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SOME REMARKS ABOUT PHILOSOPHY AND ITS RELATION TO THE EMPIRICAL SCIENCES

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Abstract: *There are currently two different views about the relation between philosophy and the empirical sciences. One of them – the "Quinean" view – holds that there is only a difference in degree: both are trying to gain insights in parts of the world, but philosophy, in opposition to the empirical sciences, which deal with concrete parts of the world, tries to find out insights of a very general type. The other view – which has a century old history, beginning with Socrates/Plato and ending, in a certain sense, with the late Wittgenstein – holds that philosophy and the empirical sciences are separated by a sharp categorical difference: Empirical sciences deal with parts of the world, and philosophy deals with concepts, that is with our habits of distinguishing and classifying things, which enable us to deal empirically with the world. This paper tries to develop some arguments in favour of the second view, and, furthermore, tries to suggest some implications of this view. One of these implications is that there are three special tasks of philosophy as a concept-reflecting enterprise: the descriptive, the explanatory and the critical. It is remarkable to see that within these aims empirical insights come again to play a certain, although limited role.*

Key-words: *concepts; justification; criticism.*

INTRODUCTION

Looking back at the last four decades of so called Analytic Philosophy, one will be confronted with a sharp break in what people believed themselves to be doing when they were acting as philosophers: Up to the sixties of the twentieth century philosophers – supporters of Logical Empiricism as well as supporters of Ordinary-Language-Philosophy – normally believed that there is a sharp and irreconcilable difference between philosophical and empirical investigations. But later on, a lot of philosophers began to believe that this is wrong.[1]

Actually, there are good reasons for the conception that the direct confrontation between philosophical and empirical investigations such as it was characteristic for the early period of Analytic Philosophy needs correction. On the other hand, for my part, I believe that the correction that was made in the succeeding years followed the wrong path. At a closer look it becomes clear that rightly understood philosophical arguments consist of a complicated mixture of various discourse types, in which empirical discourse is included as well, even though only as a part of an extensive whole. Therefore, it would be wrong to endeavour to cover over the differences between empirical and philosophical arguments. What is important is, firstly, to name as clearly as possible the different discourse types which have some influence on philosophical surveys in order to show, as a second step, how far the different discourse types are connected with each other. This is what I am going to do in the following remarks.

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[1] Cf. for great parts of this development especially the outstanding account of P. M. S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth Century Analytic Philosophy*. (Oxford: Blackwell 1996.)

1. ON THE CURRENTLY PREVAILING CONCEPTION OF THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PHILOSOPHICAL AND EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Let us begin with a more precise explanation of what the conception consists of, which the following account wants to oppose. The idea here is that philosophical theses are an expression of the often not insignificant, but at the same time just provisional, undifferentiated state of our attempts to gain insight into the world in which we live – including ourselves as part of the world. Therefore, it is supposed to be typical for philosophical theses that they are kept very general, that one approaches them e.g. by commenting on basic elements of the universe, that one tries to list general characteristics of language, that one tries to know general characteristics of the connection between physical and psychological phenomena and other things of that kind.

However, since the establishing of the empirical sciences, it is further thought, a corrective on such speculative ideas, at least in its tendency, could be formed. Empirical science succeeded in specifying the sweeping assertions of philosophy, which could not be proven without great difficulty, in order to make them accessible to empirical tests. And at the end of this process, philosophy has transformed itself in a part of the empirical sciences. In the words of Patricia S. Churchland, one of the main representatives of this understanding of philosophy: For some time now it has become clear,

> that philosophy at its best and properly conceived is continuous with the empirical sciences, and that while problems and solutions can be more or less synoptic, this is a difference in degree, not a difference in kind. Although theories may be more or less distant from observations, they are interesting only insofar as they can touch, finally, upon observations. Sometimes the route to observations may, as in theoretical physics, be a

> long one through much theory, but a route there must finally be. (Churchland (1989), pp. 2-3.) [2]

Churchland referred at this point of her exposition to W. V. Quine. And this is no coincidence. As indeed, with his essay "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", which was first published in 1951 and the monograph *Word and Object*, which was published in 1960, Quine played an important role in the accomplishment of this understanding of the relationship between philosophical and empirical ideas.

