers as providing no understanding of content or aboutness.[1]

B. Wittgenstein also attacks a cluster of views that can be seen as opposite to Platonism-- psychologism, mentalism, Cartesianism. The central target here is the idea that the problem of aboutness is to be resolved by appealing to some intrinsic power of items on the side of the mind (e.g., images, formulations of rules, experiences, feelings, etc.) to bridge the gap from the opposite direction, to indicate or point at the world in determinate ways. And the intrinsic pointing power of the mind is supposed to be independent in principle of the way the world really is. Not only is mistake possible, it may be rampant; we may be globally deluded, we may be the victims of a deceiving demon, or brains in vats, and the world may be nothing like what we suppose. Moreover, our intentions may be hopelessly futile and ineffectual. Nevertheless, our mental states have the contents in question--if they didn't, we couldn't be mistaken. Wittgenstein finds no more understanding of content and aboutness in this notion of the mind's intrinsic world-indicating powers than he does in the notion of the world's intrinsic mind-drawing powers; the two

gestures are equally unhelpful (see and cf. Pears 1988, pp. 210-11, 363-4, 468-9, 485, 504-7).

C. If it makes sense neither to suppose the world has intrinsic power to draw the mind to specific bits of itself, nor to suppose that the mind has intrinsic power to indicate specific bits of the world, then how is it possible for mental states to have contents that are about the world in determinate ways? Since neither supposition sheds any real light, a temptation arises to interpose intermediaries to do the still-mysterious work of connecting mind and world.[2]   The distinction between Platonist and mentalist intermediaries is not always sharp; it's not always clear whether the intermediary counts as a distillation of the world, which draws the mind to itself, such as a Platonic form, or as a distillation of the mind, which points at the world, such as an interpretation.

D. But it doesn't matter; whichever way a postulated intermediary faces, it doesn't work either. Intermediaries do nothing to explain aboutness, but merely push the mystery back a step, giving rise to a fruitless regress. The point is familiar from many recent commentaries. Interpretations are themselves open to interpretation; no interpretation interprets itself. Inserting an interpretation between a representation and what is represented does not explain the connection between them. It merely substitutes the twin problems of a) what makes that, as opposed to some other, the right interpretation of the representation, and b) how the interpretation in turn gets to be about what is represented, rather than something else, or nothing at all. Since the relationship of the intermediary to the original items presupposes the very aboutness it is supposed to explain, it doesn't explain it. Wittgenstein gives many versions of this point; exposing the futility of the regress is one of the most characteristic moves of his later philosophy. To take just one example, from The Blue Book: How do I obey the order: "Pick a red flower"? Suppose we are tempted to answer: By imagining a red patch and comparing it to the available flowers. But then how do I obey the order: "Imagine a red patch"?[3] Further interpretations don't help.   If we set off down this route, then, as Wittgenstein puts it, no course of action can be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule (under some interpretation or another).[4]

E. What is the import of this regress? Philosophers disagree. Some think it leads to a threatening kind of skepticism about the determinacy of content, which needs to be taken seriously and may require some kind of skeptical solution in response, one that shows us how we can live with the regress. Call these skeptical views of the regress. (Kripke (1982) and Fogelin (1987) seem to be in this category.) But others hold non-skeptical views. Some of the latter see the regress as part of a reductio: since it leads to an absurd conclusion, that content is impossible, some premise that gives rise to it must be identified and rejected. (In their different ways, Baker and Hacker (1985, ch. III), McDowell (1984), and Pears (1988, pp. 433, 464ff) seem to be in this category.) Another variation on the non-skeptical view is to see the regress as part of a transcendental argument concerning the conditions under which aboutness is possible. Aboutness is possible; but it wouldn't be if it depended only on interpretation or similar intermediaries; therefore it doesn't. (Lear (1984) seems to argue this way.) However, what the needed item is, is often left less clear than what it isn't. The puzzle developed here applies to both the skeptical and the nonskeptical views.[5]

3. Why does the appeal to practice help?

A. Wittgenstein and his commentators have made the negative part of the view, the critique of the regress, reasonably clear. But neither is as clear about the positive part of the view, about exactly how practices figure in the correct response to the regress.   There's an impressive controversy among commentators about whether a community's practice plays an essential role in Wittgenstein's response, or whether an individual's practice will do (cf. Baker and Hacker 1985, ch. IV; Blackburn 1984b, ch. 3; McGinn 1984; Kripke 1982; McDowell 1984; Pears 1988, pp. 464, 480, 500, 515, 518). Still more fundamentally, it isn't clear how the appeal to any practice, whether individual or community, functions in response to the regress point.

B. Wittgenstein says that the regress shows that there is a way of following a rule that is not a matter of interpretation, but is exhibited by what we call 'following a rule' in actual cases. We should not say that "whatever I do is, on some interpretation, in accord with the rule", but rather that any

interpretation hangs in the air along with what it interprets and that interpretations do not determine meanings (Wittgenstein 1976a, sects. 201, 198; see also 506). Now even such admirers of Wittgenstein as Hacker and Baker concede that "This response does not seem perspicuous" (Baker and Hacker 1985, p. 133). It does not pinpoint the source of the error. Wittgenstein instructs us not to regard actions according to rules as themselves interpretations. He comments that "interpretation" should be used for the substitution of one expression of the rule for another (Wittgenstein 1976a, sect. 201). But of course there is a perfectly good sense in which actions according to rules <u>are</u> expressions of the rule; so this instruction is not in itself very illuminating. He says that obeying a rule is a practice; but he doesn't explain exactly why use and practice might be thought to have any advantage over interpretations, images, feelings, and so on. Why might use and practice, for example, either end the regress, or keep it from arising, or make the apparent problem dissolve, <u>given that use and practice are themselves open to multiple interpretations</u>--as his own abundant examples display?[6] From the premise that any act can be brought into accord with the rule by interpretation we can draw the absurd conclusion there is neither accord nor conflict with the rule. We are then supposed to infer that understanding a rule is manifested in acting on it, not only in interpreting it. But why does this get us anywhere or help to avoid the absurd conclusion? The question was about what it is for an act to be in accord with a rule; how does it help at all to respond by appealing to acting on the rule itself? Uses, practices, acts, forms of life don't interpret themselves any more than anything else does. In particular, a <u>collection</u> of acts, a practice, whether that of one person or of different persons, does not interpret itself any more than a <u>one-off</u> act does--as, again, Wittgenstein's own examples show.

