

JoLMA

The Journal for the Philosophy
of Language, Mind and the Arts

Vol. 1 – Num. 1
June 2020

e-ISSN 2723-9640



Edizioni
Ca'Foscari

JoLMA

The Journal for the Philosophy
of Language, Mind and the Arts

Editor-in-Chief
Luigi Perissinotto

Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing
Fondazione Università Ca' Foscari Venezia
Dorsoduro 3246, 30123 Venezia
URL <http://ecf.unive.it/it/edizioni4/riviste/the-journal-for-the-philosophy-of-language-mind-an/>

JoLMA

The Journal for the Philosophy of Language, Mind and the Arts

Six-monthly Journal

Editor-in-Chief Luigi Perissinotto (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia)

Advisory Board Jocelyn Benoist (Université de Paris 1, Panthéon-Sorbonne, France) Annalisa Coliva (University of California, Irvine, USA) Pascal Engel (EHESS, Paris, France) Shaun Gallagher (University of Memphis, USA; University of Wollongong, Australia) Garry L. Hagberg (Bard College, New York, USA) Wolfgang Huemer (Università di Parma, Italia) Daniel Hutto (University of Wollongong, Australia) John Hyman (University College, London, UK) Oskari Kuusela (East Anglia University, UK) Michael Lüthy (Bauhaus-Universität, Weimar, Deutschland) Diego Marconi (Università degli Studi di Torino, Italia) Anna Marmodoro (University of Oxford, UK) Kevin Mulligan (Université de Genève, Suisse) Claudio Paolucci (Università di Bologna, Italia) Francesca Piazza (Università degli Studi di Palermo, Italia) Pierre Steiner (Université de Technologie de Compiègne, France) Vicente Sanfélix Vidarte (Universidad de Valencia, España) Claudine Tiercelin (Collège de France, France) Jesús Vega Encabo (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, España)

Editorial Board Cristina Baldacci (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia) Pietro Conte (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia) Marco Dalla Gassa (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia) Roberta Dreon (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia) Matteo Favaretti Composampiero (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia) Susanne Franco (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia) Mattia Geretto (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia) Alessandra Jacomuzzi (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia) Diego Mantoan (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia) Eleonora Montuschi (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia) Gian Luigi Paltrinieri (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia) Luigi Perissinotto (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia) Begoña Ramón Cámara (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, España) Carlos Vara Sánchez (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia)

Editorial assistants Filippo Batisti (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia) Alessandro Cavazzana (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia) Marco Gigante (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia) Francesco Ragazzi (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia) Alice Morelli (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia) Elena Valeri (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia)

Managing Editor Luigi Perissinotto (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia)

Head office Università Ca' Foscari Venezia | Dipartimento di Filosofia e Beni Culturali | Palazzo Malcanton Marcorà | Dorsoduro 3484/D - 30123 Venezia | Italia | jolma_editor@unive.it

Publisher Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing | Fondazione Università Ca' Foscari | Dorsoduro 3246, 30123 Venezia, Italia | ecf@unive.it

© 2020 Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

© 2020 Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing per la presente edizione



Quest'opera è distribuita con Licenza Creative Commons Attribuzione 4.0 Internazionale
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License



Certificazione scientifica delle Opere pubblicate da Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing: tutti i saggi pubblicati hanno ottenuto il parere favorevole da parte di valutatori esperti della materia, attraverso un processo di revisione anonima sotto la responsabilità del Comitato scientifico della rivista. La valutazione è stata condotta in aderenza ai criteri scientifici ed editoriali di Edizioni Ca' Foscari.

Scientific certification of the works published by Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing: all essays published in this volume have received a favourable opinion by subject-matter experts, through an anonymous peer review process under the responsibility of the Scientific Committee of the journal. The evaluations were conducted in adherence to the scientific and editorial criteria established by Edizioni Ca' Foscari.

Table of Contents

On Dispositions

Foreword	7
Introduction	9
Two Epistemological Arguments Against Two Semantic Dispositionalisms Andrea Guardo	13
Why the Mark of the Dispositional is not the Mark of the Intentional Alberto Voltolini	27
Aesthetic Cognitivism Anna Marmodoro	41
Laws, Exceptions and Dispositions Max Kistler, transl. Alice Morelli	53
Allgemeines zur Lehre von den Dispositionen Alexius Meinong	75
General Remarks on the Theory of Disposition Alexius Meinong, transl. Lindsay Parkhowell and Sascha Freyberg	101
States of Possibility. Meinong's Theory of Dispositions and the Epistemology of Education Sascha Freyberg	127



On Dispositions

Foreword

JOLMA. The Journal for the Philosophy of Language, Mind and the Arts is not born out of nothing. Its foundation fulfills the need for a journal devoted to subjects that characterize the scientific interests and research projects of several scholars who work at the Ca' Foscari University of Venice – in particular but not exclusively at the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage.

As the full name of the journal indicates, *JOLMA* aims to contribute to the development of research and scientific debate in three main fields or disciplines: the philosophy of language, the philosophy of mind, and aesthetics (including the philosophy of art). *JOLMA*'s guiding principle is the belief that these three disciplines would benefit not only from increasing their mutual exchanges and interaction in a spirit of 'horizontal' cooperation rather than competition or hierarchy, but also from engaging in closer and more frequent dialogs with other disciplinary fields such as anthropology, the cognitive sciences, the neurosciences, linguistics, art criticism, and musicology.

Two dangers are to be avoided. First, the danger of *mere juxtaposition*, as though each *JOLMA* issue should simply fit into one or the other discipline mentioned in its full name, with no concern of interdisciplinarity and no ambition to cross disciplinary boundaries. Second, the danger of *mannered interdisciplinarity*, which inevitably results in loss of focus, trivial approach, and lack of methodological rigor.

It is not *JOLMA*'s intention to be used as a vehicle for a specific philosophical school or theoretical approach in spite of the others. On the contrary, the group of its founders include scholars who belong to very different philosophical orientations ranging from pragmatism to analytic philosophy, phenomenology, hermeneutics, and the history of philosophy. Even those who work within the same field do not necessarily share the same theoretical or methodological commitments. Although *JOLMA*'s primary focus is on topics and problems that animate current debates, it also aims to give voice to historical research by promoting or hosting entire issues or single contributions devoted to philosophical figures and traditions of the past, as well as by mak-

ing philosophical texts of the past available to present-day readers. This first issue, for instance, features the original German text with English translation of Alexius Meinong's 1919 work on dispositions.

JOLMA aims to involve both international established scholars and promising early-career researchers, and is strongly committed to promote gender balance and the inclusion of minorities. Its calls for papers are designed to ensure the widest possible reach and participation. Editors-in-Chief may invite guest editors, who are selected on the basis of scholarly excellence and their potential for enriching the journal's contents and fostering collaboration. *JOLMA*'s blind peer-review process warrants the scientific quality of the published papers.

The Editor-in-Chief
Luigi Perissinotto

Introduction

Both ordinary language and scientific language are filled with dispositional terms and expressions, such as ‘soluble’, ‘elastic’, ‘conductive’, or ‘brave’. People ordinarily and spontaneously characterise objects – physical objects as well as human beings – using dispositional expressions. We say that we should be careful in touching this particular crystal glass because it is *fragile*, and we describe people as *shy*, *irascible* or *jealous*. Again, people normally act – even implicitly – by referring to dispositions: we expect the little lump of sugar to dissolve when we put it in our cup of hot tea because we know it is soluble, and we carefully protect our new set of crystal glasses because we know that they are fragile and they could easily break when struck. Hence, it is hardly surprising that the concept of disposition has played a central role in different areas of philosophy from ancient times to the more recent debates within the analytic tradition, ranging from metaphysics to semantics, epistemology and ethics. Already Aristotle offered a rich analysis of dispositions and dispositional concepts; he influenced and shaped our thinking of dispositions and even recent theories on dispositions. We owe to Aristotle both a first sketch of a realist and causal view of dispositions according to which dispositions are real causal properties of the world, and a pluralistic conception of dispositional terms, according to which there is a variety of dispositional predicates and not all of them refer to natural capacities.

Yet, the metaphysical status of dispositions and the meaning of the term ‘disposition’ are still a matter of debate. Not only that, since modern times dispositions have been treated with suspect. Generally speaking, the main problem was the empirical inaccessibility of dispositions: dispositions are not observable, for we can only observe their manifestations. We do see that a lump of sugar actually dissolves in a glass of water but we do not see its solubility; we do see that a particular piece of wood catches fire if put next to a source of fire, but we do not see its flammability. From the standpoint of the 17th and 18th century mechanistic science, dispositions were inac-

ceptable occult qualities of no explanatory help about the way our world works. Decisive was also Hume's critique of causal powers which informed the idea that dispositional properties are not ontologically autonomous entities. This idea was at the basis of the programme – typically endorsed by logical positivists – of analysing and reducing dispositional concepts in terms of semantically less problematic notions, but none of the proposed analyses seems to be without problems.

However, nowadays the attitude is radically changed and dispositions are at the centre of a flourishing debate within the analytic tradition. There is the widespread recognition that, *pace* Hume, we cannot completely renounce to the role of dispositionality, for it informs even our basic and ordinary ways of speaking and interacting with the world. Instead of keeping the old prejudice, dispositions are better enquired from a multidisciplinary perspective, with more localised discussions. This does not only mean that old issues must be addressed again, such as the metaphysical status of dispositional entities, and the semantics of disposition ascriptions, but that new issues must be addressed with respect to the connection of dispositions with other philosophical domains, such as philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, philosophy of action, ethics and even aesthetics.

The present issue belongs to this particular way of looking at dispositions. Far from aspiring to offer an exhaustive exposition of the recent debates on dispositions, it aims to bring together some significant examples of what serious philosophical reflection on dispositions would look like. At the same time, it presents some recent new results in different areas of research on the topic. The content can be divided into two parts: the first part contains the first four articles, while the second part contains the last two contributions.

In the first part we find four articles which help presenting the variety of the philosophical enquiry on dispositions. First of all, dispositions are approached by looking at some core debates belonging to different philosophical areas: semantics, philosophy of mind, aesthetics and metaphysics. Secondly, dispositions are either the object of a metaphysical enquiry about their proper ontological status, such as in Kistler's article, or they are elements that can be used to offer some analysis of other phenomena – dispositional analysis – such as in Marmodoro's and Guardo's articles. Finally, dispositional concepts cannot be properly used without specifying what are the criteria of the dispositional; this is another line of research which is part of Voltolini's article.

Andrea Guardo, in his "Two Epistemological Arguments Against Two Semantic Dispositionalisms" focuses on the role dispositions play in the semantic domain. He offers a precise analysis of Kripke's so called "Normativity argument" against semantic dispositionalism and he argues that such an argument is stronger if construed as an

argument in the philosophy of mind than when it is used as an argument in the metaphysics of language.

The connection between dispositions and intentionality is at the centre of Voltolini's article "Why the Mark of the Dispositional is not the Mark of the Mental". The author argues that Crane's criteria for intentionality of reference – directedness and aspectual shape – cannot be interpreted dispositionally and this becomes clear when they are meant in mental and phenomenological terms. For this reason, Nes' criticism of Crane's criteria – construed in terms of dispositions – does not work.

Anna Marmodoro, in her "Aesthetic Cognitivism", offers an example of dispositional account of aesthetic properties. She endorses Constitutionalism in order to offer a metaphysical account of aesthetic properties in terms of multi-track and multi-stage powers of objects. She then argues that aesthetic judgements are up for truth and falsity like perceptual ones.

The metaphysics of dispositions is at the centre also of Max Kistler's "Laws, Exceptions and Dispositions". Here, dispositions play a role in making sense of the fact that laws of nature can have exceptions albeit they are universal regularities. Kistler argues that when a natural property is instantiated, laws of nature give rise to dispositional properties and exceptional cases are cases where these dispositional properties manifest themselves either in an unusual way or not at all.

The second part of the present issue contains the English translation of Alexius Meinong's text "Allgemeines zur Lehre von den Dispositionen" which is made available in translation for the first time. The English text is accompanied by the original German one together with an important introduction written by Sascha Freyberg. Meinong's work is very important because it contains both a particular theory of dispositions and a reflection on the role that dispositions play in the philosophy of education. Sascha Freyberg, in his "States of Possibility. Meinong's Theory of Dispositions and the Epistemology of Education" explores the role of Meinong's concept of disposition in education – the German *Bildung*. Meinong's underlying assumptions are expounded and put in the right context.

The Editors
Alice Morelli, Luigi Perissinotto

Two Epistemological Arguments Against Two Semantic Dispositionalisms

Andrea Guardo

Università degli Studi di Milano, Italia

Abstract Even though he is not very explicit about it, in *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* Kripke discusses two different, albeit related, skeptical theses – the first one in the philosophy of mind, the second one in the metaphysics of language. Usually, what Kripke says about one thesis can be easily applied to the other one, too; however, things are not always that simple. In this paper, I discuss the case of the so-called “Normativity Argument” against semantic dispositionalism (which I take to be epistemological in nature) and argue that it is much stronger as an argument in the philosophy of mind than when it is construed as an argument in the metaphysics of language.

Keywords Psychology of meaning. Metaphysics of meaning. Rule-following paradox. Kripkenstein’s paradox. Semantic dispositionalism. Normativity argument.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Semantic Dispositionalism in the Philosophy of Mind. – 3 The Normativity Argument in the Philosophy of Mind. – 4 Semantic Dispositionalism in the Metaphysics of Language. – 5 The Normativity Argument in the Metaphysics of Language. – 6 Conclusion.



Edizioni
Ca' Foscari

Peer review

Submitted	2020-02-24
Accepted	2020-04-01
Published	2020-06-30

Open access

© 2020 | Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Public License



Citation Guardo, A. (2020). “Two Epistemological Arguments against Two Semantic Dispositionalisms”. *JoLMA. The Journal for the Philosophy of Language, Mind and the Arts*, 1(1), 13-26.