In one of the writings of Quine, there is a passage, which is especially informative for the context that I want to pursue here. Quine states there that according to his view what counts within epistemology is not a triad of concepts, language and world, but instead a simple dyad. He prefers to think exclusively in terms of the relation of language and the world. (Quine (1981), p. 41)

Why is this passage so informative? Because it becomes clear from it that for Quine and all who are following him, the acquisition of knowledge basically is a matter of the interaction of two, and only two opposing components: the sentences, or statements respectively, with which we try to transport something about the world to language on the one hand; and the world as it really is on the other. For what I want to elaborate on in the following, this bipolarity affirmed in Quine's epistemological basic intuitions is of crucial significance.

[2] Churchland also quotes in this connection Wilfred Sellars' collection of essays *Science, Perception, and Reality* as pioneering for the new conception. (Sellars (1963))

2. WHY THE CURRENT CONCEPTION IS WRONG

There is a point in the conception of Quine's, that one can agree with: Quine attached great importance to the idea that all empirical research is a matter of interaction between people, who endeavour to come to an agreement amongst themselves on parts of the world. But let us take a look on how this *really* works: the coming to an agreement on different opinions about the world. And let us imagine for this purpose a little story.

> Please just imagine, you are on a cycling tour with one of your friends through the Altmark[3], and you tell your friend that you know a close-by meadow, on which there are rich grounds of meadow mushrooms. And now furthermore imagine that your friend mentions that he also knows this meadow, but he claims that there are no meadow mushrooms. What could you do in order to clear up the difference of opinion? – Well, the answer at least so far seems to be very simple: the best would be, the two of you go the same meadow and have a closer look at it together. But now please imagine that you actually find some white mushrooms on this meadow with hats that are curved inwards on the edges. You, being sure that you have convinced your friend, refer to these objects. But your friend is anything but convinced. On the contrary: with an alarmed undertone in his voice which could not be missed, he says that he obviously sees these mushrooms as well, but they are not meadow mushrooms, but white amanita (destroying angels) – an opinion which you reject immediately. What could you do now to come to an agreement? – Further and more precise observation, further attempts to acquire experiences together seem to be insufficient to settle your conflict. What would you probably do? Well – here as well, the answer is simple. If the reciprocal reference to what one supposedly sees does not help, you will together with your friend get a standard textbook on the classification of mushrooms, see the characterisatio, which can be found in there of what meadow mushrooms and what destroying angels looks like, and then in the light of your acquired knowledge try anew to classify

[3] The "Altmark" is a riverscape in the North of Germany, which in large sections has remained comparatively "natural".

> the mushrooms on that meadow in the Altmark – hopefully with concurring opinions this time.

Why have this little story? – Because something important can be learned from it about the reasons why there may be differences in opinion between people, and what must be done accordingly to solve such a difference in opinion.

Some differences in opinion come up because the participants in a conversation have different experiences with the object about which they talk. One person has experiences of a certain meadow in the Altmark, and the other does not. But these are not the only possible reasons for differences in opinion. Because obviously we do not acquire our experiences completely *free of preconditions*.

To have experiences means classifying objects in a certain way – to come to the opinion that this mushroom is a meadow mushroom, that this person is a friend you can depend on, that that object which can be seen surough the microscope is a plant cell, etc. However, to be able to carry out such classifications we have to use certain standards – standards of what a meadow mushroom is, what a friend you can depend on is, what a plant cell is, etc.

To put it in other words: Such classifications can only be made by us because we have the capacity to discriminate between objects, because we have – as it is mostly put in philosophy – so called "concepts" at our disposal. And the standards understood in that way, the capacities to discriminate, the concepts do not always seem to be the same for everyone. And if that is the case, obviously a second type of differences in opinion can come up very easily. What I was trying to show with this little story therefore is that we have to distinguish between two kinds of conflicts: between

- conflicts that come up because there are differences between experiences, gained be the use of identical concepts (identical capacities to discriminate phenomena);
- conflicts that come up because there are differences between the concepts (the capacities to discriminate phenomena) themselves.

According to this we therefore have to make a difference between two kinds of attempts to solve conflicts: viz., between

- attempts to solve a conflict with the help of simply *using* relevant concepts; and
- attempts to solve a conflict with the help of *discussion about* contextually relevant concepts.

3. WHAT THIS HAS TO DO WITH PHILOSOPHY

But what does all this have to do with the connection between philosophical and empirical investigations? Let us have a look at the fact that in the ideas that we just contemplated, we did so within the bounds of an epistemological model which is not yet the same as what we just learnt from the glance at Quine's expositions.