We can spell out a bit further why practices don't seem to help in responding to the regress. Consider the case of a student we suppose to be trying to add two. Having added two up to 1000, he then goes on '1004, 1008, etc'. When challenged, he insists he's not making a mistake, that this is the same thing as he was doing before, this way of going on does agree with the previous, this is what he had intended to do all along. In virtue of what might he be trying to add two but making a mistake, rather than trying to do something else and succeeding, or not trying to do anything determinate at all? What does the difference consist in between making a mistake in doing one thing, and doing something else? And doesn't this type of question generalize to the point at which it threatens all determinate content?

Let's put aside without more ado the familiar discredited answers: platonic rails, interpretations, experiences, feelings, dispositions, etc. The challenge can be repeated in each case: in virtue of what does someone's feeling, disposition, or whatever, count as <u>this</u> one, as opposed to a slightly <u>different</u> one, which has coincided with the other up to now--so that mistake is possible?

But now how can it help to appeal to his use itself?--it's just <u>that</u> that we're trying to resolve our view of! What determines the content of the intention his uses express, a content such that it is an intention <u>to do this worldly thing</u> and <u>not that</u>, and yet at the same time permits the possibility of mistake, of trying and failing. We don't want the answer to force us to say that, whatever he goes on to do, that is in fact what he was trying to do; we want to hold on to the normativity of content. It doesn't help us to appeal to the agreement of the application in question with his other applications up to now, because what's at issue just is what determines whether those previous applications agree with <u>this</u> way of going on or <u>that</u> one; they don't interpret themselves. It's no <u>more</u> given that this use or application just does agree with that one, than it is that this experience just does agree with that one. <u>If</u> the problem about agreement arises, it arises for the content of acts in the public sphere as much as for the content of experiences.

C. Parallel remarks seem to apply to the agreement of the application in question with applications by other people. If there is a problem about the agreement of the applications made by one person, it is hard to see why there is not equally a problem about the agreement of the applications made by different people.[7] This is a point often made by those who do not regard the community to have an essential role in responding to the regress. Blackburn writes:

> The members of a community stand to each other as the momentary time-slices of an individual do.
> So just as the original sceptic queries what it is for one person-time to be faithful to a rule adopted
> by a previous person-time, so the public sceptic queries what it is for one person to be faithful to
> the same rule as that adopted by another.[8]

If we can respond to the latter: we <u>just do</u> see each other this way, then why can we not also respond: I <u>just do</u> see my experiences or sensations this way? Why put one kind of agreement rather than another below

bedrock, so that we cannot dig further? The mere contingency of any relevant agreement, whether within a practice or between sensations, is not at issue. Rather, the issue is the obtaining of the agreement to begin with. 'We just do happen to agree' takes for granted what the skeptic disputes, namely, that agreement obtains, whether contingent or not, as much as 'This sensation just is like that one' does.[9] To illustrate with the add-two case: why are we any more entitled to help ourselves to the assumption that the student's saying '1004,...' does not agree with what the others do, than the assumption that it does not agree with his own prior applications? The regress-monger can insist that the student's saying '1004,...' <u>does</u> agree with what the others do, that this is what counts as doing the same thing. It all depends on what is meant by 'agree' and 'same'. And that's the problem all over again.

So, whether what's in question is agreement of one person's use with the uses of other people or with his own prior uses, the more basic point is that agreement with practices seems open to the regress-monger's challenge just as much as agreement with anything else.[10] There seems no particular basis for allowing that practices or forms of life play the role of the given, are capable of deflecting or reducing to absurdity skepticism about agreement, as opposed to something else. If skepticism about agreement makes sense at all, it seems to make as much sense for agreement in practice, in use or form of life, as for anything else. This is not to be unduly impressed with the form of skepticism in question, but merely to insist on applying it consistently, if at all.

D. It may be suggested here that these difficulties support a skeptical view of Wittgenstein's positive response to the problem of content: one that takes the problem seriously and offers a skeptical solution that shows us how to live with it, rather than dissolving it. But viewing a solution in terms of practices as skeptical gets us nowhere toward understanding why such a solution has any advantages over a equally 'skeptical' solution in terms of any other sort of entity, such as sensations. If we can't have what is really wanted and we have to live with the regress, why bite one bullet rather than another? If there is no foundation, why appeal to practices instead of something else?

On the other hand, it might be suggested that these difficulties support a nonskeptical view. Perhaps practices aren't supposed to contribute to solving a skeptical problem; that would be to take the

skepticism too seriously. Perhaps the appeal to practice is rather part of the dissolution of the problem, part of showing us we shouldn't take the skepticism seriously and don't need a solution. But it's still not clear why the appeal to practice rather than something else rids us of the misguided pictures that generate the pseudo-problem. Why is it any more therapeutic to say "this is just what we do" than it is to say "this is just what we feel"? Perhaps we are entitled to help ourselves to a normative characterization of our practices (instead of trying, hopelessly, to establish a standard of correctness by reference to bodily movements not normatively identified). But why aren't we just as entitled to help ourselves to a normative characterization of experience (instead of trying to establish a standard of correctness by reference to private sensations)?

        E. Our puzzle, then, is why practice has any advantage over the various discredited intermediaries, in either solving or dissolving the problem of content. Now Fogelin writes:

> So in the end, and the end is encountered almost at once, we are told that a language-game is <u>this</u>, <u>this</u> and <u>this</u>. The italicized demonstrative is the <u>leitmotiv</u> of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. (Fogelin 1987, p. 206.)

We can underscore our puzzle by comparing what Wittgenstein says about the demonstrative <u>this</u> as applied to sensations and their ilk, and as applied to what we do, uses. Compare the role of saying things like "<u>This</u> is sensation S", which Wittgenstein supposedly revealed to be idle, with the role of saying things like "<u>This</u> is what we do", which he generally seems to go in for. The background point to keep in mind for both cases is that, as he puts it, "...one does not define a criterion of identity by emphatically stressing the word 'this'" (Wittgenstein 1976a, sect. 253).

        For sensations and the like, the emphatic demonstrative features prominently in the ceremonies whose idleness Wittgenstein exposes. His interlocutor says:

> "But suppose I didn't have any natural expression for the sensation, but only had the sensation? And now I simply <u>associate</u> names with sensations and use these names in descriptions." (Wittgenstein 1976a, sect. 256.)