DOI 10.30687/Jolma/2723-9640/2020/01/002

1 Introduction

In *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (1981), Saul Kripke puts forward three arguments against dispositional analyses of meaning. One has to do with the fact that speakers are disposed to make mistakes in their use of language. Another has to do with the fact that speakers' dispositions do not cover all the possible occasions of use. And then there is what has come to be known as 'the Normativity Argument', which Kripke ([1981] 1982, 37) thus summarizes:

Suppose I do mean addition by "+". What is the relation of this supposition to the question how I will respond to the problem "68 + 57"? The dispositionalist gives a *descriptive* account of this relation: if "+" meant addition, then I will answer "125". But this is not the proper account of the relation, which is *normative*, not descriptive. The point is *not* that, if I meant addition by "+", I *will* answer "125", but that, if I intend to accord with my past meaning of "+", I *should* answer "125". [...] The relation of meaning and intention to future action is *normative*, not *descriptive*.

The first two arguments I discussed elsewhere (see, e.g., Guardo 2012a, 2012b). In this paper I want to focus on the third.

In the literature, there is a lot of debate not just about the strength of the Normativity Argument, but also about its content - different commentators have given very different readings of Kripke's remarks concerning the normativity of meaning and intention. Here I will set aside the exegetical issue, embracing without argument what may be called 'the epistemological reading' of Kripke's remarks,¹ and focus on the task of assessing its strength. In this connection, I will argue for two theses. The first one is that in his book Kripke discusses, even though he is not very explicit about it, two different, albeit related, problems - one in the philosophy of mind and the other in the metaphysics of language (or, more precisely, in metasemantics) - and so his whole discussion of semantic dispositionalism, Normativity Argument included, should be seen as twofold in the very same way: there is a normativity argument against semantic dispo-

1 The epistemological reading is defended in Guardo 2014 and Zalabardo 1997. For a different reading see, e.g., Boghossian 2003, 2005; Gibbard 2012; Glüer, Wikforss 2009; Hattiangadi 2006, 2007; Miller 2010; Whiting 2007, 2009; Wikforss 2001. Note that - as I explain in Guardo 2014, 755 fn. 7 - the epistemological reading is perfectly consistent with the fact that the problem Kripke discusses in his book is metaphysical, not epistemological, in nature. Note also that the epistemological argument I ascribe to Kripke has been independently put forward by Wright ([1989] 2001) and that, in any case, it is interesting in its own right and deserves, I think, to be discussed independently of who its proponents are.

sitionalism in the philosophy of mind and there is another normativity argument against semantic dispositionalism in the metaphysics of language. My second, and most important, claim will then be that the Normativity Argument is much stronger when viewed as an argument in the philosophy of mind.

The paper is structured as follows. In section 2, I sketch the first of the two problems Kripke discusses, the one in the philosophy of mind, and I describe the corresponding form of semantic dispositionalism. In section 3, I discuss the normativity argument against this semantic dispositionalism and argue that it is quite a strong argument. In section 4, I turn to the problem in the metaphysics of language. Finally, in section 5, I discuss the normativity argument against semantic dispositionalism in the metaphysics of language and show that it is much weaker than its companion in the philosophy of mind.

2 Semantic Dispositionalism in the Philosophy of Mind

When, talking about game theory, I utter the name ‘Schelling’, I refer to Thomas Crombie Schelling, the American economist – not to Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, the German idealist. When I use the word ‘red’, I refer to a certain class of shades. And when I say that $68 + 57 = 125$, by ‘+’ I mean the addition function. But what does this referring, this meaning amount to? The nature of this *prima facie* unproblematic mental state is actually quite elusive and much of *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* is devoted to a discussion of the, no doubt somewhat incredible, idea that there is no such thing.

Take the case of ‘+’. We all think that by this symbol we mean the addition function; but what does this meaning addition – rather than some quaddition function which diverges from addition only when at least one of its arguments is authentically huge – consist in? The difference cannot be a matter of the way I answer particular ‘+’ problems, for the ‘+’ problems I am presented with never involve really huge numbers, and addition and quaddition diverge only when we get to such numbers. Nor can we answer the challenge by trying to argue that at some point I must have entertained thoughts that fit addition but not quaddition, for such thoughts would no doubt involve language, and so the challenge would have just been moved from the case of ‘+’ to that of the other words occurring in the thought in question – the recursive definition of addition fits addition but not quaddition, but only if by ‘S’ I mean the successor function, and what does this meaning the successor function (rather than some other function which diverges from it only for huge arguments) consist in?

Such questions need to be answered. Saying that there is no difference between meaning addition and meaning quaddition is tantamount to admitting that there is no such thing as meaning addition.

And if there is no difference between meaning addition and meaning quaddition, then there is no difference between meaning green and meaning grue (where past objects were grue if and only if they were green while present objects are grue if and only if they are blue), and so on. Therefore, saying that there is no difference between meaning addition and meaning quaddition is saying that there is no such thing as meaning, period.

Dispositions seem to many to provide the most natural answer to this kind of question. The reason why I mean addition and not quaddition is that my dispositions track the former, not the latter.

Let us say, for concreteness' sake, that quaddition starts to diverge from addition when at least one of its arguments is greater than or equal to 1,000,000; when that is the case, the result of a quaddition is always 5. And let us also assume that I have never been presented with '+' problems involving arguments greater than 999,999. That does not mean that I do not have the disposition to answer '1,000,002' if asked about '1,000,001 + 1'.²

Here is how Kripke ([1981] 1982, 22-3) introduces semantic dispositionalism:

To mean addition by "+" is to be disposed, when asked for any sum " $x + y$ ", to give the sum of x and y as the answer [...]; to mean quus is to be disposed, when queried about any arguments, to respond with their *quum* [...]. True, my actual thoughts and responses in the past do not differentiate between the plus and the quus hypotheses; but, even in the past, there were dispositional facts about me that did make such a differentiation.

And here is a more careful characterization of the view:

[...] the simple dispositional analysis [...] gives a criterion that will tell me what number theoretic function ϕ I mean by a binary function symbol " f ", namely: the referent ϕ of " f " is that unique binary function ϕ such that I am disposed, if queried about " $f(m, n)$ ", where " m " and " n " are numerals denoting particular numbers m and n , to reply " p ", where " p " is a numeral denoting $\phi(m, n)$. (Kripke [1981] 1982, 26)

So much for the introductory remarks. Let us now turn to the normativity argument that Kripke puts forward against this first form of semantic dispositionalism.

² One could, of course, question the notion that, in the case of '+' problems with *really huge* arguments, I have the disposition to answer with their sum. This is the point of the second of Kripke's three arguments. For a promising attempt to deal with it see Warren 2020.

3 The Normativity Argument in the Philosophy of Mind

Kripke's normativity argument against the semantic dispositionalism of the previous section is concisely stated in the following passage:

“‘125’ is the response you are disposed to give, and [...] it would also have been your response in the past”. Well and good, I know that “125” is the response I am disposed to give [...], and maybe it is helpful to be told [...] that I would have given the same response in the past. How does any of this indicate that [...] “125” was an answer *justified* [...], rather than a mere jack-in-the-box unjustified and arbitrary response? Am I supposed to justify my present belief that I meant addition [...], and hence should answer “125”, in terms of a *hypothesis* about my *past* dispositions? (Do I record and investigate the past physiology of my brain?) (Kripke [1981] 1982, 23)

Let me unpack the passage a little bit.

From a logical point of view, the argument starts with the assumption that it is a conceptual truth about meaning that one's meaning a certain thing by a certain word can be used to justify their use of that word - and that when one justifies their use of a given word in terms of what they meant, the process takes a certain characteristic form; for lack of a better term, I will say that the justifications in question are 'non-hypothetical'.³

Here is an example of what Kripke has in mind. Let us suppose that, during a conversation, I say that analytic philosophers have a great deal of respect for Schelling's work and that, taking me to be speaking of the German idealist, you comment that you have never had that impression. I realize that there has been a misunderstanding, and I clarify that I was not referring to the German idealist, but to the American economist. My meaning the American economist can be used to justify my claim that analytic philosophers have a great deal of respect for Schelling's work. And the justification process is especially straightforward; it does not rely on hypotheses but, rather, on what seems to be a form of *non-inferential* knowledge of my mental states: when I say something, I non-inferentially know what I mean, and I can use this non-inferential knowledge to justify my utterances.

³ In Guardo 2014 I construed this first part of Kripke's argument in a slightly different way. According to the reading defended in that article, that when one justifies their use of a given word in terms of what they meant, the justifications in question are non-hypothetical is deduced from the 'unhesitating' character of our linguistic behavior, while here that is just assumed, without argument. I take the reconstruction I focus on in this paper to be preferable both from an exegetical and a philosophical point of view. That being said, none of this matters that much, since (as I note below and explain a bit more in detail in Guardo 2014) Kripke's emphasis on the notion of justification is somewhat of a red herring.

But if it is a conceptual truth about meaning that one can justify their use of a certain word by means of their non-inferential knowledge of what they meant, then it is clear that a dispositional analysis of meaning can work only if it can account for such non-inferential knowledge, i.e. only if speakers have non-inferential knowledge of their linguistic dispositions. But, as a matter of fact, speakers do not have such knowledge. And so semantic dispositionalism is bound to fail.

I take this to be an extremely strong argument against the very notion that the mental state of meaning can be made sense of in terms of dispositions. The first, conceptual, step of the argument is virtually impossible to deny, especially when one realizes that it is even more straightforward than Kripke makes it out to be. After all, here the point is that semantic dispositionalists must make sense of the fact that we all have non-inferential access to what we mean; Kripke introduces this idea by focusing on the role that this access plays in our justificatory practices, but one does not have to go about it that way: that we non-inferentially know what we mean is quite clear in itself, even independently of this knowledge's role in our justificatory practices.

The argument's second step is quite solid, too. If dispositionalism were true, my non-inferentially knowing that I mean addition would require me to non-inferentially know, for any pair of huge numbers 'M' and 'N', that I am disposed to answer with their sum if asked about 'M + N'. And that is a knowledge which I most definitely do not have.

Note that what I am taking to be clear is not that it is not the case that I *know*, for any pair of huge numbers 'M' and 'N', that I am disposed to answer with their sum if asked about 'M + N'. This I may well know – let us say I can deduce it, with reasonable confidence, from the answers I do give to more manageable '+' problems. What I believe is clear is only that, if I do have such knowledge, it is *inferential* in nature.

Nor am I assuming that it is *impossible* for me to have the non-inferential knowledge in question. No doubt there are possible worlds in which I do have non-inferential access, down to the tiniest detail, to my current brain states, and hence to my linguistic dispositions. What I am assuming is just that, *as a matter of fact*, I do not have such knowledge. This is all that needs to be assumed in order for the argument to go through, since its point is that semantic dispositionalism cannot make sense of the fact that I *have* non-inferential access to what I mean, *in this world*.⁴

The Normativity Argument, viewed as an argument in the philosophy of mind, is, indeed, quite straightforward. In a certain sense, it

⁴ For a more in-depth discussion of this second part of Kripke's argument see Guardo 2014.

comes down to the claim that semantic dispositionalism “[...] threatens [...] to make a total mystery of the phenomenon of non-inferential, first-personal knowledge of past and present meanings [...]” (Wright [1989] 2001, 175). In order to resist it, one should show either that this is not a real phenomenon or that, contrary appearances notwithstanding, a dispositional analysis can account for it. The first strategy looks utterly desperate,⁵ while the second is inconsistent with what seem to be rather uncontroversial facts about our knowledge of our dispositions.

4 Semantic Dispositionalism in the Metaphysics of Language

In this section I turn to the first of the two theses I want to argue for, namely that in his book Kripke discusses two different problems, one in the philosophy of mind and the other in the metaphysics of language, and so all he says about semantic dispositionalism, Normativity Argument included, should be seen as twofold in the very same way.⁶

Let us start by coming back to the way I introduced the problem of meaning in the philosophy of mind. Following Kripke, I tried to show that the notion of meaning something by a sign is problematic by calling attention to the fact that it is not clear how to make sense of the difference between meaning addition and meaning quaddition, where quaddition was assumed to be a function which diverges from addition only when at least one of its arguments is authentically huge. Kripke defines quaddition in a slightly different way: he stipulates quaddition to diverge from addition as soon as at least one of its arguments is greater than or equal to 57. However, Kripke also assumes that we have never been presented with ‘+’ problems involving arguments greater than 56, so the difference between his definition and mine is superficial; in both cases, quaddition is defined in such a way that the answers we gave to the ‘+’ problems we have been presented with were consistent with both addition and quaddition. Now let me ask a question: why is this important? Why does it matter that our answers to the ‘+’ problems we have been presented with are compatible with both functions?

5 Of course, a meaning skeptic can deny the reality of “the phenomenon of non-inferential, first-personal knowledge of past and present meanings” (Wright [1989] 2001, 175) on the basis of the fact that, in their view, there is no such thing as meaning. However, such a move is clearly unavailable to the dispositionalist, whose goal is to *vindicate* our intuitions concerning this mental state.

6 Of course, the problem in the metaphysics of language I am about to sketch is interesting and deserving of discussion in its own right, independently of whether Kripke really had it in mind or not.

The answer to this question is rather obvious: Kripke wants to build a case in which it is clear that the difference between meaning addition and meaning quaddition cannot be made sense of in terms of overt behavior, i.e. in terms of the answers we give to the ‘+’ problems we are actually presented with. But, as clear as it is that this is what he has in mind, a little reflection is more than enough to see that Kripke’s worry here does not make much sense. Overt behavior is just not the kind of thing a mental state can be identified with. Saying that my meaning addition by ‘+’ consists in my giving (as opposed to my being disposed to give) certain answers to certain problems is not explaining what that mental state amounts to; it is saying that there is no such thing as meaning something by a sign, and then trying to substitute that concept with something else.

So now the question is: how is it that Kripke did not realize that? The answer is, I think, that while Kripke was working on *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* he had in mind, besides the problem I described earlier, another one, too. The two problems are related, and most of the time what holds with regard to the first problem holds in the case of the second one, too (and *vice versa*). Therefore, Kripke does not take the trouble to explicitly distinguish between them. But the two problems are distinct nonetheless, and sometimes what makes sense with regard to one does not make sense with regard to the other. And so not distinguishing between them may lead one to worry about things that need not be worried about. What I described in the previous two paragraphs is just one such case.