Quine, as we saw, favors a bipolar epistemological model: Here is the level of sentences, or statements respectively, by which we try to bring something about the world into the language; and there is the level of the real world, to which we try to refer with those statements.

The example though, which we made up, points in the direction of an epistemological model which contains at least three important levels. True – or as well false – statements on the world, as the example suggests, are not acquired by an individual, or a group of individuals, by entering into a direct relationship to the world. Statements about the world should rather be understood as the result of endeavours by which

individuals pick out certain objects of their world and try to classify them by the use of those capacities to discriminate objects that are at their disposal.

The actual cause of differences of opinion between people like those in our little mushroom-example amounts to more than that the two of them have different experiences facing the meadow in question in the Altmark. It has to do with the fact that both of them, from the start, have different skills, or to say it in a more neutral way: different habits of telling apart certain kinds of mushrooms on that meadow. Which, as a consequence, resulted in the fact that efforts to solve the conflict between them promised to be successful only under certain preconditions: Both had to cease insisting on what they *saw* in the meadow within the bounds of their respective abilities to discriminate. Instead they had to make an effort to synchronise those abilities.

Now naturally there are – though understood in the broadest sense of the word – capacities to discriminate not just for human beings, but also for animals. And animals can also change their capacities to discriminate. Notice that there are at least three ways change of capacities to discriminate can take place. Firstly, there are the *biological* processes of genetic combination, mutation, selection, etc.; secondly, change of capacities to discriminate can be a result of events within *individual history*, a result of processes of maturation, shaping, learning, etc.; and thirdly, it may be caused in the course of *cultural* events – in essence by social learning imparted by language.

But, curiously enough, the reason why our two people in the example are on the point of changing some of their capacities to discriminate is not yet included in this enumeration. It is essential to the processes of genetic or individual transformations, or even of cultural changes as well, that these are changes which happen, so to speak, "behind the back" of the affected living beings: these living beings do

not know what happens to them, and, as a consequence, will not be able to intend those changes. And this is not the case with the two people in our example. Here we have living beings who are definitely aware that they are making an attempt to change a part of their capacities in discriminating things by taking a look at a standard book on the classification of mushrooms.

So evidently we can add a further, fourth factor to our enumeration of factors which can lead to the change of capacities to discriminate phenomena: Obviously at some point in the development of human cultures it happened that human beings acquired the ability to turn their capacities to discriminate between objects itself into an object of thoughts – which as a consequence enabled them even to intentionally transform some of those capacities.

When did that happen? And what are the special characteristics of a discourse, in which capacities to discriminate phenomena are not only employed but also reflected upon? Very simple: The fact that human beings have acquired cognitive abilities of this kind is very closely connected with the emergence of philosophy.[4] And discussions in which capacities to discriminate phenomena are not only used, but transformed into an object of speech are discussions which with good reason may be called genuine "philosophical" discussions.

4. INTERIM SUMMARY

I assume that in the meantime it became clear where, according to my conviction, the mistake is, which is characteristic of the current predominant understanding of the connection between philosophy and the empirical sciences. This mistake is very closely connected, to

[4] Nevertheless, it is controversial in how far this is also true for philosophy outside of Europe – in China, India, etc.

emphasize this once again, with the bipolar epistemological model. And this model is erroneous. The model supposes a somewhat direct confrontation between our statements (or systems of statements) about parts of the word and the world in itself. But this direct confrontation does not exist. All of our confrontations with the world are mediated by more or less evolved capacities in discriminating and classifying things.

Just to mention a further point which can be used against the Quine-model. Let us take the way in which the empirical sciences have developed since European antiquity. If the epistemological model which is only bipolar were right, then the development of sciences would only be due to circumstances in which we learned to make more and more detailed and controllable experiences about the world. But in fact, numerous surveys of the history of science – amongst others those of Stephen Toulmin and Thomas S. Kuhn[5] – have shown already some time ago quite impressively that this is only half of the truth.

What is overlooked in the former mentioned opinion on the development of the empirical sciences is that scientific progress also means that the standards for categorising objects which we use in empirical research are to be subordinated to a continual process of broadening, modification, reorganisation, etc. It is naive to believe that the empirical sciences face a reality that exists so to speak "as such", and that the process of scientific exploration of the world gets exhausted by building up more and more knowledge about this reality.