He asks in response: Can I point to sensation S? What is this ceremony for, given that whatever is going to

seem right to me is right? If I say "Well, I believe that this is the sensation S again", he replies briskly, "Perhaps you <u>believe</u> that you believe it" (Wittgenstein 1976a, sects. 258, 260).

> "But I can (inwardly) undertake to call THIS 'pain' in the future".--"But is it certain that you have undertaken it? Are you sure that it was enough for this purpose to concentrate your attention on your feeling?" (Wittgenstein 1976a, sect. 263.)

> "How is he to know what colour he is to pick out when he hears 'red'?--Quite simple: he is to take the colour whose image occurs to him when he hears the word. --But how is he to know which colour it is 'whose image occurs to him'? (Wittgenstein 1976a, sect. 239.)

> "How do I recognize that this is red? "I see that it is <u>this</u>; and then I know that that is what this is called."

But <u>what</u> is <u>this</u>?

> "I could apply any rules to a private transition from what is seen to words. Here the rules really would hang in the air; for the institution of their use is lacking." (Wittgenstein 1976a, sect. 380; see also sect. 509.)

> "How does one point to an image? How does one point twice to the same image?" (Wittgenstein 1976a, sect. 382.)

> "And do you know that what you are giving yourself this exhibition of is pain and not, for example, a facial expression? ... This <u>private</u> exhibition is an illusion." (Wittgenstein 1976a, sect. 311.)

So, there is a point about how one person's private sensations over time could count as of the same type. There is a related point about how different persons' private sensations could count as of the same type: "...nobody knows whether other people also have <u>this</u> or something else" (Wittgenstein 1976a, sect. 272). When I suppose that I have <u>got</u> something my neighbor has not, I want to say: "At any rate only I have got THIS." But, Wittgenstein comes back, "What are these words for? They serve no purpose" (1976a, sect. 398). The point seems to be that the emphatic demonstrative is idle with respect to these issues about types of sensation and experiential content.

> Is it similarly idle with respect to issues about types of action and intentional content, with respect

to <u>what it is</u> that we are doing? If not, why not?[11] Why does Wittgenstein keep directing us to look at the use? Why does he write, for example:

> The arrow points only in the application that a living being makes of it. (Wittgenstein 1976a, sect. 454; see also sect. 340.)

and:

> [The truths of logic] are determined by a consensus of <u>action</u>: a consensus of doing the same thing, reacting in the same way. There is a consensus but it is not a consensus of opinion. We all act the same way, walk the same way, count the same way. (Wittgenstein 1976b, p. 184; see also 1976a, sect. 278.)

Pictures and images can't force particular applications or uses on us (Wittgenstein 1976a, sect. 140); <u>but neither can other applications or reactions or uses</u>. And Wittgenstein says as much:

> Say I want someone to make a particular movement, say to raise his arm. To make it quite clear, I do the movement. This picture seems unambiguous till we ask: how does he know that <u>he is to make that movement</u>?--How does he know at all what use he is to make of the signs I give him, whatever they are?--(1976a, sect. 433. See also sect. 432.)

Maybe the problem here is that the example of arm-raising to be followed isn't itself a use, but only a way of mentioning a use, a sign of a use. And perhaps "...there is a way of giving the meaning of mentioned expressions which is not merely the substitution for them of other mentioned expressions, but of expressions in <u>use</u>" (Seabright 1987, p. 23). Wittgenstein says:

> One gives examples and intends them to be taken in a particular way.--I do not, however, mean by this that he is supposed to see in those examples that common thing which I--for some reason--was unable to express; but that he is now to <u>employ</u> those examples in a particular way. Here giving examples is not an <u>indirect</u> means of explaining--in default of a better. For any general definition can be misunderstood too. The point is that <u>this</u> is how we play the game. (1976a, sect. 71.)

But our worry is that uses are no less subject to multiple interpretations than mentions or signs. And that 'one does not define a criterion of identity by emphatic stressing of the word <u>this</u>', with respect to uses any

more than anything else. We may apply 'this' to a sensation <u>or to an act</u> without thereby determining the relevant type of the thing, whether other things are relevantly similar, and what counts as 'going on in the same way'. Perhaps we are entitled to shrug this off. But if we are entitled to shrug this off with respect to uses, why not with respect to sensations too? Why is the former at any advantage? What motivates or justifies the asymmetry in their treatment with respect to the emphatic demonstrative? As we've seen, it's not evident that this question can be any more readily answered for the practices of a community than those of an individual.[12]

      F. Of course, Wittgenstein is acutely aware of just these issues. He points out that descriptions of reactions to rules presuppose understanding of rules (Wittgenstein 1978, p. 393). He writes: "(I cannot give a rule in any way other than by means of an expression; for even examples, if they are meant to be examples, are an expression for a rule like any other.)" But how does this claim, that examples of how the rule applies count as expressions of the rule like any other, sit with his advice, at <u>Philosophical Investigations</u> 201, to distinguish between interpretations, which substitute one expression of a rule for another, and acts of applying or following rules? We noted earlier the naturalness of assimilating acts of rule-following to expressions of the rule. And we noted the way this assimilation makes mysterious what is gained by appealing to action, use or practice, since the latter admit of multiple interpretations as much as any other expression of the rule. Indeed, acts admit of multiple interpretations whether they are 'meant to be examples' or not. But Wittgenstein, of course, got there first. To drive that point home, consider this remark:

> Now what is doing the same with 100? --One might put the point I want to make here by saying, '99 is different from 100 in any case; so how can one tell whether something we do to 99 is the same as something we do to 100?' (Wittgenstein 1976b, p. 26f, cited at p. 206 in Baker and Hacker 1985.)

Or this remark:

> It is no use, for example, to go back to the concept of agreement, because it is no more certain that one action is in agreement with another, than that it has happened in accordance with a rule. (Wittgenstein 1978, p. 392; see also 1985, sects. 224-5.)

So, to summarize, if acts or practices don't interpret themselves any more than anything else does, why are they any better placed than the discredited entities either to solve, or to dissolve, the problem of content? Wittgenstein writes: "One does not learn to follow a rule by first learning the use of the word 'agreement'. Rather, one learns the meaning of 'agreement' by learning to follow a rule' (1978, p. 405). The ability to follow rules is fundamental; forms of life are the given. But why is it any more helpful to say: "These public acts just do agree with that way of going on, that is bedrock" than to say: "These private sensations just do agree with that way of going on, that is bedrock"? The public/private distinction cuts across the issue of what constitutes agreement, and so far we have found no reason for the latter to be any less an issue in the realm of practice than in the realm of sensation. Given the difficulty of making sense of how anything, practices included, could be intrinsically self-interpreting, how does appeal to practice show how aboutness and content are possible, either by preventing the regress from arising, or showing us how to live with it, while appeal to more traditional givens does not?