But what is this other problem that Kripke had in mind? As I have already hinted, it is a problem in the metaphysics of language. More precisely, it is the problem of explaining what determines the reference of a word.⁷ What makes it the case that the name ‘Ludwig Wittgenstein’ denotes a certain Austrian philosopher? What makes it the case that the predicate ‘being a philosopher’ refers to the class of individuals which, as a matter of fact, it does refer to? And what makes it the case that ‘+’ refers to the addition function, and not to quaddition?⁸

7 In Guardo 2018 I described this second problem in a slightly different way. I now think that that formulation is less than optimal and, therefore, in this paper I decided to drop it and substitute it with the one just given.

8 One may wonder how Kripke could fail to clearly distinguish this problem from the one described in section 2. The answer is, I think, that both problems can be rephrased in terms of correctness, and when phrased that way it is indeed quite easy to mistake one for the other. That the concept of reference has a normative dimension (and so the problem of explaining what determines the reference of a word can be rephrased in terms of correctness) is rather obvious: saying that ‘being a philosopher’ refers to a certain class of individuals is saying that that predicate is applied correctly if and only if it is applied to a member of that class. The availability of a formulation in terms of correctness is somewhat less apparent in the case of the problem of the nature of the mental

Kripke's two problems are, of course, related (their relationship will look especially close if one believes that the reference of a word depends on what people usually mean by it). But they are two distinct problems nonetheless. One has to do with the nature of a certain mental state, the other has to do with the relationship between linguistic expressions and entities in the world.

It is because they are distinct problems that, sometimes, what does not make sense in the case of one does make at least some sense in that of the other. In the case of the problem of explaining the nature of the mental state of meaning something by a sign, any reference to overt behavior can be discarded out of hand as clearly irrelevant. But in the case of the problem of explaining what makes it the case that a word refers to what it refers to, overt behavior seems to be at least part of the solution: granted, taken by itself, past usage does not show that '+' does not refer to quaddition; but at least it rules out other functions, which diverge from addition also with regard to pairs of smaller arguments, or at least so it seems.⁹

Just as the problem Kripke is interested in is actually two problems, it is important to recognize that there are two semantic dispositionalisms, one in the philosophy of mind and one in the metaphysics of language. In the philosophy of mind, semantic dispositionalism is the thesis that what makes it the case that I mean, say, addition by '+' is that I have certain dispositions, and not others: I have addition-tracking, not *quaddition*-tracking, dispositions. In the metaphysics of language, on the other hand, to be a semantic dispositionalist is to have a certain view of what makes it the case that *a word refers to what it refers to*: '+' denotes the addition function because it is that function which is tracked by the speakers' dispositions concerning the use of that symbol.

state of meaning something by a sign, for such a formulation involves the semi-technical notion of metalinguistic correctness. That being said, the idea is rather easy to get. If by '+' I have always meant quaddition, there is a sense - what Kripke calls the "metalinguistic" sense - in which for me it is correct to answer '5' if asked about '1,000,001 + 1': '5' is the correct answer in the sense that '+', as I intended to use that symbol in the past, denoted a function which, when applied to the numbers I called '1,000,001' and '1', yields the value 5. And so the problem of explaining what makes it the case that by '+' I mean addition (and not quaddition) can be seen as the problem of explaining what makes it the case that I should answer '1,000,002' (and not '5') if asked for '1,000,001 + 1'.

9 As a matter of fact, in this case appearances are misleading, for reasons I explain in Guardo 2012b and elsewhere. That being said, nothing of importance hinges on this point here.

Some may take the upshot of the foregoing to be not that Kripke was interested in two distinct (and yet related) problems, but that the problem Kripke was really interested in is not the one he seems to be interested in but, rather, the one in the metaphysics of language I have just sketched. I believe that such a conclusion would be too strong. Kripke is quite clearly interested in the nature of the mental state of meaning, too. In fact, one of the things that makes it clear is his use of the Normativity Argument, which is very strong when viewed as an argument in the philosophy of mind but, as I am about to argue, rather weak as an argument in the metaphysics of language.

And just as there are two semantic dispositionalisms, one can try to put forward a normativity argument both in the philosophy of mind and in the metaphysics of language. In section 3, I argued that, in the philosophy of mind, normativity considerations are extremely effective. In the next section, I will try to show that in the metaphysics of language the situation is completely different.

5 The Normativity Argument in the Metaphysics of Language

According to the epistemological reading I am assuming here, the Normativity Argument is epistemological in nature. The argument gets called '*Normativity Argument*' because it makes use of the notion of justification, which is normative, but its focus on our justificatory practices is just a means to call attention to an epistemological point, and in fact the argument can be rephrased without making any mention of justifications, so that '*Normativity Argument*' is really something of a misnomer.

In the philosophy of mind, focusing on the epistemological core of the argument – setting aside all talk of justifications – gets us something like this: it is a fact that we have direct access to (non-inferential knowledge of) what we mean by our words; we do not have, however, any such access to our linguistic dispositions; therefore, dispositional analyses of meaning cannot account for the epistemology of this mental state, and so they can be discarded out of hand.

To me, this looks like a very strong argument. But can such considerations be generalized to the case of semantic dispositionalism in the metaphysics of language? Well, in the metaphysics of language, semantic dispositionalism is the view that what makes it the case that a word refers to what it refers to are the speakers' dispositions. Therefore, here, in order to get off the ground, the Normativity Argument would need to call attention to some feature of our epistemic relationship with facts about reference – and, relatedly, of our knowledge of a word's reference – that semantic dispositionalism cannot make sense of. What we need is an asymmetry between our knowledge of a word's reference, our semantic competence, and our knowledge of the speakers' dispositions. Hence, the issue of the effectiveness of 'normative' considerations against semantic dispositionalism in the metaphysics of language comes down to a very simple question: is such an asymmetry anywhere to be found?

To the extent that I can make sense of the notion of reference, it seems to me that the character of our epistemic relationship to the relevant facts is perfectly consistent with the idea that those facts are facts about the speakers' dispositions. The mental state of meaning a certain thing by a certain word is clearly a conscious state (a

state with a phenomenal component), to which we have *direct, non-inferential* access. Facts about the reference of linguistic expressions, though, are not like that. Granted, that ‘+’ refers to addition is something I am *extremely confident* about. It may even be said that that is something I am *certain* of. But the very same degree of confidence I have in the fact that my own and my fellow speakers’ dispositions concerning ‘+’ track addition, and not some other quaddition-like function. Therefore, it seems that nothing about the nature of our epistemic access to facts about reference tells against the idea that these facts are really facts concerning how we are disposed to use the words of our language.

One might try to salvage the argument by building on the fact that, in its original version, the Normativity Argument made use of the concept of justification. Of course, we have seen that, in the case of the version of the argument Kripke runs in the philosophy of mind, any mention of justifications can be removed without in any way weakening the argument. But maybe things are different when we turn to the metaphysics of language; maybe here the reference to our justificatory practices is essential.

Prima facie, this is an interesting suggestion. When one realizes that the point of the Normativity Argument is epistemological, Kripke’s emphasis on the notion of justification starts to look rather strange. But if it were to turn out that in the case of the metaphysics of language the argument requires that concept, then the way Kripke builds it would make much more sense. That being said, I do not see how a focus on our justificatory practices could provide the kind of asymmetry we are after. And so my conclusion is that the Normativity Argument is not a serious threat to semantic dispositionalism in the metaphysics of language.

6 Conclusion

Kripke took the Normativity Argument to show not just that semantic dispositionalism is false, but that it is *clearly* false, that nobody in their right mind could *take seriously* such a blatantly inadequate account of meaning. The standard interpretation of the Normativity Argument – according to which the point of the argument is that while meaning a certain thing by a certain word entails categorical oughts, having certain dispositions does not – makes Kripke’s assessment of the strength of his argument look overly optimistic.¹⁰ After all, that meaning a certain thing by a certain word entails cate-

¹⁰ For this reading see the works cited in note 1.

gorical oughts is far from uncontroversial.¹¹ On the other hand, the epistemological reading I sketched in section 3 makes, I think, perfect sense of Kripke's view of the dialectic, since the argument described in that section is indeed a very strong one. But by vindicating Kripke's assessment of the merits of the Normativity Argument the epistemological reading raises a worry: if it is true that nobody in their right mind could take seriously such a blatantly inadequate account of meaning as semantic dispositionalism, how is it that among the ranks of semantic dispositionalists we find philosophers such as (to name just a few) Simon Blackburn (1984), Charlie Martin and John Heil (1998), Fred Dretske (1981) and Jerry Fodor (1990)?

The two theses I have argued for in the previous two sections can, I think, help answer such worries. As shown in section 4, the label 'semantic dispositionalism' is ambiguous. It may refer to the view in the philosophy of mind which is the primary target of Kripke's normativity considerations, but it may also refer to a thesis in the metaphysics of language. And, as I have argued in section 5, when viewed as an argument against the latter thesis the Normativity Argument is quite weak. Hence, it may be that the reason why Blackburn, Dretske, Fodor, etc. found semantic dispositionalism attractive is that what they had in mind was, at least to some extent, not the view in the philosophy of mind, which is indeed blatantly inadequate, but that in the metaphysics of language.¹²

Bibliography

- Blackburn, S. (1984). "The Individual Strikes Back". *Synthese*, 58(3), 281-301. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00485244>.
- Boghossian, P.A. (2003). "The Normativity of Content", in "Philosophy of Mind", *Philosophical Issues*, 13(1), 31-45.
- Boghossian, P.A. (2005). "Is Meaning Normative?". Nimtz, C.; Beckermann, A. (Hrsgg), *Philosophie und/als Wissenschaft. Hauptvorträge und Kolloquiumsbeiträge zu GAP.5. Fünfter Internationaler Kongress der Gesellschaft für Analytische Philosophie* (Bielefeld, 22.-26. September 2003). Paderborn: Mentis, 205-18.
- Dretske, F.I. (1981). *Knowledge and the Flow of Information*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Fodor, J.A. (1990). *A Theory of Content and Other Essays*. Cambridge (MA); London: The MIT Press.
- Gibbard, A. (2012). *Meaning and Normativity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹¹ See, e.g., Boghossian 2003, 2005; Glüer, Wikforss 2009; Hattiangadi 2006, 2007; Wikforss 2001.

¹² Of course, the two semantic dispositionalisms are, as I have already noted, related and most philosophers (Kripke in primis) do not distinguish clearly between them. Therefore, it does not make much sense to pretend that there is a clear-cut distinction between having in mind the view in the metaphysics of language and having in mind that in the philosophy of mind.

- Glüer, K.; Wikforss, Å. (2009). "Against Content Normativity". *Mind*, 118(469), 31-70. <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/fzn154>.
- Guardo, A. (2012a). "Rule-Following, Ideal Conditions and Finkish Dispositions". *Philosophical Studies*, 157(2), 195-209. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-010-9632-y>.
- Guardo, A. (2012b). "Kripke's Account of the Rule-Following Considerations". *European Journal of Philosophy*, 20(3), 366-88. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0378.2010.00414.x>.
- Guardo, A. (2014). "Semantic Dispositionalism and Non-Inferential Knowledge". *Philosophia*, 42(3), 749-59. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11406-014-9518-x>.
- Guardo, A. (2018). *Seguire una regola*. Milano: Mimesis.
- Hattiangadi, A. (2006). "Is Meaning Normative?". *Mind and Language*, 21(2), 220-40. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0268-1064.2006.00312.x>.
- Hattiangadi, A. (2007). *Oughts and Thoughts. Rule-Following and the Normativity of Content*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kripke, S.A. [1981] (1982). *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language. An Elementary Exposition*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Martin, C.B.; Heil, J. (1998). "Rules and Powers". *Philosophical Perspectives*, 12, 283-312. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0029-4624.32.s12.13>.
- Miller, A. (2010). "The Argument from Queerness and the Normativity of Meaning". Grajner, M.; Rami, A. (eds), *Truth, Existence and Realism*. Frankfurt am Main: Ontos Verlag, 107-24.
- Warren, J. (2020). "Killing Kripkenstein's Monster". *Noûs*, 54(20), 257-89. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nous.12242>.
- Whiting, D. (2007). "The Normativity of Meaning Defended". *Analysis*, 67(2), 133-40.
- Whiting, D. (2009). "Is Meaning Fraught with Ought?". *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 90(4), 535-55. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0114.2009.01354.x>.
- Wikforss, Å.M. (2001). "Semantic Normativity". *Philosophical Studies*, 102(2), 203-26. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1004746319850>.
- Wright, C. [1989] (2001). "Wittgenstein's Rule-Following Considerations and the Central Project of Theoretical Linguistics". Wright, C., *Rails to Infinity. Essays on Themes from Wittgenstein's "Philosophical Investigations"*. Cambridge (MA); London: Harvard University Press, 170-213.
- Zalabardo, J.L. (1997). "Kripke's Normativity Argument". *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 27(4), 467-88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00455091.1997.10717482>.

Why the Mark of the Dispositional is not the Mark of the Intentional

Alberto Voltolini

Università degli Studi di Torino, Italia

Abstract In this paper, first of all, I will try to show that Crane's attempt at facing Nes' criticism of his two original criteria for intentionality (of reference), directedness and aspectual shape, does not work. Hence, in order to dispense with Nes' counterexample given in terms of dispositions, there is no need to strengthen such criteria by appealing to representationality. Moreover, I will stress that such criteria are perfectly fine when properly meant in mental *viz* phenomenological terms that appeal to the possible non-existence and the possible apparent aspectuality of the object of a thought, its intentional object. For once they are so meant, dispositions clearly lack them.

Keywords (Reference) intentionality. Dispositions. Directedness. Aspectual shape. Intentional object. Possible nonexistence. Possible apparent aspectuality.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Dispositions Do Not Threaten the Traditional Mark of Intentionality. – 3 Why the Traditional Mark Works. – 4 Conclusion.