Actually, a quite significant part of scientific research not only consists in trying to clarify directly parts of the world, but in trying to clarify the way each of us practises his *access* to the world. The progress of scientific knowledge is very often not hindered because people hang on

[5] St. Toulmin, *Foresight and Understanding*, London 1961; Th. S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago 1962.

to false ideas about parts of the world: such things can be corrected as soon as it is possible to provide better conditions for inter-subjective observations. Vague meaning, inadequately differentiated or respectively an inadequately understood practice of classifying of objects can be at least as serious. And to get rid of such hindrances is, to say it again, the job of philosophical reflection.

Of course this does not mean that you have to be a philosopher by profession in order to start with philosophical reflections. Logical questions relating to the type of arguments you are realizing are one thing; and sociological questions relating to the kind of academic or other institutions these arguments are debated in are another thing. And so, on a closer look, you will find that it was philosophical reflection that led Newton to substitute the concept of natural movement which he found in Aristotle by a different concept; that caused Einstein to modify our concept of the simultaneity of two events; that made it possible for biologists such as Erich von Holst, Konrad Lorenz, Nikolaas Tinbergen and others to interpret activities of animals not only as a sequence of stimuli and reactions, but also as complex structured and genetically co-ordinated wholes, etc.

In fact, we will not be able to understand the enormous dynamic of cultural changes which European societies, or respectively societies which were influenced by Europe, have experienced over roughly the last two and a half thousand years, if we do not take into account that since ancient Greece people have acquired the capacity not only to use their capacities of discriminating objects but also to intentionally modify them if necessary.

5. SUPPLEMENTARY REMARK

Before I continue, a short interjection. We said that one should differentiate between concept using and concept reflecting discourses, and that empirical considerations belong to concept using discourse while concept reflecting discourses are nothing else but what is generally understood or respectively should be understood as philosophical argumentation.

This picture should now be amplified a little bit. Naturally not only empirical argumentation provides examples of concept using discourse. Moral discourse and mathematical discourse are two more examples for argumentations where concepts are used. And as far as concept reflecting, philosophical discourse is concerned it is advisable to differentiate between two special cases. In one of these cases we attempt to get a clearer understanding of specific concepts – concepts that are used e.g. within biology, psychology or historic sciences, etc. In the second of these cases we try to get a clearer understanding of what should be understood by a capacity to classify things, by a concept or, to put it in a more general way, by a *point of reference* for the classification of things.

This last distinction – the distinction between clarification of special concepts and clarification of "concept" in general – is not recommended by chance. In fact, in the history of philosophical reflections there was not only a change in our understanding of what is included in our concept of material objects, of life, of the soul, and so on. We also find some deep changes in the understanding of what it means generally to refer to some point of reference for the classification of objects in general.

In the whole philosophy of antiquity for example people were convinced that those points of reference, in Platonic terms the "ideas",

consisted of something that people at least in principle can find in that what is externally given to them. If by a concept you understand a man-made inner mental phenomenon, which is the decisive means in your endeavours in classifying phenomena, you will not find it in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, the Epicureans or the Stoics. That sort of thing only became possible in the philosophy of people like Descartes, Locke, Leibniz, Kant and others, people who maintained that we do not find our points of reference for the classification of objects in the external world but make them by ourselves, realizing some special "mental operations". And eventually today reasons that were provided especially by the later Wittgenstein suggest to understand something by those points of reference that is closely interwoven with the language which we speak.[6]

6. TASKS OF PHILOSOPHICAL – CONCEPT REFLECTING – REFLECTIONS

But what exactly does that mean, when one claims that philosophical considerations should be understood as concept reflecting considerations, in contrast to concept using considerations? First of all in this context one should differentiate between three special tasks of philosophical efforts understood in that way, although in practise they may be very closely connected: concept reflecting (= philosophical) discourse should help

- to describe and so to become conscious of concepts;
- to explain concepts; and
- to examine concepts and change them if necessary.

Let us have a closer look at what is meant by these three points.

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[6] Cf. on this development A. Ros, (1989-1990).

7. DESCRIPTION OF CONCEPTS

Normally the concepts which we use for the classification of objects are concepts which at some point in time came up in the course of the development of our society. At some time our ancestors developed habits of classifying objects which seemed to be profitable for their social interactions amongst themselves, their dealing with the external world, and for their own self-presentation as individuals. And so these habits were passed on to the following generations.