The main purpose here has been to articulate these questions, not to answer them. But we can consider briefly some possible responses.

4. Skeptical or pragmatic responses.

A. As already indicated, it is not an adequate answer to say that the solution practices provide is a skeptical one, that nothing underwrites content and we just, contingently, happen to agree in doing this rather than that. This answer simply fails to take the point: the problem, if there is one at all, runs to as much to action (nonlinguistic as well as linguistic) as to sensation or anything else. Unless it's defused, it deprives us even of arbitrary, groundless decisions. So we can't take the problem seriously and then fall back on the latter, however grimly. If the absurd conclusion is in force we're not entitled to talk about what we just do, whether contingently or not, about our practices or decisions or choices or anything intentional in the way needed, because they are content-presupposing; this would be a case of the skeptic helping himself to resources his own argument denies him. That is, the full force of the skeptical view dissolves our capacities for intentional action, for trying and choice, however arbitrary, as much as for perception and

thought. It takes the ground out from under the feet of pragmatism and conventionalism, as much as Platonism and psychologism. It rules out appeals by the skeptic to our intentional responses, our attributions, our constructions, our investigations, our procedures of verification or ratification, etc. Again, the point is simply that these items on side of practice are content-presupposing, so can have no privileged role in solving, or dissolving, the problem of content. Whether this point has been adequately recognized in some recent discussions[13] is a question not pursued here.

B. Some of Wittgenstein's remarks about the lack of need for theoretical justification of what we "just do" suggest that his appeal to practice might be understood to express a kind of pragmatism akin to Hume's putting his skepticism aside to play backgammon. Our engagement in life doesn't so much answer, as silence and render academic, our worries about how content and aboutness are possible. In the "seeing as" sections toward the end of the Investigations, Wittgenstein asks whether in aspect shifts we really see something different, or only interpret what is seen differently. He then comments that interpreting can be recognized because it involves the forming of hypotheses that might prove false; whereas seeing, he suggests, isn't open to the same sort of verification. Perhaps, then, we can regard interpretation as a cognitive and theoretical matter and contrast its cognitive status, similarly, with the noncognitive status of practice, which is not a matter of forming hypotheses that may be true or false. This view might be applied to his remark that what has to be accepted, the given, is forms of life. We find ourselves in the midst of forms of life and practices; we just are alive and active; this needs and admits of no justification. Our actions as living beings are not hypotheses; concepts are expressions of our interests. Moreover, higher forms of life and activity, such as our uses of language, are not discontinuous with more primitive ones. In the midst of life and language, we have no use for hypotheses about how content and aboutness are possible. We don't need such theories in order to know how to act; we just get on with things.

This kind of 'backgammon pragmatism' also misses the point. Of course we just get on with life; no one denies that. But life is as much experience as action; and we also 'just do' reflect on our forms of life and try to understand how they relate to what we experience and intend. Distaste for theoretical reflection

is irrelevant to the questions here raised about the role of practice in responding to the problem of content; it just changes the subject.

C. We might consider a comparison with Kant on the primacy of practical reason. According to Kant, theoretical reason is limited and cannot demonstrate the reality of our freedom; but we can and must, as beings endowed with practical reason, act under the assumption of freedom. It is altogether proper for practical reason to fill the void left by theoretical reason. Perhaps we should see Wittgenstein as saying that we cannot understand theoretically how content, including the content of our actions, is possible; but nevertheless, as rational beings, we can and must act under the assumption that it is, and that this is altogether proper. Perhaps forms of life are given for Wittgenstein in something like the way that freedom and the other postulates of practical reason are given for Kant.

5. Contextualist responses.

A. But let's now try a different tack. Baker and Hacker emphasize something that's surely right, namely, that the notions of practice and of agreement are not appealed to by Wittgenstein in the role of intermediaries, competing with other failed intermediaries, but which, unlike the others, happen to do the trick (Baker and Hacker, 1985, ch.IV, V). A practice, they say, is not a third thing, standing between the rule and its applications. Rather, the relation between a rule and acts of following it is what they call <u>internal</u>: <u>this</u> is "what we call" following <u>that</u> rule; the rule and its applications make contact in language. As they put it: "This rule would not be the rule that it is, nor would this act be the act that it is, if this act were not in accord with this rule. Because the relation is internal, no intermediary can be interposed between its two terms to effect a connection." (Baker and Hacker 1985, p. 91.) An internal relation is a relation of interdependence that runs to the very identity of the items in question. Hacker and Baker identify a mistake where the whole chain of reasoning leading to the regress takes off, namely, a failure to appreciate the interdependent individuation of rules and their uses or applications. "The apparent logical gulf between a rule and its 'extension' arises from the mistaken assumption that understanding a rule is at least partly

independent of how it is projected on to actions. But however it is formulated or explained, a rule is understood only if it is correctly projected. To be ignorant or mistaken about what acts are in accord with it is to be ignorant or mistaken about what the rule is" (Baker and Hacker, 1985, p. 97; see and cf.: Pears 1988, p. 458; Introduction to Pettit and McDowell 1986). And Wittgenstein writes:

> Don't I know, then, which game I want to play until I <u>have</u> played it? ...so it is impossible for me to be certain what I am intending to do? And if that is nonsense--what kind of super-strong connexion exists between the act of intending and the thing intended? (1976a, sect. 197.)

B. These remarks lead us to consider the possibility that the content of a rule someone understands and intends to follow, and the set of acts that constitute acting on it, are not two independent items. Rather, the content of the intention may be determined by its <u>context</u>, including actions identified in a world-involving way. A parallel view about perceptual content would deny that the content of a perceptual experience is constitutively independent of the worldly objects of perception. What we can call a broadly <u>contextualist</u> view of Wittgenstein is suggested in work by McDowell, and by others.[14] While contextualist views differ in various respects, they have in common the denial that content is constitutively independent of worldly context. So, for example, they reject individualist and internalist views about content, though different versions may appeal to various aspects of a subject's context or environment (social, physical, etc.), and in different ways (through normal causes, teleology, etc.)