Edizioni
Ca' Foscari

Peer review

Submitted	2020-03-02
Accepted	2020-04-01
Published	2020-06-30

Open access

© 2020 | Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Public License



Citation Voltolini, A. (2020). "Why the Mark of the Dispositional is not the Mark of the Intentional". *JoLMA. The Journal for the Philosophy of Language, Mind and the Arts*, 1(1), 27-40.

DOI 10.30687/Jolma/2723-9640/2020/01/003

1 Introduction

In 2008 Crane replies to an attack (Nes 2008) to his claim that the mental features of directedness plus aspectual shape constitute the mark of the intentional (Crane 2001). This attack appeals to the idea that dispositions satisfy the very same criteria. Crane says that Nes' attack does not actually work (Crane 2008). For, according to him, in allegedly catching the mark of the dispositional, the attack basically ends up providing allegedly necessary and jointly sufficient conditions yet of the different linguistic phenomenon of *intensionality*. For this reason, he adds, it is not surprising that sophisticating the linguistic versions of such criteria by appealing to hyperintensionality or further linguistic machineries does not work either, as Nes himself stressed. Since however such linguistic versions may appear as counterparts of his two mental criteria, he finally tries to strengthen such criteria by appealing to representationality as a further necessary and (along with the other two) jointly sufficient condition of intentionality.

In this paper, first of all, I will try to show that such a strengthening does not work. Moreover, I will stress that the two original criteria provided by Crane are perfectly fine when properly meant in mental terms that appeal to the possible nonexistence and the possible apparent aspectuality of the object of a thought, its intentional object. For once they are so meant, dispositions clearly lack them. In this respect, the linguistic approach to such issues that I gave in Voltolini (2005), which appeals to existential unloadedness and pseudo-opacity, yields merely the adequate linguistic counterparts of such mental criteria.

The architecture of this paper is the following. In section 1, I will try to show why neither Nes' attack to Crane's criteria nor Crane's strengthening of them work. In section 2 I will try to show how Crane's original criteria work when appropriately meant in mental terms. Section 3 concludes.

2 Dispositions Do Not Threaten the Traditional Mark of Intentionality

According to Crane (2001, 2013), objectual intentionality or *intentionality of reference*, the property for an intentional state, a *thought*, to be about something, must be distinguished from *intentionality of content*, the property for a thought to have a content that determines

I thank Anna Marmodoro, Andrea Raimondi and Elisabetta Sacchi for their very useful comments to a previous version of this paper.

its satisfaction conditions (Kim 1996), since the former is more basic than the latter. By actually focusing on intentionality of reference,¹ Crane says further, as a property of mental states intentionality is characterized by two features that are its necessary and jointly sufficient conditions; namely, *directedness* – the fact that thoughts may be both about something that exists and about something that does not exist – and *aspectual shape* – the fact that what one thinks about presents itself under a perspective, or an aspect. If intentionality is further taken, *à la* Brentano (1874), as the mark of the mental – the claim that all and only mental states are intentional – as Crane also wishes, then directedness and aspectual shape constitute that mark as well. For the purposes of this paper, following Crane himself (2008, 215), I can however put this further issue aside (for my skepticism on the claim, cf. Voltolini 2013b).

Recently, Nes (2008) has maintained that such criteria do not provide jointly sufficient conditions of intentionality. For even dispositions satisfy them: they have both directedness and aspectual shape. In Nes' own example, take the disposition to attract a metal pretzel. Says Nes,

[e]ven if there are no metal pretzels, something may be disposed to attract a metal pretzel. And even if the extension of “metal pretzel” is the same as the extension of “passion for shrimp-flavoured ice-cream”, i.e. the empty set, the true report:

(1) The ball is disposed to attract a metal pretzel

is not equivalent to:

(2) The ball is disposed to attract a passion for shrimp-flavoured ice-cream. (2008, 209; sentence numbering changed)

By paraphrasing Place (1996),² one might say that in looking for the mark of the intentional, one has actually found the mark of the dispositional. Yet as Crane himself stresses (2008, 216), there is an easy way for him to rule out the counterexample, which in point of fact was already presented in similar terms by Martin, Pfeifer (1986). If, as Nes actually does, we consider dispositions in terms of their linguistic reports, it is easy to see why such reports do not provide jointly

¹ Intentionality of content is indeed characterized not only by directedness and aspectual shape, but also by the fact that – as Fodor (1987) puts it – representations can be true as well as false, or in other terms, intentional states have the content they have independently of whether the satisfaction conditions determined by that content are indeed satisfied.

² Even though for him things are actually more complicated. See the following footnote.

sufficient conditions of intentionality. For, as many people along with Crane himself (2001) have underlined (starting from Kneale 1968 and Searle 1983), the linguistic phenomena that feature such reports, i.e. failure of existential generalization on the one hand and failure of substitutivity *salva veritate* on the other hand, are no criteria for singling out the genuine linguistic counterparts of intentional states; namely, adequate reports of such states, *intentional reports*. Instead, they constitute a mark of the more general linguistic phenomenon of *intensionality*, which affects dispositional reports just as modal or nomic statements, *intensional contexts* in general.³ As a result, comments Crane, it is no surprise that Nes is right in holding that even linguistic refinements of the above features, such as those involving hyperintensionality or what Nes calls Russellian meanings (the contribution to the structured Russellian propositions expressed by the sentences in which the relevant terms figure) (2008, 213), do not work either.

So far, so good. Yet these considerations notwithstanding, Crane wants to take this counterexample seriously. Probably because he feels that, even if it is stated in improperly linguistic terms, it may indirectly undermine his two aforementioned mental criteria for intentionality, directedness and aspectual shape, as being jointly insufficient as well. For, he says, “in broad outline, the intensionality of the ingredients of reason is the logical expression or reflection of these two ideas” (2001, 13). In this respect, he adds a further condition to his two criteria of intentionality, i.e. *representationality*. For “a representation can represent something that does not exist, and [...] when something is represented it is represented under some aspect or other” (2008, 216), while dispositions do not represent the phenomena manifesting them.

One may however wonder whether appealing to representationality, as Crane does, really helps. For on the one hand, talking of representation is just another way of cashing out the idea that intentional states, in their being the kind of states they are (hence, in their having a certain *mode*), are about something or have a content (Searle 1983, 12). Thus, speaking of intentional or of representational states basically amounts to the same thing. This is shown by the linguistic facts that, in talking about content, people often indifferently labels it *intentional* or *representational* content, and that, in describing the philosophical position that takes all mental states to be intentional states, people often indifferently refer to it as *intentionalism* or *representationalism*. So meant, representationality can hardly work as

³ Place (1996) puts forward an intermediate position. For even if he states that the genuine criteria for intentionality are actually the mark of the dispositional, he rules out aspectual shape as contributing, once linguistically conceived, to mark intensionality instead.

a further criterion of intentionality.⁴ On the other hand, by talking of representation one may mean the more specific idea that thoughts are relations to representations, to be understood as the physical vehicles (typically located in one's brain) that are endowed either with aboutness or with content. Yet it would be hard to appeal to this more fine-grained conception of representation. For it would amount to take as a criterion of intentionality what in point of fact constitutes just the tenet of a specific theory of thoughts, the so-called representational theory of mind, a version of the classical computational theory of mind (cf. e.g. Fodor 1981). For one may well hold that a thought is qualified by directedness and aspectual shape without espousing the further idea that it is so qualified in virtue of its standing in a (typically computational) relation with a representational yet physical vehicle having those features.

Perhaps there are further ways of cashing out what for Crane representationality amounts to. At the very beginning of his book (2001), he says that having a mind, in its being basically featured by intentionality, amounts to having a point of view on the world (Crane 2001, 4-6). Yet appealing to the idea of a point of view is hardly useful in this context. For either it is just another way of pointing out that thoughts have aspectual shape, and therefore it does not mobilize any further feature of intentionality, or it is something that hardly qualifies thoughts *as such*, whether it further appeals to the idea that objects or contents of a thought are *presented* to the thought's subject (McGinn 1997), an idea that properly applies just to perceptual experiences, or it appeals to the similar idea that *experiential* thoughts are, or involve, representations *for* a subject (Kriegel 2013), an idea that rules out unconscious thoughts.

3 Why the Traditional Mark Works

In point of fact, if one reflects on what the traditional marks of intentionality, directedness and aspectual shape, actually amount to from a straightforwardly mental point of view, one can better understand why dispositions are no counterexample to them. For in having such features, thoughts are not qualified by mental counterparts of the linguistic features of intensional contexts, failure of existential generalization and failure of substitutivity *salva veritate*, which instead adequately apply to dispositional reports as *bona fide* cases of intensional contexts. Instead, directedness and aspectual shape are other mental features; namely, the *possible nonexistence* of the ob-

⁴ Even more problematically, for Martin and Pfeifer even dispositions represent in this sense (1986, 541). For other criticisms to Crane on this point, cf. Raimondi, unpublished.

ject of a thought, its *intentional object* as the tradition has labeled it, and its *possible apparent aspectuality*. In their turn, so meant these features are linguistically matched by corresponding linguistic features, let me call them *existential unloadedness* and *pseudo-opacity*, which properly apply just to intentional reports, as I said elsewhere (Voltolini 2005).

Let me start from directedness. Appearances notwithstanding, directedness is not the mental fact that there may be no object for a thought. Instead, it is the mental fact that the object of a thought may exist just as may not exist: the *possible nonexistence* of the intentional object. By contrast, dispositions are not qualified by directedness so meant. Granted, dispositions may be individuated, if not in a *metaphysical* at least in a weaker *epistemic* sense, in terms of their possible manifestations. For example, fragility is the capacity for something *to be broken*, which if it does not metaphysically *depend* on this possible manifestation,⁵ at least it is epistemically *identified* by means of it. Yet a disposition is such that it may have no object *at all* with which such a possible manifestation is related. Pace Nes (2008), this is not the same as what would be a proper directedness for dispositions, if there were any (which is not the case); namely, the idea that they may have an existent as well as a nonexistent object. On behalf of the dispositionalist, one may reply that such an object of a disposition is *the possible manifestation itself*: a possible event is what the disposition is directed upon (Martin, Pfeifer 1986; Place 1996).⁶ Yet again, insofar as there may be no object at all the possible manifestation is related with, this possible event is just a generic, not a singular item, as the object an intentional state is directed upon is instead taken⁷ to be. This difference is linguistically captured by their distinct kinds of reports, the intentional vs the dispositional reports.

Let me clarify this point by means of examples. Sean Connery may think of Nicola Sturgeon, the present Scottish First Minister that ac-

⁵ This dependence can be further meant either in a weaker modal, existential, sense, or in a stronger essentialist, ontological, sense. For more on these senses cf. e.g. Fine 1995.

⁶ For a metaphysical, strong, sense of individuation of dispositions in terms of their possible manifestations, cf. e.g. Bird 2007. By specifying what Martin and Pfeifer (1986) maintain, Place (1996) instead claims that a further criterion that contribute to single out dispositionality is the weaker epistemic identification of something in terms of its object; precisely, its possible manifestation. Crane himself flirts with this idea when he says that dispositions are individuated, in a weak, non ontologically committal sense, by their possible manifestations, just as thoughts are individuated, in the very same sense, by intentional objects (forthcoming; 2001, 25-6). Yet not even this weak epistemically individuating sense of directedness captures the sense of directedness that is involved in the criterion for intentionality. For this latter sense is not epistemic, but phenomenological (if not also ontological), as we will see later: it (possibly correctly) looks to one that one's state is about something independently of whether it actually exists.

⁷ Or even *felt*: see later.

tually exists, just as he may think of Nessie, the alleged Loch Ness monster that actually does not exist. In both cases, *there is something*, namely Nicola and Nessie respectively, Sean thinks about; yet simply, in the second case, unlike the first case, that very something does not exist. This is linguistically captured not by the idea that a sentence like:

(3) Sean thinks of Nessie (who does not exist)

elicits no existential generalization, as is traditionally said (e.g. Smith, McIntyre 1982; Searle 1983; and even Crane himself 2001), but rather (see Sainsbury 2018, and even Crane himself 2013) by the fact that it elicits a particular, nonexistentially loaded, quantification. Indeed, from (3) one can validly infer:

(4) Hence, there is something, namely Nessie, Sean thinks about (who does not exist).

Clearly enough, the validity of this inference shows that in the above case there is no failure of existential generalization. For what is rather involved is a particular generalization existentially unloaded – *existential unloadedness*, for short (McGinn 2000, 2004).⁸ For it ranges upon an overall domain of individuals independently of whether they exist or not. While in the dispositional case, existential generalization fails *tout court*. For, to come back to Nes' example:

(1) The ball is disposed to attract a metal pretzel

(5) Hence, there is a metal pretzel the ball is disposed to attract

is an invalid inference, even if “there is” is given a non-existentially loaded reading. Indeed, there is no metal pretzel, even in an existentially unloaded sense, the ball is disposed to attract. Granted, in extensional contexts the description “a metal pretzel” actually denotes the empty set. Yet in (1) it has a merely possible denotation, but it actually denotes no actually nonexistent item, not even a possible indi-

⁸ Note that in order to account for this situation there is no need to resort *à la* Priest (2016) to two different ‘existential’ quantifying items respectively meant by different expressions, an existential (“there exists”) and a particular (“some”) one. For, in trying to capture the linguistic counterpart of the possible nonexistence of the intentional object, one may say that precisely the same kind of inference mobilizing just the very same quantifier holds from “Sam thinks of Nicole (who exists)” to “There is someone, namely Nicole, Sam thinks of (who exists)”. Simply in this case, one may contextually use the very same quantifier *restrictedly*, as ranging over just the subdomain of existents. For more about this see Voltolini 2018.

vidual. For it is indeterminate what that possible denotation amounts to, as Kaplan (1973, 505-8; 1989, 609) originally stressed by raising the problem of the insufficient specificity for an actually unsatisfied description to single out a certain possible *denotatum*. Consider a possible world *w* that contains a metal pretzel (to be attracted by the relevant ball) and a possible world *w'* that contains a metal pretzel (to be attracted by such a ball) as well. Are such possible metal pretzels the same thing or not? There is no fact of the matter as to how this question could be answered.⁹ As a result, the step from the *de dicto* reading conveyed by (1) to the *de re* reading stated by (5) is illegitimate.¹⁰ Clearly enough, in fact, unlike (3) no plausible existential generalization of any sort generalization, not even a particular one existentially unloaded, does come out of the infinitival expression “to attract a metal pretzel” occurring in (1).¹¹

Ditto for aspectual shape. Appearances notwithstanding, aspectual shape is not the mental fact that it is indeterminate whether two thoughts are about the same object, but it is the mental fact that two thoughts are about different intentional objects that may further appear as aspects of the very same thing: the *possible apparent aspectuality* of the intentional object. By contrast, dispositions are not qualified by aspectual shape so meant. For dispositions are such that it is indeterminate whether an object a possible manifestation is related with is the same as another object the manifestation is related with. This is not the same as what would be a proper aspectual shape for dispositions if there were any (which is not the case); namely, the idea that there are different objects such possible manifestations are related with. Nor would resorting to the possible manifestations themselves fare any better: simply, a mere indetermination in their identity would arise as well. Again, this difference is linguistically captured by their distinct kinds of reports, the intentional vs the dispositional reports.