But the fact that those habits of classification were handed down and still are used, does certainly not necessarily mean that one explicitly knows about them. The situation that one has to deal with here is similar to what is characteristic for the mastery of language. It is one thing to be able to speak a language more or less correctly. But it is quite a different thing to give some information on the general rules on the basis of which one can determine when a certain sentence within a language is formed correctly.

Look for example at our capacity to differentiate between psychological and non-psychological phenomena. Most of us will not have difficulties in saying that perceptions, sensations, feelings, intentions, etc. belong to psychological phenomena, whereas mineral samples, organisms, language utterances etc. do not. But are we able to give a rule, which would identify such a practice of classification as a part of a more or less describable structure? This is where the difficulties begin. And the attempts to find and describe that rule (or the rules) which lies (lie) at the bottom of this capacity is a main part of philosophical reflections.[7]

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[7] Cf. on this e.g. chapter 3 in Peter F. Strawson, *Analysis and Metaphysics. An Introduction to Philosophy*. Oxford 1992.

8. EXPLANATION OF CONCEPTS

Single concepts, single habits of classifying things are very often parts of a comprehensive whole which may be called a "field" of concepts. And when we describe concepts, we normally give them a certain place within such a field. But what we gain in this way are, as important as it is, just facts. And facts provoke the question why they are the way they are.

Take a look at that field of concepts by which we are able to describe material objects and compare it with that field of concepts we use when we talk of living beings. Amongst others there is one striking difference between these concepts: We usually say about material things – about a piece of metal, a stone, a crystal, etc. – that they "are" a certain body. But we do not say the same about living beings. For it belongs to our concept of living beings that we cannot say that they "are" bodies; instead we have say that they "have" a certain body.

This is a typical example for what we can reach by attempts to describe concepts. But does this mean that we *understand* what we have found by those attempts? Certainly not. Because in order to be able to understand we have to do more than that. We have to make an effort to show that there are some rationally[8] realizable steps by which we can go from one field of concept, with those characteristics, to another field, with other characteristics. And in trying to do this we not only try to describe but to explain certain concepts.

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[8] The addition of "rational" is important. Because explanations why we have certain systems of concepts also can be given from an exclusively historical point of view, and then they are part of empirical and not philosophical efforts in the narrow sense.

9. THE CRITICAL TASK

What is meant by the "critical task" of reflecting about concepts should have already become clear from what was said so far. Naturally, not all our habits of classifying phenomena which we took over from our ancestors consist of useful and rational ways of classifying phenomena. In certain cases they need criticism and change.

Maybe in our present way of classifying certain cognitive mental activities of human beings we have left something important out of our consideration? Then we have to change this part of classifying phenomena; then we should e.g. start out on the idea that "human thinking, according to its concept, is nothing else but a certain kind of processing of symbols", such as it is claimed by supporters of present cognitive science.

Or, even worse, maybe some of our traditional abilities in classifying phenomena are not abilities at all, but merely just a quite problematic habit, a habit that leads us to populate the world with mere chimera? Perhaps it would be advisable for that reason to substitute for example our concepts of psychological phenomena with concepts of a complex accumulation of chemical substances forming nerve and motor cells, just as the biologist Francis Crick suggests in his recent monograph, which in German translation received the ambitious title *Was die Seele wirklich ist*? ("what the soul really is")[9].

10. WAYS OF EXAMINING THE RATIONALITY OF CONCEPTS

Let us resume: The fields of concepts we use form, so to speak, the framework within which we can acquire experiences about the world. These fields of concepts are not only effective behind our backs. Within

[9] Francis Crick, *The Astonishing Hypothesis*, New York 1994.

"philosophical" efforts we can try to become conscious of them, to explain them and to look critically at them to see whether they are rational or not.

But do we really have standards by which we are able to check the rationality of a concept? There are more than a few authors within current academic philosophy who would answer this question in the negative. That one can give reasons for something, as these authors say, would require that one can move within a certain stable system of concepts. And as soon as one leaves that system, randomness would begin irrevocably. Anyone who could not see that would be, as could be easily shown, either the victim of a unrecognised circle in argumentation, or get into a never ending succession of discussions about concepts for reflecting on systems of concepts which has to remain unfinished.

But no matter how widely held such an opinion is, in reality it is too resigned. In reality we do have possibilities of examining the rationality of a concept. It has to be admitted though, that the problems which can come up in such undertakings are of a quite complex nature. In the following remarks I restrict myself to one single point: a point, which is connected with the role experiences may play in the examination of the rationality of a concept.