Internal relations and context-dependent determination of content may seem to make mistake impossible, to leave no room for the difference between a mistake in trying to follow one rule and success in following a different rule. But the possibility of mistake can be accommodated within a contextualist view, so long as the relevant context is broadly enough understood. Content can be determined by global context, while mistakes are local, exceptional. This familiar kind of point about the parasitic character of mistake is suggested in various places by Wittgenstein.[15]

C. A contextualist reading of Wittgenstein may well be correct; this would be a nonskeptical reading. If this type of response is effective and distinct from the discredited Platonist view, it is because it

rejects the mind-world dualism that gives rise to the apparent problem, so there is no mind-world gap to bridge and no regress can get started. As McDowell puts it, the correct response to the regress is to realize that we ought not to suppose we have to start with something--what the person has in mind--that 'just stands there'. Rather, a normative link to the objective world may be essential to the very identity of what someone has in mind (McDowell 1992, p. 46-7). We cannot evaluate here whether this response is effective, but let us assume for the sake of argument it is. This would not in itself answer our question. There would still be an question about how a contextualist reading addresses the mismatch between the symmetry of apparent problem for perception and for action, and the asymmetry of response in terms of practice.

While developing a contextualist view in Natural Reasons, I made a suggestion about the special role of practice, which I no longer find satisfactory. There I wrote that Wittgenstein applied the point that nothing could possibly be self-interpreting to practices and behavior as much as anything else:

> His point is not simply that experiences can't interpret themselves, but that it is a mistake
> to conceive of the relation between the mind and the world in such a way that the need to
> postulate intrinsically self-interpreting entities of any kind arises....He appeals to
> practices...not as [such entities], but because he conceives them as identified in relation to
> and constitutively engaged with the world. His appeal to them is in effect a repudiation of
> the conception of the mind as independent of the world that gives rise to the problem
> which makes [self-interpreting entities] seem necessary. ....it is far easier to relinquish this
> dualistic conception of mind and world with respect to activity than with respect to
> experience.... Which practice a given bodily event belongs to...[is a question] that it is
> hardly tempting to answer without reference to the world. (Hurley 1989, pp. 34-6.)

I no longer find this satisfactory, for at least two reasons.

First, even if it is correct as it stands, it doesn't go far enough. We need to know why it is easier to relinquish the mind-world dualism and the world-independent conception of content for activity than experience, if indeed it is. Does this greater ease merely give rhetorical significance to the appeal to practice, when in principle an independent appeal to the correct nondualistic or contextualist conception of experience would have done just as well? Or is there some asymmetry such that the appeal to practice

grounds the correct view of experience?

We can adopt parallel versions of contextualism, for the content of intentional action, and for the content of perceptual experience; there is no obvious basis for asymmetry here. Contextualism, the denial that mental content is constitutively independent of worldly context, seems to be neutral as between an orientation to action and intentional content, and an orientation to perception and experiential content. As a result, it doesn't illuminate any special or asymmetrical role of practice in diagnosing and dissolving the problem of content. That problem arises, if at all, symmetrically, for perception as well as for action. It is equally one about the relationship between a perceptual experience and the worldly entity it is about, and the relationship between an intention or a trying to follow a particular rule and the action that counts as success. In so far as contextualism provides a dissolution of the problem, there is equally scope for it in relation to perception and to action. Given this symmetry, we may still wonder how practice acquires a special, asymmetrical role in a contextualist diagnosis.

Our puzzle was about the mismatch between symmetry of supposed problem of content, for perception and for action, and asymmetry of response, in terms of practice. Since the contextualist response shares the symmetry of the supposed problem, it can't account for the mismatch. We picked up an important point articulated by Hacker and Baker, that practices were not intermediaries that succeeded where others failed. Rather the appeal to practice introduces the idea of internal relations. This led us to consider that a contextualist repudiation of mind-world dualism may dissolve the problem of content. But even if these thoughts are along the right lines generally, they don't orient us toward practice or agency in particular, so they still haven't illuminated the special role of practice.

Consider a related suggestion about the special role of practice. If a nonskeptical view of Wittgenstein's concerns is correct, then there is no reason why we shouldn't treat certain ordinary common sense truths as a default position, such as the truth that our practice is one of adding, not of quadding. We are entitled to help ourselves to such normative characterizations of our practices; the assumption that we are not leads to absurdity. But there is no actual practice of naming private sensations. There are no ordinary common sense truths about practices, comparable to truths about our public practices, for the private sensation linguist to appeal to. So, as things actually are, there is an asymmetry here.[16]

But this asymmetry results from taking what can be called a <u>slanted view</u>. Suppose we are entitled to help ourselves to the common sense view of our practices, normatively identified. But we can equally help ourselves to the common sense view of our experiences, normatively identified, as giving us knowledge of the world. For short, call these the 'good' views of action and of experience. The good view of experience contrasts with what we can call for short a 'bad' view of experience, in terms of private sensations or sense-data. The good view of action also contrasts with a 'bad' view of action, which tries to set up a standard of correctness for action by pointing to movements nonnormatively identified.

If we accept the good views as correct[17], the point can be put like this: The polemic against the bad view of experience should be make us happy to accept the good view as the default. But why do we need the idea of practice to do that? Normative, common sense characterizations of experience may not be available to the private linguist, but they are to us. If we take a slanted view and compare the good view of practice with the bad view of experience, it looks as if there's an asymmetry. This is what we do when we note the availability of ordinary common sense facts about our public practices, and that nothing comparable is available to the private sensation linguist. But the asymmetry depends on taking this slanted view; why look at things this way to begin with? If we compare the good views in each case, the asymmetry disappears. We can help ourselves to the common-sense view of experience, normatively characterized, as the default position, as well as to the good view about practice. But then why does appealing to practice in particular help us to achieve the good view? It looks as if there is a self-standing point about experience, as well as one about practice. If you assume that Wittgenstein is appealing to practice to nudge us over to the good view about experience, the asymmetry is still puzzling: why does practice have any advantage in making the point about our entitlement to these default positions? On the other hand, if we compare the bad views in each case, we may suppose that practice has an advantage: but that supposition brings us close to what we can call <u>the myth of the giving</u>.[18]

My second reason for dissatisfaction with what I wrote earlier is that I now suspect that it is <u>not</u> easier to relinquish the mind-world dualism for activity than for experience. On the contrary, there is a deep tendency in philosophy to assume that, however sophisticated and far ranging our skepticism, we can nevertheless always fall back on our own agency. Even when we have rid ourselves of passively given

experiences, even when we have distanced ourselves from the empiricists by turning our skeptical gaze back onto the contents of our own experiences, we still find it very difficult to get our capacity for choice, however futile and arbitrary, under our skeptical gaze. Residual naivete about agency tends to support some subtly sophisticated or skeptical views about other things.[19]

6. The myth of the giving.

A. This second reason is illustrated in the discussion in essay 1 above of views that have been attributed to Kant, concerning the transcendental role of synthesis in relation to the possibility of contentful experience and the unity of concepts and of consciousness. We'll rehearse briefly some of the points made there, and then raise some related issues about Wittgenstein's views.