Again, let me rely on examples. Oedipus may entertain a certain thought with respect to a certain intentional object, call it “Jocasta”, yet fail to entertain the same kind of thought with respect to *another* intentional object, call it “Mummy”, even if both objects may further

⁹ I take that the indeterminacy in question is metaphysical. Yet nothing would change if it were semantical, i.e. it involved a conceptual failure in the description of the relevant possible world. At any rate, clearly enough it is not epistemic, i.e. it has nothing to do with a failure in identification.

¹⁰ Cf. Smith, McIntyre (1982, 30-3), who precisely tie this failure of existential generalization (which is for me the only genuine failure that there is) to the illegitimacy of passing from a *de dicto* to a *de re* reading of the relevant sentence. Unfortunately, they connect this illegitimacy with an unnecessary distinction between indefinite and definite intentions.

¹¹ As Place himself (1996, 104) implicitly acknowledges.

appear as aspects of the same thing, Jocasta-aka-Mummy. Sticking to reports of objectual intentional states (but the same result would be obtained if one mobilized reports of propositional intentional states), this is linguistically captured by the fact that (*pace* Freud) the true:

(6) Oedipus craves for Jocasta

is matched by the false:

(7) Oedipus craves for Mummy.

For in such contexts, the ordinarily coreferring names “Jocasta” and “Mummy” respectively refer to different intentional objects that may further appear as aspects of one and the same thing, Jocasta-aka-Mummy. Thus, as Frege (1892) originally captured,¹² in (6)-(7) there is no failure of substitutivity *salva veritate*. For there is no referential *opacity*, but just *pseudo-opacity* (Voltolini 2005). Indeed appearances notwithstanding, the names do not corefer there, for instead they refer to different intentional objects, respectively named there “Jocasta” and “Mummy”. While in the dispositional case, there is such a failure *viz* proper referential opacity. Suppose one goes back to:¹³

(1) The ball is disposed to attract a metal pretzel.

(2) The ball is disposed to attract a passion for shrimp-flavoured ice-cream.

Granted, in extensional contexts the two descriptions “a metal pretzel” and “a passion for shrimp-flavoured ice-cream” actually code-note the empty set. Yet unlike what happens in (6)-(7), in (1)-(2) such descriptions do not actually denote *different* (actually nonexistent) objects; they merely have possible denotations of which is indeterminate whether they are identical. Indeed, it is indeterminate whether there is just one *attractable* metal pretzel across unactual possible worlds as well as whether there is just one *passion-attractable* shrimp-flavoured ice-cream across such worlds, hence whether they

¹² Actually, Frege was committed to a metaphysical picture of intentional objects as *Sinne*, i.e. abstract objects of a certain kind. Yet this is irrelevant for my present purposes (see later).

¹³ This can be better seen in Martin and Pfeifer’s example, where the two dispositional reports respectively involve two definite descriptions, “the only pink object O at L” and “the only object M of mass f at L” (1986, 533), which in extensional contexts actually denote the same thing, but in such reports differ in their possible indeterminate denotations.

are identical.¹⁴ As a further result, it is indeterminate as well whether to the two infinitival expressions “to attract a metal pretzel” and “to attract a passion for shrimp-flavoured ice-cream” single out different possible events. All in all, the fact that (1) has a certain truth-value is no guarantee for (2), which turns out from the mere substitution of the first description with the actually codenoting (in extensional contexts) second description, to have the same truth-value.¹⁵

At this point, however, one may wonder what makes it the case that the above characterizations of directedness and aspectual shape are *mental* characterizations. In response, note that, in so mobilizing the notion of an intentional object as involved both in directedness and aspectual shape adequately meant, I have not relied on any metaphysical characterization of such objects, nor have I ontologically committed to them. Instead, by following Crane (2001, 2013) and Woodling (2016a, 2016b), I have simply stuck to the *phenomenological* characterization of such objects, as is captured by the three following theses:

a) every intentional state is about an intentional object, i.e. there is an intentional object for any intentional state independently of whether it exists;

b) taken as such, whether or not it exists, an intentional object is a schematic object, i.e. it is an object that has no particular metaphysical nature insofar as it is thought of;

c) taken as such, whether or not it exists, an intentional object is a phenomenological object, i.e. an object for the subject of the intentional state: more precisely, it is what that subject takes (or even *feels*) that state to be about.

According to these theses, on the one hand, in the first example above Nessie is the object of Sean’s thought, even if it does not exist. On the other hand, in the second example, Jocasta and Mummy are the two different intentional objects of Oedipus’ relevant thoughts, insofar as for a long while Oedipus has not recognized that they further appear as aspects of one and the same thing, Jocasta-aka-Mummy.

¹⁴ See fn. 9.

¹⁵ Both Martin, Pfeifer (1986) and Place (1996) appeal to a further criterion that traces back to Anscombe (1965), the so-called indeterminacy of the intentional object, in order to again hold that also this criterion contributes to single out dispositionality, not intentionality. Yet the only plausible sense in which the criterion qualifies intentional objects, which is *epistemic* – namely, the idea that the subject of an intentional state *may not know* of certain properties whether they are possessed or not by a certain intentional object – does not qualify dispositions.

This is what tragically reveals itself to be the case when Oedipus finally discovers that Jocasta is the same as Mummy.¹⁶

Granted, it is an utterly different issue to settle *what* intentional objects metaphysically really are, and whether *there* really are such objects from an ontological point of view. Personally on the one hand, as I stressed elsewhere (cf. e.g. Voltolini 2013a), I believe with Crane (2001, 2013) that out of their being thought of, intentional objects are metaphysically various. *Pace* Crane, on the other hand, I also believe that the answer as to the issue of whether there really are, ontologically speaking, such metaphysically various intentional objects, depends on the issue of whether we are already ontologically committed to objects of the respective metaphysical kind. Sometimes, the answer to this question is typically positive – e.g. when intentional objects are *concreta* – yet some other times we are uncertain on what is the right answer to it – e.g. when intentional objects are *ficta* – and some further times the answer is typically negative – e.g. when intentional objects are *impossibilia*. Yet someone else may have utterly different both metaphysical and ontological convictions on these issues.

Fortunately enough, however, in order to settle the issue of whether directedness and aspectual shape are necessary and jointly sufficient conditions of intentionality (of reference), we do not have to enter into these metaphysical and ontological controversies. For even if phenomenology is the last guide *neither* to metaphysics *nor* to ontology, directedness and aspectual shape must still qualify intentionality, by mobilizing the proper metaphysico-ontological counterparts of intentional objects, whatever they are. Thus, meaning such features phenomenologically, as above, is enough in order for them to work as the mark of the intentional, not of the dispositional.¹⁷

¹⁶ For more about this (in particular, why the weak sameness relation between different intentional objects is not the same as the strong identity relation between an object and itself, an idea originally defended brilliantly by Castañeda 1989), cf. e.g. Voltolini 2016.

¹⁷ If one claims that metaphysically, intentionality amounts to the essential thought-object relation of *constitution*, as I do (cf. Sacchi, Voltolini 2012; Voltolini 2015), the idea that directedness and aspectual shape must be phenomenologically meant as I have just done is further corroborated. Incidentally, this claim does not reintroduce the issue of distinguishing intentionality from dispositionality from the rear door. For even if one appeals to the strong metaphysical sense of individuation as ontological dependence in order to understand the relation between dispositions and their possible manifestations (see fnn. 5-6), the constitution relation holding between a thought and its object (or content) is even stronger than that. For, unlike possible manifestations of a disposition, the object is an *essential part* of its thought. Yet for this paper's purposes I can leave these matters aside.

4 Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to show that, when properly meant, i.e. phenomenologically, as involving intentional objects that may not exist and may further appear as aspects of other things, Crane's criteria of intentionality (notably, reference intentionality), directedness and aspectual shape, resist Nes' counterexamples appealing to dispositions. Thus, in order to find the mark of the intentional we do not need to resort to a further alleged yet unclear feature of intentionality, representationality, as Crane instead thinks.

Bibliography

- Anscombe, G.E.M. (1965). "The Intentionality of Sensation. A Grammatical Feature". Butler, R.J. (ed.), *Analytic Philosophy*. Oxford: Blackwell, 158-80.
- Bird, A. (2007). *Nature's Metaphysics. Laws and Properties*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Brentano, F.C. (1874). *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, Band I. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Castañeda, H.-N. (1989). *Thinking, Language, and Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Crane, T. (2001). *Elements of Mind. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Crane, T. (2008). "Reply to Nes". *Analysis*, 68(3), 215-18. <https://doi.org/10.1093/analys/68.3.215>.
- Crane, T. (2013). *The Objects of Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Crane, T. (forthcoming). "Is Intentionality a Relation?". *Rabindra Bharati Journal of Philosophy*.
- Fine, K. (1995). "Ontological Dependence". *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 95, 269-89. <https://doi.org/10.1093/aristotelian/95.1.269>.
- Fodor, J.A. (1981). "Methodological Solipsism Considered as a Research Strategy in Cognitive Psychology". Haugeland, J. (ed.), *Mind Design*. Cambridge (MA); London: The MIT Press, 307-38. Bradford Books.
- Fodor, J.A. (1987). *Psychosemantics. The Problem of Meaning in the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge, MA; London: The MIT Press. Bradford Books.
- Frege, G. (1892). "Über Sinn und Bedeutung". *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik*, 100, 25-50.
- Kaplan, D. (1973). "Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice". Hintikka, K.J.J.; Moravcsik, J.M.E.; Suppes, P. (eds), *Approaches to Natural Language. Proceedings of the 1970 Stanford Workshop on Grammar and Semantics*. Dordrecht; Boston: Reidel, 490-518. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-2506-5_27.
- Kaplan, D. (1989). "Afterthoughts". Almog, J.; Perry, J.; Wettstein, H. (eds), *Themes from Kaplan*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 565-614.
- Kim, J. (1996). *Philosophy of Mind*. Boulder (CO): Westview Press.
- Kneale, W. (1968). "Intentionality and Intensionality". *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, suppl., 42(1). <https://doi.org/10.1093/aristotelian-suppl/42.1.73>.

- Kriegel, U. (2013). "Two Notions of Mental Representation". Kriegel, U. (ed.), *Current Controversies in Philosophy of Mind*. London: Routledge, 161-79. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203116623-7>.
- Martin, C.B.; Pfeifer, K. (1986). "Intentionality and the Non-Psychological". *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 46, 531-54. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2107668>.
- McGinn, C. (1997). "Consciousness and Content". Block, N.; Flanagan, O.; Güzeldere, G. (eds), *The Nature of Consciousness. Philosophical Debates*. Cambridge (MA); London: The MIT Press, 295-307.
- McGinn, C. (2000). *Logical Properties. Identity, Existence, Predication, Necessity, Truth*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- McGinn, C. (2004). "The Objects of Intentionality". McGinn, C., *Consciousness and Its Objects*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 220-48. <https://doi.org/10.1093/019926760x.003.0011>.
- Nes, A. (2008). "Are Only Mental Phenomena Intentional?". *Analysis*, 68(3), 205-15. <https://doi.org/10.1093/analys/68.3.205>.
- Place, U.T. (1996). "Intentionality as the Mark of the Dispositional". *Dialectica*, 50(2), 91-120. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-8361.1996.tb00001.x>.
- Priest, G. (2016). *Towards Non-Being. The Logic and Metaphysics of Intentionality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Raimondi, A. (unpublished). "Tim Crane's Concept of Intentionality: A Critical Assessment".
- Sacchi, E.; Voltolini, A. (2012). "To Think Is to Have Something in One's Thought". *Quaestio*, 12, 395-422. <https://doi.org/10.1484/j.quaestio.1.103622>.
- Sainsbury, M. (2018). *Thinking about Things*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Searle, J.R. (1983). *Intentionality. An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, D.W.; McIntyre, R. (1982). *Husserl and Intentionality. A Study of Mind, Meaning and Language*. Dordrecht: Reidel.
- Voltolini, A. (2005). "How to Get Intentionality by Language". Forrai, G.; Kampis, G. (eds), *Intentionality. Past and Future*. Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 127-41.
- Voltolini, A. (2013a). "The Mark of the Mental". *Phenomenology and Mind*, 4, 124-36. https://doi.org/10.13128/Phe_Mi-19595.
- Voltolini, A. (2013b). "There Are *Intentionalia* of Which It Is True that Such Objects Do Not Exist". *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 21(3), 394-414. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09672559.2013.788267>.
- Voltolini, A. (2015). "What's in a (Mental) Picture". Torza, A. (ed.), *Quantifiers, Quantifiers, and Quantifiers. Themes in Logic, Metaphysics, and Language*. Cham; Heidelberg; New York; Dordrecht; London: Springer, 389-406. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-18362-6_18.
- Voltolini, A. (2016). "Why Frege Cases Do Involve Cognitive Phenomenology but Only Indirectly". *Philosophical Explorations*, 19(2), 205-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13869795.2016.1176236>.
- Voltolini, A. (2018). "Ontological Syncretistic Noneism". *The Australasian Journal of Logic*, 15(2), 124-38. <https://doi.org/10.26686/ajl.v15i2.4067>.
- Woodling, C. (2016a). "The Indispensability and Irreducibility of Intentional Objects". *The Journal of Philosophical Research*, 41, 543-58. <https://doi.org/10.5840/jpr201683093>.