11. DIRECT REFERENCE TO EXPERIENCES IS OF NO HELP

Let us state right at the beginning: People who try to prove the rationality of a concept by referring directly to experiences with objects which are supposed to be identified only on the basis of the use of that concept are engaged in a project which cannot work.

Let us take as an example the concept of psychological phenomena. And let us imagine that we would have to deal with someone who strictly represents the materialistic position, i.e. with

someone who, like Francis Crick, believes that in the end our concept of psychological phenomena is dispensable in favour of concepts of purely material phenomena. And let us imagine further, that we try to dissuade such a person from his opinion by referring to experiences with living things, which according to our conviction show psychological phenomena. The following little course of argumentation between a "proponent" and a "opponent" might elucidate what it would result in:

Prop.: Our concept for what a psychological phenomenon is is a rational concept.

Opp.: I would dispute that; the whole talk of "psychological phenomena" etc., to me seems to be problematic and just a relict of an already long out-dated metaphysics. Because in the end, so I believe, everything consists only of physical matter.

Prop.: But please: You will not dispute that what I am pointing to at this moment is a person who feels pain. And so you have here an empirical demonstration of the existence of a psychological phenomenon. At the same time this proves the rationality of the concept of "psychological phenomena" – since for what else do we have concepts, if not to designate existing phenonomena?

Opp.: But of course I will dispute this. What you classify as pain, and therefore as a psychological phenomenon, for me is nothing more than a sequence of activities of neurons, which in the end incidentally is nothing other but a certain constellation of physical-chemical processes.

It is easily seen what the course of the dialogue depends on: Since the concepts these two persons are willing to use are different, their ways

of classifying phenomena they realize in gaining experiences are different, too. And an alignment of their opinions with the help of experiences alone is impossible, because the real source of their conflict is not on the level of what is experienced, but on the level of the concepts *with which* they experience.

12. AT THE SAME TIME EXPERIENCE PLAYS A CERTAIN ROLE

But can it really be that experience does not play any role at all when we try to check the rationality of a concept?

Well, let us not forget: If we want to have a discussion about the rationality of *some* concept, this certainly does not mean that we want to discuss the rationality of *all* concepts at once. There is no reason why we should not be allowed to use other concepts than those which are under discussion. And there is no reason, either, why we should not be allowed to refer to experiences made by the use of these special and at the moment uncontroversial concepts.

Let us have a look at a special example to understand what this can mean. Actually, this example does not come from philosophy but from psychology. But it has the advantage of being very simple, so that the point I am aiming at hopefully will come out clearly.

We all know picture puzzles – those pictures in which there is just a tangle of lines to be seen, and in which when observed more closely more or less abruptly a picture of an Indian's head or a flying bird, or whatever, takes shape. These pictures and what happens to us when we look at them are of considerable theoretical interest. Obviously, the fact that after a certain time we can see the picture of an Indian's head, is indeed not just the result of us now seeing something that we just did not look at hard enough before. It rather is a result of the fact that our capacity to discriminate and identify phenomena with which we approached the

picture changed while looking at the picture: firstly it is just the ability to discriminate between randomly arranged single lines and then it is the ability to discriminate between pictures of Indians' heads.

So far the example. But what is of interest here from a philosophical point of view? Now, imagine you want to get someone who at the moment has only the ability to discriminate between single lines and is not yet able to use the ability to discriminate between various pictures of Indians' heads, to acquire the point of view on the picture puzzle that you are already aware of. It is easy to see how important all the experiences will be which your opponent can gain by using his ability to discriminate between lines. By taking advantage of this ability you can for example try to make him aware especially of this or that line and of this or that connection between single lines. And all this can be a helpful aid to evoke in him the capacity to see the picture of an Indian's head as well.

Naturally, this way of making reference to experiences is not all you need. For whatever you are saying to your interlocutor, in the end he will only see the picture of an Indian's head, when he *declares himself as able* and *prepared* to adopt the ability to identify pictures of Indians' heads.