Kant admits the essential role of activity in relation to the content of perceptual experience, and so he rejects the myth of the given, as the slogan has it. He rejects the idea that the content of perceptual experience can be taken as an unproblematic primitive, which the mind passively receives from the world, a matter of pure input. Rather, the spontaneous activity of synthesis can be viewed as having a transcendental role in making contentful experience possible, as the source of the unity a concept imposes on its instances (and thus, to shift to more modern terminology, a source of determinate content). Moreover, this view can be taken in a way that neither presupposes the unity of things as they are in themselves, nor simply takes for granted our experience of empirical objects. "Combination", Kant writes, "does not lie in the objects" (Kant 1929, B134). The unity a concept imposes on the variety of its instances can be viewed transcendentally as reflecting the spontaneous activity of synthesis.

B. However, it is one thing to reject the myth of the given in relation to the content of perceptual experience, and another thing to bring into doubt the complementary conception of the content of intentional acts, which we can call 'the myth of the giving'. This involves the idea that the content of intentional action can be taken as unproblematically primitive, something generated by the active mind, a matter of pure output. This idea can seem to arise from the transcendental role of spontaneous synthesis.

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Here's a reminder of how.[20]

Spontaneous synthesis, whether viewed transcendentally or empirically, is conceived as essentially involving our activity or agency, what we do rather than merely what happens in or to us, and hence the possibility of intentions with content. Since intentional action, however spontaneous, has content, just as much as perceptual experience does, any general role played by the activity of spontaneous synthesis in making experience possible will be a <u>content-presupposing role</u>. The contents presupposed are those of the intentions associated with intentional acts of synthesis, not the contents so synthesized. No particular intentional content or act need be presupposed, but the transcendental role of spontaneous synthesis will at least presuppose that intentional content in the sense of 'the content of intentions' is possible.

However, issues about the unity of concepts and of consciousness arise equally for the content of intentions and experiential content. If there are problems about how contentful experience is possible, there are parallel problems about how contentful intentions are possible. The basic issue is how content of any kind is possible. How can the activity of synthesis have the transcendental role of making content possible, when any role it plays will presuppose that intentions with content are possible?[21] The view that unity depends on the transcendental role of the activity of synthesis leaves unexplained the source of the unity presupposed by conceiving of synthesis as an activity to begin with, as an expression of agency as opposed to merely a series of natural events. The possibility of contentful acts of spontaneous synthesis cannot play the transcendental role of making it possible for acts of spontaneous synthesis to have content. Since no act can determine its own content, the spontaneity of synthesis does not help. If we need to know how content is possible to begin with, we need to know how intentions and action are possible as much as how experience is possible. If we help ourselves to the assumption that contentful actions are possible, in order to view the activity of synthesis as playing a transcendental role in making contentful experience possible, we simply push the question back from: 'how is contentful experience possible?', to: 'how is contentful action possible?'. To suppose that this last question does not arise while the former does, or that the content of intentions can be taken as unproblematically primitive in explaining how the content of experience is possible, is to succumb to the myth of the giving. The idea that the content of intentions reflects the pure output of a spontaneously active mind is no less problematic than the complementary idea

that the content of perceptual experience reflects pure input from the world, passively received by the mind.

C. Our topic here is not the correct interpretation of Kant. Without resolving the question whether Kant's views, properly understood, are open to these criticisms, we can recognize that there is a danger of incoherence in the fundamentally modern idea that <u>we do</u> the classifying of the world, in a way not determined by the world. This modern idea is at least influenced by Kant's claim that "combination does not... lie in the objects": as if by appealing to <u>what we do</u> we somehow get beneath problems of unity and content-determination. This is again the myth of the giving. It is a myth because intentional acts presuppose (in virtue of being intentional and hence having content) classification, unification under concepts or by reference to objects, in the same sense that experience or anything else does. Moreover, this point applies to acts of classification as well as to any other kind of act. Acts that classify themselves or determine their own content are as much a myth as experiences that classify themselves or determine their own content. We no more get beneath issues about unity and content by appealing to what we do than by appealing to what we experience.

D. So, the myth of the giving merits rejection as much as the myth of the given. To reject the myth of the given while holding onto the myth of the giving leads away from realism in various directions. But if we reject the myth of the giving as well, this need not be the case. We can correct the traditional philosophical subordination of agent to subject without going to the opposite extreme. We can adopt a sophisticated, activity-laden view of experiential content, without taking intentional content as primitive in the ways associated with the myth of the giving. What is needed, rather, is to understand why it is no accident that only perceivers are agents, as well as why it is no accident that only agents are perceivers: to understand the interdependence of perception and action. There is no apparent reason to think this cannot be done compatibly with realism.

E. There are, of course, many similarities between Kant and Wittgenstein. Both reject the myth of

the given, the conception of perception as pure input from world to mind, by reference to our activity, what we do. Wittgenstein, like Kant, seems to be committed to some version of a theory/practice distinction. And we've already seen that Wittgenstein may share something like Kant's view of the primacy of the practical.[22]

One response to the questions here raised about Wittgenstein's appeal to practice would be to hold that his position as well as Kant's position are one-sided in the way we have considered. No doubt Wittgenstein did conceive of the content of experience as infused by our activities or practices, rather than as the given. But it is a further question whether he gave the content of our actions an asymmetrically fundamental or privileged role, which would be difficult to defend (cf. O'Shaugnessy 1980a, pp. xxx-xxxi). If so, Wittgenstein and Kant may share a one-sidedness in these respects and a susceptibility to the myth of the giving.