Woodling, C. (2016b). "The Limits of Adverbialism about Intentionality". *Inquiry*, 59(5), 488-512. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174x.2016.1140071>.

Aesthetic Cognitivism

Anna Marmodoro

Durham University, UK

Abstract Is beauty a feature of objects in the world; or a feature of our individual experience of objects; or the result of aesthetic education and training, modulated by social culture? I argue that aesthetic properties are like perceptual properties, understood as Constitutionalism explains them: as real features of objects in the world that fully manifest themselves only in causal interaction with suitable perceivers. I here develop Constitutionalism to provide a metaphysical account of aesthetic properties in terms of causal powers. Like perceptual properties, aesthetic properties are (multi-track and multi-stage) powers of objects that mutually manifest with relevant powers of the perceiver. On this basis, I argue that aesthetic judgements, like perceptual judgements, are apt for truth and falsity, and their truth value derives from the reliable experiences that produce them.

Keywords Aesthetic properties. Perceptual properties. Causal powers. Reliabilism. Cognitivism. Constitutionalism.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 The Ontology of Sensuous Properties. – 3 The Role of the Perceiver. – 4 Aesthetic Properties. – 5 Conclusion.



Edizioni
Ca' Foscari

Peer review

Submitted	2020-03-23
Accepted	2020-04-01
Published	2020-06-30

Open access

© 2020 |  Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Public License



Citation Marmodoro, A. (2020). "Aesthetic Cognitivism". *JoLMA. The Journal for the Philosophy of Language, Mind and the Arts*, 1(1), 41-52.

1 Introduction

Would the world be lushly coloured, tasty and smelly as we experience it, if there were no one to perceive it? Are colours, tastes, smells, etc. features of the world, or features of our experience?

Some philosophers hold that perceptible properties like colours are ‘out there in the world’, but are exhaustively accounted for in terms of the physical properties of objects – let us call this view *Physicalism*; whilst others claim that colours are ‘in the mind of the beholder’ and wouldn’t exist without perceivers – let us call this view *Projectivism*. Various attempts have been made in the philosophical literature to do justice to the contrasting and yet compelling intuitions motivating these two views about colours and suchlike properties; intuitively, colours seem to be ‘out there’ and also ‘in the mind’. If the qualities of the objects in the world and the qualities of our experience of them were somehow connected, we could ‘save the phenomena’; but what sort of connection would this be? *Primitivism*, a third view in the literature, holds that colours (and perceptual properties in general) are primitive intrinsic properties instantiated by physical objects; and that they are somehow constitutive of our phenomenal experience of them.¹ *Primitivism* is an appealing position: it does justice to the idea that objects are truly coloured, and colours are out there in the world, and it connects somehow – constitutively – what there is in the world with what there is in our mind. Yet, *Primitivism* posits, but doesn’t account for, this all-important constitutive connection (which isn’t identity) between our phenomenal experience of the world and the qualities of the world that we perceive. That there is no identity between the two is clear from a variety of cases, which we can subsume for convenience under the label of ‘phenomenal variance’: there is incontrovertible evidence that phenomenal experiences may vary without the perceived properties (instantiated by the physical objects) varying – to the extreme that it is possible to have phenomenal experiences of objects that don’t even exist, e.g. when an object is hallucinated. Phenomenal variance is a *datum* of our experience of the world that *Primitivism* cannot ac-

Acknowledgements: A previous version of this paper was presented as a talk at the departmental seminar in philosophy of the University of Turin. I am grateful to the audience for feedback, and to the anonymous journal’s referee. The present work draws on Marmodoro (2006) and Marmodoro, Grasso (2020), occasionally *verbatim*.

¹ For versions of *Primitivism* see e.g. Campbell (1993), Johnston (1992), McGinn (1996), Thau (2002) and Wright (2003); for a critical discussion of it Chalmers (2006). Not all Primitivists accept that primitive properties are instantiated. For instance, Maund (1995) and Wright (2003) hold that they are un-instantiated, and hence colour experiences are illusory. In this paper I assume for dialectical purposes the version of *Primitivism* according to which primitive properties are instantiated, and hence colour experiences are veridical (see e.g. Johnston 1992; Campbell 1993; McGinn 1996).

commodate in view of the constitutional relation between phenomenal experiences and perceptual properties. Our *desideratum* is a theory that accounts for perceptible properties, such as colour, as real properties of objects in the world, taking into account the existing variety of types of perceivers and perceiving conditions, and experiential cases such as non-veridical perception, hallucinations and inverted-spectrum scenarios (which *Primitivism* does not explain).

The key idea I argued for in previous work (Marmodoro 2006; Marmodoro, Grasso 2020) is that objects have qualitative features (e.g. colours) but, crucially, such properties are *sensuous*. Namely, they are such that they need to interact causally with perceivers (and not with trees or stones, or just light), to ‘come to their full’ (i.e. come to fully be what they are). They ‘come to their full’ only when and while the objects to which they belong interact causally with perceivers, under certain conditions.² What is the role of the perceiver on this account? It is to enable the objects to activate their colours in full, in a certain environment; thus serving as a necessary condition for that activation/activity, but without projecting colours onto the world. This requires causal interaction between the object and the perceiver; the realisation of powers of objects in the sense-organs of the perceiver. This causal interaction is constitutive of both of the object’s manifested qualities *and* of the perceiver’s experience of them – hence, the theory is called *Constitutionalism*. Objects are in full colour as they interact with perceivers.

I here lean on *Constitutionalism* as developed in previous work, and its central idea that some properties are sensuous, to provide a metaphysical account of aesthetic properties in terms of causal powers. In sections 2. and 3. I will introduce *Constitutionalism* and the key arguments that support it, and in section 4. I will argue that like perceptual properties, aesthetic properties are (multi-track and multi-stage) powers of objects that mutually manifest with relevant powers of the perceiver. On this basis, I argue that aesthetic judgements, like perceptual judgements, are apt for truth and falsity, and their truth value derives from the reliable experiences that produce them.

2 The Ontology of Sensuous Properties

I will here assume the stance defended elsewhere (Marmodoro 2020) and shared by other metaphysicians, that the properties we admit in our ontology as *bona fide* ones should satisfy the so-called *Eleat-*

² Furthermore, changes in the conditions wherein the interaction takes place bring about different such manifestations of the qualitative features of objects, as we will see in more depth in sections 3 and 4.

ic Principle according to which only what is causally powerful is real (see Plato's *Sophist* 247e1-4; and e.g. Armstrong 1978, 5, in current philosophy). Properties, in short, are causal powers. Powers (e.g. heat) are essentially directed towards their manifestation or exercise (heating), which defines the type of power they are. While this account of causal powers is mainstream and goes under the name of *dispositional essentialism*, fewer metaphysicians (e.g. Molnar 2003 among others) hold the additional thesis, which I endorse, that a power's manifestation or exercise always happens as mutual manifestation of partner powers. Partner powers serve reciprocally as necessary conditions for each other's manifestation.³ (Heat heats only when something is heated). Uniquely, in the current debate, I further hold that it is numerically the same power that is inactive in potentiality and then manifests. (The power that heats is the power that can heat). It is both intuitively compelling and philosophicaly sounder (for reasons given in Marmodoro 2020 and elsewhere) to think that a power's exercise is its activity, i.e. what the power does; rather than thinking that the exercise of a power is a numerically different, new power, causally related with the original one - which is the mainstream view in current debates (see e.g. Mumford 2011 among others). Powers, as I conceive of them, can endure being exercised; they may also endure various types of alteration by being exercised, as for example their strength may increase or diminish (e.g. the strength of the electric charge of a discharging capacitor diminishes). Some powers may endure repeated manifestations (as for instance the repelling power of an electron).⁴ To understand how a power endures transitioning from potentiality to exercise it is helpful to recall that instantiated powers are tropes of physical powerfulness; they are real within nature, even if inactive. Power tropes in potentiality are physically present in the world; this is their reality, and is what grounds how they endure exercise, alteration, and repeated exercise. When powers exercise/manifest, they produce change in partner powers, which we can detect.⁵

Drawing on my general metaphysics of powers, in the case of (genuine, not hallucinated) perceptions, I hold that there is a causal interaction between the powers of an object in the world and the perceiver's perceptual system. This causal interaction (under appropriate

3 Speaking more accurately, I distinguish (in Marmodoro 2020) between transitive and intransitive powers; the former (which include the powers of objects to cause certain experiences in the perceivers, and the powers of the perceivers to perceive them) are those which require manifestation partners.

4 There is ontological economy in individuating powers in a way that allows for repeated manifestation, rather than positing a different instance of the power each time.

5 The causal relation however, being contingent, gives rise to epistemological issues for the cognition of a power through its manifestation.

circumstances, e.g. light conditions), grounds the co-occurrence of a specific phenomenal property in the perceiver (e.g. the experience of seeing a specific colour) and the qualitative character of the coloured surface. Thus the power of the object to (e.g.) appearing red, and the power of the perceiver to have an experience as of red are co-activated as mutual manifestation partners.⁶ The perceiver's experience of red and the appearing red of the coloured surface are manifestations of two different powers, but constitutively connected on account of their mutual interdependence for their occurrence.⁷ The fact that colours and suchlike properties are powers of the kind here outlined is key: colours are real properties of objects; however, the full manifestation of the qualitative properties of objects is dependent on the environment and on the operation of the observer's perceptual system. Thus, *Constitutionalism* explains in which sense colours are sensuous properties, and provides the explanation of what *Primitivism* leaves unexplained on account of positing properties as primitive.

3 The Role of the Perceiver

If a tomato weren't red in the absence of any perceiver, it would seem the tomato's colour is somehow generated by its being perceived, in a projectivist, non-realist manner. On the other hand, if the tomato's being red in the absence of any perceiver were the manifestation of a numerically different power from the one that gets manifested in the presence of a perceiver, it would seem that what the perceiver sees is different from what's there when the perceiver is not there - which is counter-intuitive and deems the phenomenology of our perceptual experience systematically erroneous. I submit that perceptible properties are 'sensuous', namely, they are such that they require the presence of, and a causal interaction with the perceivers to be fully activated/manifested, in appropriate conditions. What the appropriate conditions are will vary for each type of power. Generalising, as I argued elsewhere (Marmodoro 2014; Marmodoro, Grasso 2020), sensuous properties are 'multi-stage' powers; and the role of perceivers is to enable their full manifestation, which co-occur with the perceiver's perceptual experience.

Let us now turn to phenomenal variance: suppose that how things are in the world is held fixed with regard to which sensuous proper-

⁶ For clarity, sensuous properties are dependent on their co-manifestation partners, whether they are in potentiality or are manifesting. This does not entail that a tomato is red only if someone is seeing it, but only if someone can see it.

⁷ The mutual dependencies between phenomenal properties of our experience and the full qualitative character of objects are of co-determination, co-dependence, and co-variation, as discussed in Marmodoro 2006.

ties an object has, and with regard to the obtaining of the appropriate conditions for their manifestations. Can there be variation in how different perceivers experience such a world? It seems more than plausible to answer in the positive, not only on the basis of everyday experience (think of possible illnesses or malformations affecting the sense organs), but also because of thought experiments such as the inverted spectrum one. So, suppose that perceiver A and B, while looking at the same tomato, experience phenomenal properties blue and red, respectively. Are they seeing the same colour? My answer is “Yes”; my theory can accommodate this type of case, on the understanding that colour is a multi-track power, whose manifestation is both blue and red, in A and B respectively, at the same time. Many even if not all power ontologists posit the existence of multi-track powers, such that a numerically single power may have manifestations of different types (called tracks).⁸ A commonly referred to example of a multi-track power is the power of an electron to be affected by other electrons at various distances from it. In this case, the electron does not have as many numerically different powers to be affected as there are repelling powers of other electrons, but only one numerically same power that admits different manifestation types, and which is manifested in combination with different partner powers (i.e. the powers of other electrons). Thus, the (numerically) same power of the tomato in our example can give rise to different manifestation types: red and blue, for different perceivers (or even, in different manifestation conditions, e.g. in green light, for one perceiver).

To recapitulate, multi-track and multi-stage powers are such that they may have different manifestation types, each with multiple manifestation stages. Thus the numerically same power can be possessed by an object but not manifested; it can be enabled to manifest in the absence of a perceiver; and it can be fully manifested in the presence of a perceiver. Furthermore, the numerically same power (but a different track of it) can be equally fully manifested in the presence of a perceiver A with a different type of sense organ than perceiver B. The feature of being multi-stage is crucial, because it guarantees that what we perceive is really the power of the object; hence it provides a realist account of perceptible properties as properties of objects, and yet, the causal interaction with the perceiver ‘makes a difference’ to what there is in the world. (So e.g. dogs enjoy different

8 For further definitions of multi-track powers see Martin, Heil (1998, 1999), according to whom the same power can manifest itself differently in conjunction with different manifestation partners, and Choi, Fara (2016), for whom they are “[...] conventional dispositions that correspond to more than one pair of stimulus condition and manifestation (Ryle 1949, 43-5; Bird 2005, 367; Bird 2007, 21-4; Ellis, Lierse 1994, 29). The thought is that exactly the same conventional dispositions may be picked out by multiple characterisations in terms of stimulus condition and manifestation”.

colours in the world than we do). From this account follows that perceptible qualities are real properties of objects; however, their full activation/manifestation depends on the environment and on the observer's perceptual system. This is *Constitutionalism*. *Constitutionalism* provides a richer account than other theories of perceptible properties, via the apparatus of multi-track and multi-stage powers and the appeal to the existence of mutual dependencies between the phenomenal properties of experience and the qualitative character of objects.⁹

The non-realist might at this point raise the following consideration: does the interdependence, in the mutual activation between an object's perceptible power and the power of a perceiver to perceive, undermine the objectivity of perception? Is the tomato, itself, *really* red or blue? Are there any properties out there in the world? If there is variation in how a certain perceptible property of an object might be activated/manifested in different perceivers, along different tracks, which manifestation of it is veridical? Are perceptual observations at all apt to have truth value? I argue that perceptual observations (as well as aesthetic observations, as we will see in the following section), are indeed true or false, because there are proper observers and observation conditions, which my account explains. In this sense, my position may be characterized as *Perceptual Cognitivism*.¹⁰

My *Perceptual Cognitivism* is underpinned by a form of *reliabilism*.¹¹ The truth value of perceptual observations is determined by the causal process whose outcome is the perceptual experience (as well as, on my account, the full manifestation of a certain quality in the world). When this process takes place, the perceiver and world conditions within which it occurs determine the reliability of the observations. I submit that our common practice is to classify things as thus and so (e.g. as red) on the basis of our perceptual observations having taken place in 'appropriate' or 'standard' conditions. We discriminate between veridical and non-veridical perceptions and appearances of things in the world on the basis of the obtaining (or not) of such conditions, which make the perceptual process (the causal interaction between a perceptible and the relevant sense organ) reliable.