And just here there is a parallel with concept reflecting philosophical arguments. The conflict between the strict materialist and the non-materialist of which we have spoken before can be understood as a conflict of quite comparable structure. It is true that the psychological example just mentioned is strictly speaking about a change within our *perceptive faculties*, while the main theme of philosophical reflections lies in changes within our *abilities of interpretation* of something as something.[10]

[10] The distinction used here between the seeing of something, the seeing of something as something, and the interpretation of something as something goes back to clarifications the later Wittgenstein gave in the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations*.

And that is a major difference. But the comparison between the two cases makes it possible to let something important become evident.

Similar to persons who are not able or are not willing to switch to those capacities which would enable them to identify not only lines but a picture of an Indian's head, the materialist is someone who is not able or is not willing to make use of the capacity to disriminate between psychological phenomena. And if you try to convince him, in some sense you have to do the same you did in the picture puzzle case. You first should try to make him aware of some or other very special constellations of material phenomena. And within a second step you should try to bring him to a point where he is able and willing to see that constellations of material phenomena not only as such, but as parts of that we usually would call a psychological phenomenon.

To conclude: It is indeed possible and often essential to base attempts to clarify the rationality of a concept by reference to experiences. But those references necessarily play a limited role within such attempts. What must be added are attempts to *widen the classifying abilities* of your opponent. And what must be added, too, are attempts to convince your opponent that it is *worthwhile* to make use of the concept in question. This is one of the reasons why I said earlier that rightly understood philosophical argumentation consists of a complicated mixture of different discourse types.

13. SUMMARY

I have almost come to the end of what I wanted to say. Let me sum up:

(1) In having experiences there is no direct confrontation between a certain subject and parts of the world. Whatever we experience, we experience by the use of certain concepts, certain habits of

discrimination: *The truth or the falsity of a statement about the world is only relatively valid in correspondence with the concepts used in the statement.*

(2) Conflicts about the validity of an opinion about the world may have their origin either in similar concepts used differently, or in the use of different concepts. In cases of the first type you have to come to an adjustment of experiences if you want to solve the conflict. In cases of the second type you have to come to an adjustment of concepts. *Conflicts about the validity of an opinion about the world can develop due to different uses of the same concepts, as well as due to the use of different concepts as such.*

(3) Discourses within which we try to clarify concepts form the core of philosophical discourse. The main aims of philosophical discourse consist in being able to consciously describe already acquired concepts, to explain them, and if necessary to change them with a critical eye: *Philosophical reflections are reflections aimed at the description, explanation and critical examination of concepts.*

(4) It is not possible to resolve a conflict about the rationality of a concept by making reference to experiences with objects which can only be identified as objects of a certain kind with the help of that concept. Nevertheless, references to experience made by the use of concepts which at the present are uncontroversial may play an important role within those attempts: *Experiences may be of indirect importance for the examination of the rationality of concepts.*

(5) Such indirect experiences alone, as important as they are, are not enough to be able to justify the rationality of a concept. To convince someone of the rationality of a concept you also have to help him in reorganising his abilities to discriminate phenomena; and you have to show him that the use of the concept in question lies in his well understood personal interest: *The rationality of a concept is not only a question of indirectly relevant experiences, but also a question of our abilities to reorganise*

capacities of discrimination, as well as a question of which concepts we should be interested in.

14. ADDITIONAL REMARK ON "INTERESTS"

Let me conclude with some additional remarks about the "interests" you can refer to in the examination of the rationality of concept.

To say it again: We human beings are a highly odd biological species. We are not just able *to make use* of certain capacities of discrimination, but we are also able *to reflexively become aware* of those capacities, and also to change them at one or the other point. But what exactly does this mean?

When we describe ourselves as members of such a special biological species we naturally use a certain concept: that of living beings which are capable of such self-assessment. But do we understand already what is implied in this concept? Have we understood already what implications result from this concept of ourselves when we try to put ourselves – as is natural – in the line of ongoing evolutionary processes of material phenomena in the world? Do we understand already what kinds of possibilities and restrictions result from this concept in view of our future actions? Questions such as these, we will have to answer in the negative. And this allows a certain conclusion in view of the interests we are trying to satisfy by examinating the rationality of concepts: We have a well justified interest in not only *using* that concept of describing ourselves, but also in *understanding* it in a methodically identifiable way. Therefore, in the end philosophical considerations should serve this one higher aim: the aim of clarifying just that concept with which we try to understand ourselves as concept reflecting living beings. That current Analytic Philosophy does not understand itself in this way is undeniable.

But in the light of what I tried to say before, there is no other possible conclusion than this: It is time for a change.

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