It is not clear that the one-sided view of Wittgenstein would be correct. Some of his remarks about action and willing are difficult to reconcile with this view (see, for example, 1976a sects. 611-625, especially 617). McDowell's reading rejects the assumption that Wittgenstein's appeal to custom should be understood as part of a constructive account, and so in terms that do not presuppose meaning and understanding (McDowell 1992, p. 50). The one-sided view may seem to depend on the constructivist assumption that McDowell rejects. However, the basic point here doesn't depend on the constructivist assumption; it merely insists that any entitlement to presuppose content be applied evenhandedly. If we reject the constructivist assumption for sensations and experiences as well as for customs and practices, the special role of the latter is still unexplained. A rather deflationary explanation might be offered at this point: perhaps the emphasis on practice in Wittgenstein's philosophy merely serves to correct the undue contrary emphasis, still prevalent despite Kant, on input and causes and cognition and the subject, as opposed to output and effects and the will and the agent.

F. However, a bolder response would be to challenge an implicit premise of this discussion so far, which is shared by many commentators on Wittgenstein. This is the premise that Wittgenstein's response to the problem of content actually does give practice a special or asymmetrical role to begin with, that his

references to forms of life can be assimilated to his references to practice, and have some essentially practical force. If this premise is false, the explanation called for is unneeded. Wittgenstein does not set out the issues about content separately for perception and belief on the one hand, and for action on the other, but rather interleaves them. This may suggest the right way to think about forms of life. Perhaps we should not try to disentangle the parallel versions of issues about content for perception and the cognitive attitudes, on the one hand, and for action on the other, and then wonder how the view thus tidied up gets skewed toward practice, and whether he hasn't lapsed from one myth into the other. Perhaps, instead of assimilating Wittgenstein's talk of forms of life to his emphasis on practices, as is often done, we should do the reverse. That would be to read his appeal to forms of life not in terms of a practice-oriented asymmetry that involves him in anything like the myth of the giving, but rather as a way of avoiding both myths by recognizing the interdependence of experience and practice within forms of life. The question remains how this correction of the usual view would mesh with whatever the right response is to the problem of content. But at least the mismatch puzzle would be removed.

The interpretative issues raised here have not been resolved. Nor has it been claimed that either Wittgenstein or Kant definitely does succumb to the myth of the giving. The point has been more preliminary: merely to trace the way in which Wittgenstein's philosophy, like Kant's, reveals a danger of moving from a mistaken conception of experience into an equally mistaken conception of agency.

1. "If someone thinks mustn't he think <u>something</u>? ... And if he thinks something, mustn't it be something real?" But then "We seem to have an infallible paradigm of identity in the identity of a thing with itself. I feel like saying: 'Here at any rate there can't be a variety of interpretations. If you are seeing a thing you are seeing identity too.'" Unfortunately, there is, Wittgenstein remarks, "no finer example of a useless proposition" than "A thing is identical with itself". "It is as if in imagination we put a thing into its own shape and saw that it fitted." Wittgenstein 1976a, sects. 518, 215-16.

2. See Wittgenstein 1976a, sect. 94; see also Malcolm 1986 for an example of intermediary interposition; another may be found in Pettit's "inclinations" (1990), p. 10ff.

3. See Wittgenstein 1975, p. 3. And then, again:

It is easy to have a false picture of the processes called 'recognizing'; as if recognizing always consisted in comparing two impressions with one another. It is as if I carried a picture of an object with me and used it to perform an identification of an object as the one represented by the picture. (Wittgenstein 1985, sect. 604.)

And again:

"What I really <u>see</u> must surely be what is produced in me by the influence of the object"--Then what is produced in me is a sort of copy, something that in its turn can be looked at, can be before one..... (Wittgenstein 1985, p. 199.)

4. Wittgenstein 1976a, sect. 201. Blackburn 1984b is good on regress of interpretations; see also Pears 1988, p. 468-9.

5. My own view is firmly in the nonskeptical category, though I do not argue the point here. See Hurley 1989, part 1, and Hurley 1992.

6. See and cf. Millikan 1984, p. 101. On the wide scope of Wittgenstein's negative argument and the asymmetrical role of practice, see Pears 1988, pp. 469-507. The issue raised in the text arises equally for all intentional action, whether linguistic or not. On the importance of pre-linguistic practices in Wittgenstein's view, see Pears 1988, pp. 396, 402, 414, 529-30.

7. Though Wittgenstein sometimes writes as if issue of whether different persons reactions are the same or different were unproblematic: "But what if one person reacts in one way and another in another to the order and the training? Which is right?" (1976a, sect. 206.)

8. Blackburn 1984a, p. 294; see also 1984b, ch. 3, especially p. 99. But cf. Kripke 1982, pp. 79, 86, 89, 90. For

example, Kripke does not extend the skepticism he expounds to the teacher's judgment that a child has given the same answer as he himself would give, that the child's answer agrees with his own. And cf. Wright 1980, pp. 382-3. See also and cf. Pears 1988, pp. 309, 369, 373-4, 378, 381, 387.

9. Walker writes:

"For there to be ....agreement in judgment...., it must be true of A, B and C that they share a common property, the property of judging-that-p, and their sharing of this property cannot itself depend upon the agreement which it constitutes.

...considerations about rule-following seemed to show that there were no brute and basic facts which were there independent of our classifications of things and which it was simply up to us to recognize. The classification of any two things as similar was something that we effected and did not read off from the nature of things; the recognition of two or more people as similar in respect of judging-that-p must be just as much a matter of our own classification as the recognition of any other similarity. If in this one kind of case we resist the argument and hold that there are facts independent of our classification and our recognition of them, why should we not resist it everywhere, thus abandoning the theory completely? ...." (1989, pp. 145, 157.)

10. Here is Walker on the regress that arises from the point about agreement applied to agreement itself:

"Wittgenstein builds much--indeed, everything--upon our agreement in judgment. That we agree is something that is, very commonly, warrantedly assertible. Whenever a judgment is warrantedly assertible it is the agreement of the community that makes it so; so it is the agreement of the community, and nothing else, that makes it warrantedly assertible that the community agrees. This is not circular, because the content of the second agreement is different form the content of the first: it is an agreement to the effect that the first agreement obtains. But it gives rise to a regress. Agreement was said to provide the standard; but the standard for the claim that agreement occurs is a further agreement; and the standard for the claim that that obtains is agreement once again. This means that there is no standard, for the regress is vicious in the same way as the regress that arose for Hegel's theory....