⁹ Which allow for their occurrence, and are further explained in Marmodoro 2006.

¹⁰ This view is Aristotelian in spirit, in the sense that it is built on Aristotle's theory of perception, which I defined elsewhere a subtle realist one (Marmodoro 2014). For the reader who might be interested in Aristotle's cognitivism in general, a helpful resource is Ian Mccready-Flora (2014). Aristotle has been an inspiration for *pragmatist* metaphysics of properties, from Dewey to Putnam and more, and to this degree, my account shares similarities with theirs.

¹¹ See e.g. Laurence Bonjour: "the central idea of reliabilism is that what makes a belief epistemically justified is the cognitive *reliability* of the causal process via which it was produced" (2002, 244).

What counts as ‘appropriate’, ‘standard’ or ‘normal’ conditions? We do have the notion of well-functioning sense organs in appropriate observation conditions, which facilitate the well functioning of the organs. I propose to understand the notion of a well-functioning sense organ, and correspondingly of a malfunctioning sense organ, as statistical notions, within the perceiver’s species.¹² Thus, I hold that there are real properties of objects in the world, which we perceive; there is no privileged access to reality that confers truth on any particular perceiver’s perceptual content. Yet, in human society, we have developed the notion of ‘healthy perceivers and appropriate perpetual conditions’; accordingly, perceptual experiences can be true of false; the veridical ones are only those by well-placed and well-functioning perceivers. In that sense, ‘not all perceptions are born equal’, and so, “Man is the measure of things” in a different sense than as conceived by relativism. It is not the case, in my theory, that any perception is as veridical as any other; well-functioning perceivers operating in appropriate conditions are ‘measures’ of truth, because the process underlying the formation of their perceptual content is reliable; it counts as reliable because it is of the kind that the majority of individuals within the species have (rather than because it is somehow ‘closer’ to reality).

4 Aesthetic Properties

Perceivers observe redness in the world, but also beauty, elegance, harmony, etc. Is there beauty ‘out there’ in nature? My answer is ‘Yes!’ I argue that aesthetic properties are as real as perceptual properties; they qualify objects; but their nature, too, is to be sensuous properties, i.e. powers dependent for their full activation/manifestation on the observers. I will here concentrate on addressing a relativist challenge to the existence of aesthetic properties in the world (rather than on giving a detailed account of how my account of sensuous properties provides a metaphysics for aesthetic properties). The question I want to consider here is this: can both types of observations – of e.g. red, and of beauty – be veridical, latching on to something real in the world? I want to defend here the view that I call *Aesthetic Cognitivism*.

The relativist challenge to the reality of aesthetic properties, and the veracity of our observations of them, has been expressed in a variety of ways in the literature; one way is to deny the idea that there can be a well-functioning observer of aesthetic properties operating in appropriate conditions, that can serve as a ‘measure’ of e.g.

¹² See also Marmodoro 2006.

beauty. Robert Hopkins, among others, contrasts the existence of a reference class that can serve as ‘measure’ of perceptible properties to that of an (impossible, to his mind) reference class for aesthetic properties:

if on looking at something I judge it red, but everyone else I ask to look at it judges it brown, this can be reason enough for me to think my view wrong [...]. In an aesthetic case, in contrast, I am never justified in going that far [...]. (2001, 168-9)

From this stance follows that aesthetic judgements cannot be right or wrong, because there is no standard against which to measure their veracity. The idea is that, while for perceptual properties we can distinguish between what e.g. Philip Pettit (1983) has called a “primitive” and a “rectified” report,¹³ we cannot for aesthetic properties, because, there is no way to determine which group of observers might be considered the ‘normal’ one, with reference to which, aesthetic reports can be rectified. Thus, there cannot be a reliable process that leads to a correct report on aesthetic properties.

Interestingly, Roger Scruton takes this position in the direction of non-realism about aesthetic properties, as follows: “in aesthetics you have to see for yourself precisely because what you have to ‘see’ is not a property” (1974, 54). What is it that one ‘sees’, according to Scruton, when looking at an artwork? I understand Scruton’s position as it is glossed in the passage below:

As an example, consider the face in a picture. This is not visible to a dog, but only to a being with imagination (which is a rational capacity). There are physical features of the picture which explain the fact that I see a face in it, and which could be described in primary-qualities terms. But the face is not part of them. Nor is there any law which says, to a being with certain sensory capacities (for example sensitivity to light rays), the face will automatically appear. (Scruton 2010, 100)

The step from conceiving aesthetic properties along these lines, to being non-realist about them, is short, and Scruton takes it; his lines quoted above are followed by this claim: “Because of this dependence on rational capacities, it is possible that the face can be ‘argued away’” (Scruton 2010, 100).

13 “Taken as primitive, ‘It’s red’ is a report of how something looks here and now; taken as rectified, it is a report of how it would look to a normal eye under normal illumination” (1983, 18).

The contrast with *Constitutionalism* and with the Aristotelian position from which I derive *Constitutionalism*, is stark.

In a 'linguistic turn' mode, Scruton does 'argue away' aesthetic properties, thus:

Consider the sadness of a piece of music or the gravity of a verse. Few of us feel tempted to follow Berkeley in thinking that secondary qualities are not really "in" the objects which seem to possess them. But we all feel tempted to say something like that of tertiary qualities. There comes a point, we feel, when it is only a matter of speaking to refer to a property of an object. The real fact of the matter is the response of the observer. If we speak of a property of an object, this is just a matter of saying that the response was justified (as when we describe a landscape as 'fearful'). (2010, 100)

So for Scruton, the fact that our response to an aesthetic quality is justified, is not sufficient ground for realism about these properties.

In response to Scruton's eliminativist move, I want to argue that we have ways to support the same combination of realism, cognitivism and reliabilism concerning aesthetic properties that I have put forward for perceptible properties. The interesting question to address is: What counts as normal conditions, for aesthetic observations to be reliable? My answer is that every society has observers who are recognized for their well-functioning aesthetic judgement; they set aesthetic 'norms'; and they can educate society in such norms. This is a plausible view to hold, and commonly shared. Therefore, there is a public domain wherein there is 'right' and 'wrong' in aesthetic judgements. Reliabilism, *modulo* society, is not relativism, because there are reliable 'observers of truth' in each and every society; hence other observers can be corrected or confirmed, using public criteria of truth, within a society. This position is not relativist: while relativism would claim that truth is relative to each individual, where there cannot be 'rectified' (perceptual or aesthetic) reports, *Aesthetic Cognitivism* is the view that the truth of aesthetic judgements is dependent on society's practice with respect to aesthetic norms, as much as the truth of perceptual judgements is relative to the human species.

5 Conclusion

Are colours, sounds and beauty in the world, or in our heads? Is the world as we experience it? How do the properties of the world relate to the observers' experience of them? According to *Constitutionalism*, colours and suchlike perceptual and aesthetic properties are powers of objects whose (full) manifestation depends on the mutual manifestation of relevant observation powers of perceivers, and is co-realized

with them in their interaction. In addition, *Constitutionalism* takes such properties to be multi-track, and also multi-stage powers. The track-dimension explains why the numerically same property of an object can have different types of manifestation (for instance, appear as different colours to different perceivers). The stage-dimension allows us to preserve realism about the properties, while accounting for the crucial role of the perceiver/observer in the causal interaction. The causal interactions between observers and objects in the world, in the case of perceptual and of aesthetic properties, admit of 'standard conditions', and thus support a form of *Cognitivism* according to which, perceptual and aesthetic reports about properties have truth value, based on the reliability of the process they result from.

Bibliography

- Armstrong, D. (1978). *Universals and Scientific Realism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- Bird, A. (2005). "The Dispositionalist Conception of Laws". *Foundations of Science*, 10, 353-70.
- Bird, A. (2007). *Nature's Metaphysics: Laws and Properties*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bonjour, L. (2002). "Internalism and Externalism". Moser, P. (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 234-61. <https://doi.org/10.1093/0195130057.003.0008>.
- Campbell, J. (1993). "A Simple View of Colour". Haldane, J.; Wright C. (eds), *Reality, Representation, and Projection*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 257-68.
- Chalmers, D.J. (2006). "Perception and the Fall from Eden". Gendler T.; Hawthorne, J. (eds), *Perceptual Experience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 49-125. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199289769.003.0003>.
- Choi, S.; Fara, M. (2016). "Dispositions". *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/dispositions/>.
- Gendler, T.S.; Hawthorne, J. (eds). (2006). *Perceptual Experience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gibson, J. (2008). "Cognitivism and the Arts". *Philosophy Compass*, 3(4), 573-89.
- Haldane, J.; Wright, C. (eds) (1993). *Reality, Representation, and Projection*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Johnston, M. (1992). "How to Speak of the Colors". *Philosophical Studies*, 68, 221-63.
- Lamarque, P.; Olsen, S.H. (eds) (2004), *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art. The Analytic Tradition. An Anthology*. Blackwell: Oxford.
- Marmodoro, A. (2006). "It's a Colorful World". *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 43(1), 71-80.
- Marmodoro, A. (2014). *Aristotle on Perceiving Objects*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Marmodoro, A.; Grasso, M. (2020). "The Power of Color". *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 57(1), 55-67.

- Marmodoro, A. (2020). "Powers, Activity and Interaction". Meincke, A.S. (ed.), *Dispositionalism: Perspectives from Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Science*. Springer, 55-66. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28722-1_5.
- Martin, C.B.; Heil, J. (1998). "Rules and Powers". *Philosophical Perspectives*, 12, 283-312.
- Martin, C.B.; Heil, J. (1999). "The Ontological Turn". *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 23, 34-60. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-4975.00003>.
- Maud, J.B. (1995). *Colours: Their Nature and Representation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McCready-Flora, I. (2014). "Aristotle's Cognitive Science: Belief, Affect and Rationality". *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 89(2), 394-435. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phpr.12065>.
- McGinn, C. (1996). "Another Look at Color". *Journal of Philosophy*, 93, 537-53.
- Molnar, G. (2003). *Powers: A Study in Metaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Moser, P. (ed.) (2002). *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mumford, S.; Anjum, R.L. (2011). *Getting Causes from Powers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pettit, P. (1983). "The Possibility of Aesthetic Realism". Schaper, E. (ed.), *Pleasure, Preference and Value*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 17-38.
- Scruton, R. (1974). *Art and Imagination: A Study in the Philosophy of Mind*. London: Methuen.
- Scruton, R. (2010). "Public Text and Common Reader". Elinor, S.S. (ed.), *Comparative Criticism. A Yearbook*. Vol. 4, *The Language of the Arts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 85-106.
- Elinor, S.S. (ed.) (2010). *Comparative Criticism. A Yearbook*. Vol. 4, *The Language of the Arts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thau, M. (2002). *Consciousness and Cognition*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wright, W. (2003). "Projectivist Representationalism and Color". *Philosophical Psychology*, 16, 515-33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0951508032000121823>.

Laws, Exceptions and Dispositions

Max Kistler

Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne, France

Abstract Can laws of nature be universal regularities and nevertheless have exceptions? Several answers to this question, in particular the thesis that there are no laws outside of fundamental physics, are examined and rejected. It is suggested that one can account for exceptions by conceiving of laws as strictly universal determination relations between (instances of) properties. When a natural property is instantiated, laws of nature give rise to other, typically dispositional properties. In exceptional situations, such properties manifest themselves either in an unusual way or not at all.

Keywords Law of nature. Exception. Disposition. Proviso. *Ceteris paribus*.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 The Problem. – 3 *Ceteris paribus* Statements. – 4 *Ceteris paribus* Laws. – 5 No Laws Outside Fundamental Physics? – 6 Laws and their Application. – 7 Dispositional Properties and Dispositions. – 8 What is an Exception? – 9 The Challenge of Circularity. – 10 Reply: Metaphysics and Scientific Method. – 11 “Completers” and Absolute Exceptions. – 12 Conclusion.



Edizioni
Ca Foscari

Published 2020-06-30

Open access

© 2020 |  Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Public License



Citation Kistler, M. (2020). “Laws, Exceptions and Dispositions”. *JoLMA. The Journal for the Philosophy of Language, Mind and the Arts*, 1(1), 53-74.

DOI 10.30687/JoLma/2723-9640/2020/01/005

53

1 Introduction

Science strives to establish general truths. One way of making the demand for generality precise is to require that nomological hypotheses can contain only *strictly qualitative* predicates. Such predicates must not contain any reference to objects, time instants or particular places. The statement ‘all people in this room have a heart’ is not a nomological hypothesis because it violates this requirement. No matter whether it is true or false, such a statement cannot express a law of nature simply because it is not sufficiently general.

2 The Problem

The following statements are generally taken to express laws, but they are true only if they do not have a strictly universal form. Insofar as their form is strictly general, the statements are not true.