....For p to be warrantedly assertible is for it to be agreed that it is; for it to be agreed that p is warrantedly

assertible is for it to be warrantedly assertible that it is agreed that p is warrantedly assertible; for this to be warrantedly assertible in its turn is for it to be agreed that is it. This is not a harmless regress, like the trivial one generated by the fact that if p is true it is true that p is true....

What is needed to break out of the regress is that at some stage the agreement should be a <u>fact</u>: a fact that obtains in its own right and independently of us, of our classifications, and of our agreements. But it is just this that the theory will not let us have." (1989, pp. 143-4.)

11. According to David Pears, Wittgenstein's view is that "...the meanings of our words are not guaranteed by any independent pattern already existing in the world and waiting for language to be attached to it. On the contrary, the pattern that we see depends on what we do with our words, albeit not entirely arbitrarily, in the world." (See Pears 1988, p. 363; see also pp. 437, 441.)   Wittgenstein tells us that how someone takes an ostensive definition "...is seen in the use that he makes of the word defined". If we ask how someone points to the colour of a thing as opposed to its shape, we are told to attend to all the different circumstances in which we act when we attend to colour as opposed to shape. But what is done can still be interpreted differently; the interpretation "...may also consist in how he now makes use of the word." "...[B]ecause we cannot specify any <u>one</u> bodily action which we call pointing to the shape (as opposed, for example, to the colour), we say that a spiritual [mental, intellectual] activity corresponds to these words." (Wittgenstein 1976a, sects. 29, 33, 34, 36.) Here we seem to be driven to postulate the mental essence by recognition that uses can be interpreted differently; the mental essence of course does not help, but recognizing this does not show us how attending to uses is going to help.

12. If Wittgenstein's point is that we shouldn't look for a unifying essence at all, in either case, then why don't we do as well to appeal to a variety of different though related experiences as to a variety of different though related uses? We are then, maybe wisely, giving up the demand for a criterion of type identity or an account of what it is in virtue of which <u>this</u>, <u>this</u>, and <u>this</u> count as the same. But, again, we have as yet seen no reason to give it up with respect to uses while pressing it with respect to sensations.

13. Consider Kripke 1982 on the role of what is done and of practice in the 'skeptical solution' to Wittgenstein's

problem, at about p. 95-96.

14. See McDowell 1992; see also the Pettit and McDowell's Introduction to their 1986 volume <u>Subject, Thought and Context</u>. The exact relationship between the views of McDowell and of Baker and Hacker is not clear to me. But some of the things Baker and Hacker say suggest sympathy with some of the motivations for contextualism. See also and compare Pears 1988, pp. 485-9.

The relationship between Platonism and contextualism or externalism raises issues that cannot be addressed here. Platonism allows the mind-world gap to open and then tries to bridge it in a way that cannot work. Externalism can be seen as refusing to allow the gap to open to begin with. See also the Introduction to Pettit & McDowell 1986, and McDowell's distinction between rampant and relaxed Platonism (1994). See also van Gelder and Port: "The dynamical approach to cognition handles the embeddedness problem by refusing to create it" (in "It's About Time: An Overview of the Dynamical Approach to Cognition", Port and van Gelder, eds. 1995, p. 29). The relationship of dynamic considerations to Externalism is discussed in essay 8.

15. For Wittgenstein making the parasitism point, see, for example, 1976a, sect. 345; p. 227. See also 1977. It's made in a different way, which appeals to normal causes, by Burge's perceptual externalism. And in yet a different way again by Davidson.

16. Here I am indebted to Bill Child.

17. Which is closely related to accepting the nonskeptical view.

18. Bill Child has also suggested that 'this' may in some cases refer to a practice, normatively identified. That means that participants in it can be right or wrong: succeed in selling wood by the standards of the practice or not, for example. But then 'this is what we do' implies there is no question of a right or wrong practice.

Again, however, we can make parallel points for experience. 'This' might pick out a normatively identified type of experience, so that subjects could be right or wrong: succeed in perceiving the world veridically, or fail. But then 'this is what we feel' could equally be taken to imply that there is no question of our being right or wrong to have

this type of experience at all: for example, to have colour vision as opposed to bat sonar. So again, there is a good reading of the use of 'this' in relation to experience as much as to practice: why take a slanted view and focus on the bad reading for experience and the good reading for practice?

19. See essay 9, sect. 7.D, E, for an attempt to explain one source of asymmetry between perception and action.

20. This section gives a condensed repetition of material from Ch. 1, sect. 7, for the sake of a self-contained discussion in the present chapter.

21. Again, there seems to be a mismatch between the symmetry of the problem of how content is possible, as between perception and action, and the asymmetrical orientation toward agency in the appeal to the role of synthesis.

22. Wittgenstein's hostility to philosophical theorizing, and habit of advising us to overcome the temptation to theorize by immersing ourselves in practice, suggest that he is committed to some version of a theory/practice distinction. But perhaps Wittgenstein should not have been concerned so much to correct an unduly theoretical view of the mind as to correct an insufficiently pragmatic view of theory--as if theorizing weren't 'just' part of our practices.

Also, like Wittgenstein, Kant sees the regress problem about rules for applying concepts. Here, for example, is Kant on formal rules for employment of the understanding:

"If it is sought to give general instructions how we are to subsume under these rules, that is, to distinguish whether something does or does not come under them, that could only be by means of another rule. This in turn, for the very reason that it is a rule, again demands guidance from judgment. And thus it appears that, though understanding is capable of being instructed, and of being equipped with rules, judgment is a peculiar talent which can be practised only, and cannot be taught." (1929, A133; B172.)

These remarks seem to anticipate Wittgenstein; did Kant fully appreciated their import? According to Jonathan Bennett, Kant wanted his schematism theory to explain how we recognize and classify. For example, I conjure up a mental picture of dog and check this against the object I see in trying to classify it as a dog or otherwise. But any

problem about classifying this thing with dogs I have also with classifying this thing with this image and this image with dogs. Interposing an image as intermediary replaces one concept application by two, as Wittgenstein points out. And the point can be generalized: there cannot be a technique for concept application as such. In any such theory there must be a description of the situation in which to apply a concept. But knowing whether that description applies is applying a concept. Indeed, Kant says this himself! Any technique for concept application will require concept application. Bennett suggests that perhaps Kant's schematism idea doesn't conflict with his anticipation of Wittgenstein, in that it only gives a technique for applying concepts of one kind by means of another kind. See Bennett 1966, p. 143ff.