(1) The practical syllogism is fundamental to the common sense explanation and prediction of human behaviour. It can be expressed in a nomological form: if person x wants A and believes B to be an optimal means to achieve A , then x will attempt to do B . Simply put: “If a person wants something, she’ll take steps to get it” (Earman, Roberts 1999, 447; Schiffer 1991, 2). Of course, such a generalisation has its exceptions: right now I have many desires – like the desire to lie in the sun on the beach – towards whose satisfaction I take no steps at all, either because the satisfaction of such desires is out of reach or because I decide to pursue instead the satisfaction of some higher-ranking desires, like writing down what I think about exceptions.

(2) The economic generalisation: “If the price of a good falls, the demand for it will raise” (Earman, Roberts 1999, 460) expresses a real dependence of demand on price, but suffers from exceptions. If the price for a better good B falls even more than the price of good A , so that B becomes cheaper than A , the demand for A may well fall in spite of its falling price.

(3) There is a biogeographical law according to which: “The equilibrium number S of species of a given taxonomic group on an ‘is-

English translation of “Lois, exceptions et dispositions”, in Bruno Gnassounou and Max Kistler (éds), *Les dispositions en philosophie et en sciences*. Paris: CNRS Editions, 2006, 175-94. Transl. by Alice Morelli, Ca’ Foscari University of Venice.

land' (as far as creatures of that group are concerned) increases exponentially with the island's area A : $S = cA^z$. The (positive-valued) constants c and z are specific to the taxonomic group and island group" (Lange 2002, 416-17). However, there are exceptional islands with respect to such a law: a smaller island lying close to the mainland may have more biodiversity than a larger island far out in the ocean. Similarly, a smaller but climatically heterogeneous island may contain more species than a larger but climatically homogeneous island. However, the existence of those exceptions does not prevent statement (3) from expressing a real dependency between island surface and biodiversity.

(4) In biology, Mendel's law of segregation states that among sexually reproducing diploid organisms, for every allele pair (genes that occur at the same site on the two chromosomes of a chromosome pair), each of the two alleles occurs in 50% of the gametes. In other words, the two alleles are equally distributed over the gametes. Yet, this regularity is subject to exceptions, for certain genes undergo a 'meiotic drive' which makes them over-represented, that is, they represent more than 50% of the gametes (Sterelny, Griffiths 1999, 58; Sober 1993, 107-9; Mitchell 2002, 331).

(5) According to the chemical law of definite proportions, any chemical compound consists of elements in invariant proportions. However, there are exceptional substances, such as ruby, which is composed of aluminium (Al), chrome (Cr), and oxygen (O). The proportions of aluminium and chrome are variable; this is represented in the chemical formula of ruby as follows: $(Al, Cr)_2 O_3$. A ruby can be modelled as a regular crystal where aluminium atoms are bonded to oxygen atoms in a regular structure, in a proportion of 2 Al atoms to 3 O atoms. In this network, some Al atoms are replaced by Cr atoms which are similar in size and bonding capacities. The proportion of Al and Cr varies from ruby to ruby, which violates the law of definite proportions (Lange 2002, 408).

(6) The most remarkable fact is, perhaps, that we can find generalisations subject to exceptions even in physics. Hempel gives the following example: for every bar magnet b , "If b is broken into two shorter bars and these are suspended by long thin threads close to each other at the same distance from the ground, they will orient themselves so as to fall into a straight line" (Hempel 1988, 148). There does not seem to be any way of interpreting this statement so that it is both strictly universal and true. In exceptional cases, in which there is a strong air current or a strong external magnetic field, the two halves of a bar magnet will not orient themselves along a straight line.

(7) Moving on to an even more fundamental level, it seems that even the generalisation regarding acceleration due to gravitational attraction is not free from exceptions: if the centre of mass of a massive body with mass m_1 is at a distance d from the centre of mass of a second body with mass m_2 , the first body undergoes an acceleration of $G \frac{m_2}{d^2}$ towards the second body. In this form, the generalisation is subject to many exceptions: most massive objects situated at some distance from a second massive object will not accelerate towards that object, either because they are even more strongly attracted by other massive objects, or because their movement is subject to other forces. A helium-filled balloon rises even though it is close to the Earth, and electrostatically charged bodies can repel each other rather than get closer according to the law of gravitation (Cartwright 1983, 57-8; Hempel 1988, 151; Pietroski, Rey 1995, 86; Smith 2002).

We can express the problem of exceptions to laws in the form of a dilemma. Science tries to discover laws. Exactly what it takes for a regularity to be a law is controversial, but it is generally agreed that it takes at least strict universality. In order for "All A are B " to qualify as a law, it must at least be strictly true that all A s are B s. The fact of giving nomic sentences a strictly universal form leads to the first horn of the dilemma: in this form they are false. This is precisely what Nancy Cartwright is saying when she claims that laws, even physical ones, "lie" (Cartwright 1983). However, what possible benefit could science draw from discovering false generalisations that are not false merely because of our general ignorance (in other words, by virtue of the problem of induction)?

We can try to avoid the problem of the falsity of nomic statements by giving them a form which is not strictly universal, but this leads to the second horn of the dilemma: construing generalizations allowing for exceptions as 'non-strict' laws with a *ceteris paribus* clause attached to them. It seems possible to preserve the truth of troublesome nomic statements by adding a proviso: the alleles are equally distributed across the gametes, *provided that nothing interferes*. The idea that laws subject to exceptions have a particular logical structure has been developed in two main ways. According to the first, there is only one kind of law, but it is expressed by two kinds of statements: ordinary law statements and *ceteris paribus* law statements. According to the second, the difference in logical structure between statements mirrors an objective difference between two kinds of laws: strict laws and *ceteris paribus* laws.

3 *Ceteris paribus* Statements

Let us examine the hypothesis according to which the difference between laws subject to exceptions and strict laws lies on the level of the statements that express them. Laws subject to exceptions are expressed by statements containing a *ceteris paribus* (hereafter cp) clause. According to this hypothesis, that clause plays the role of an *indexical* expression that refers to a paradigmatic type of situation in which the regularity in question holds (Hausman 1992; Keil 2000; Glymour 2002). To say that the generalization also more generally holds if “all else is equal” means that it holds in all those (real or counterfactual) situations outside this paradigmatic class, in which all factors independent of the antecedent but capable of influencing the consequent have exactly the same values as in the paradigmatic class. We can express this suggestion by saying that cp statements have an ineliminable indexical component: “cp, the alleles are equally distributed across the gametes” means, with respect to a given concrete population and sample of gametes, that 1) in this sample, let us call it the paradigmatic sample, alleles distribute equally across the gametes, and that 2) the same is true for all those populations and samples of gametes which share all other relevant features with the paradigmatic sample.

The problem with this proposal is that generally the set of relevant factors is not a well-defined class. First of all, it is impossible to enumerate explicitly the relevant factors *present* in the sample class that must be also present in all populations to which the law should apply. What is even more problematic is that there always seem to be infinitely many possible interfering factors which are *absent* from the paradigmatic sample and which must also be absent from all populations to which the law is intended to apply. To use Joseph’s (1980) expression, a cp statement is generally true only *ceteris absentibus*. This is just a new form of our problem: there is no way to express a cp statement explicitly, so that it is strictly universal and true; there seems to be no general way to specify explicitly which factors must be absent. As a consequence, it seems that cp statements do not have a well-defined content; in other words, they do not express any definite proposition (Schiffer 1991). Insofar as the conditions in which the generalisation holds cannot be explicitly stated, it risks being trivial or vacuous: “cp, all *F* are *G*” might not have any more content than “all *F* are *G* unless they are not”, or “all *F* are *G* or they are not”.

Along similar lines, Marc Lange has suggested that a cp nomic statement includes an ineliminable reference to *paradigmatic exceptions*: the ruby exemplifies a kind of exception to the law of definite proportions. However, we cannot avoid the problem in this way, for it is impossible to provide an explicit and complete list of all kinds of exceptions. This is apparent in the form which Lange gives to the law

of definite proportions: all chemical compounds consist of elements in invariant proportions, “unless the compound is a network solid or a polymer *or something like that*” (Lange 2002, 409).

4 *Ceteris paribus* Laws

David Armstrong holds that laws with exceptions belong to a special category of laws: he calls those laws that have no exceptions “iron laws” and those that are true *ceteris paribus* “oaken laws”. Oaken laws have the following form: “It is a law that Fs are Gs, except where Fs are Hs, are Js, and Ks...and so on for an infinite set of distinct properties” (Armstrong 1983, 28). Insofar as the gap indicated by “...” cannot be filled, statements in this form specify the content of the law in an incomplete way. Consequently, it is unclear how such a law can be tested, and how it can play an informative role in scientific explanations.

I propose to interpret Pietroski and Rey’s (1995) account as an attempt to clarify Armstrong’s distinction between iron laws and oaken laws. Pietroski and Rey agree that it is impossible to complete the antecedent of a cp statement so as to remove the gap expressed by “...”. However, they offer a condition under which such a kind of law is neither trivial nor vacuous. A law can have exceptions without being trivial if, in all situations in which the antecedent is true but the consequent false, there is an independent factor which explains why the consequent does not hold.

Here is their analysis of the logical structure of cp laws.

cp $[(x) (Fx) \Rightarrow (\exists y) Gy]$ is nonvacuous, if: [...] $[(x) (Fx) \Rightarrow (\exists y) ($ either Gy or $(\exists H)(\exists w)(H \neq F) \ \& \ I([Hw], [\neg Gy])$ and: either $[Hw]$ explains $[\neg Gy]$ or $[Hw] \ \& \ (Fx) \Rightarrow (\exists z) Gz$ explains $[\neg Gy]$ ¹ and (iii)[...]. (Pietroski, Rey 1995, 92; emphasis added)

“I (x,y)” means “x plays an explanatory role independent from y”. (Pietroski, Rey 1995, 92)²

This may be read as: “The nomic statement ‘*Ceteris paribus*, for all x, if x is F then there is a G’ is not vacuous if: for all x which are F, there is an object y that is either G or is not G but there is some other object w with property H, such that $H \neq F$ and the fact that w is H plays an explanatory role independent of the fact that y is not G, and

¹ The text says “ $\neg Gz$ ”, but I suppose this is a typo.

² I skip over other conditions that Pietroski and Rey set for non-vacuous cp laws.

the fact that w is H either explains on its own why y is not G , or it explains it together with the law according to which, for all x , if x is F then there is a G , and [...]”.

This ingenious proposal faces two problems.

Insofar as Pietroski and Rey’s proposal is interpreted semantically, as an analysis of the peculiar logical structure of cp laws, it makes laws ‘holistic’. On this semantic interpretation of Pietroski and Rey’s proposal, the consequent of a cp law contains a quantification over possible interfering factors: $(\exists H)(\exists w) \dots$ Such interferences are themselves due to laws linking the presence of an interfering factor (Hw) to the lack of instantiation of the consequent of the main law ($\neg Gy$). These other laws sneak into the content of the main law because they make true the explanation of the non-occurrence of the consequent of the main law. Now, at least some of those laws are themselves cp laws which contain other quantifications over interfering factors and still other laws, and so on. Thus, the semantic interpretation of Pietroski and Rey’s proposition leads to the ‘holistic’ result according to which every single cp law has the tendency to incorporate a large number of other laws. This point seems to contradict the very notion of law, which includes the idea of a determinate relation between a small number of factors that can be described independently of other laws. This undesirable consequence seems to me to stem from the fact that Pietroski and Rey erroneously try to incorporate an (epistemic and heuristic) strategy for distinguishing situations that refute a law from exceptional situations into a semantic analysis of the very content of the law. Pietroski and Rey do not succeed in giving cp laws a well-defined content that excludes the sum of scientific knowledge called upon during the testing process.

Pietroski and Rey’s account faces a second and probably even more serious problem. Earman and Roberts (1999, 453-4) have noted that it trivializes the notion of cp law, for Pietroski and Rey’s conditions yield the result that any two properties whatsoever are linked by a cp law. Pietroski and Rey’s analysis has, for example, the absurd consequence that it is a cp law that all spherical objects are conductive: it is indeed very plausible that for all spherical objects that are not conductive there is an independent factor that 1) explains why the object is an insulator and 2) explains other facts that are logically and causally independent from its being an insulator. Such independent factors can be found in particular in the molecular and atomic structure of the object.

More generally, the very idea that there is a special category of cp laws seems to fail for the following reasons: there seems to be no way of explicitly spelling out the conditions under which the consequent of such a law is satisfied, leaving the content of the cp statement vague and indeterminate. This is what Lipton (1999, 157) calls “the problem of content, the problem of seeing how cp law statements

succeed in saying anything at all". This problem brings other subsidiary problems with it: "the problem of falsification" (Smith 2002, 235) is that no situation containing an instance of the antecedent but not of the consequent suffices to refute a cp law. Given the indeterminacy of what factors must be present or absent together with the explicit part of the antecedent, one may always blame those factors for the non-occurrence of the consequent, which amounts to immunizing the law from refutation. The other side of the coin is that there do not seem to be any clear criteria for the *confirmation* of such a law. A situation where the consequent occurs confirms the law if it occurs owing to the antecedent rather than interfering factors. For the same reason it is doubtful whether such a law could lend support to counterfactual conditionals: we have good reasons to think that the consequent occurs only insofar as the counterfactual situation is sufficiently similar to the paradigmatic one: the problem, then, is that we do not have explicit criteria to judge this similarity. Finally, at least some cp laws, in particular those belonging to physics, seem to face the "problem of instantiation" (Lipton 1999, 157): there do not seem to be any situations at all to which statement (7), which links acceleration to gravitation, applies. In this case at least, other factors interfering with the consequent of that 'law' are never absent, which makes the need for an explanation of why such a law can play a useful role in science especially pressing.

5 No Laws Outside Fundamental Physics?

The failure to spell out the logical form of cp laws has led many authors to the radical conclusion that our examples 1-7 are no laws at all. A proper law is necessarily strict and does not need any qualification by a *ceteris paribus* clause; however, such strict laws can only be found in fundamental physics. Sheldon Smith traces the main mistake that leads to the concept of cp law back to the failure to distinguish between fundamental laws and equations of motion, which laws allow us to derive: only equations of motion, not laws, concern specific systems and hence can be used to explain and predict their behaviour. Smith works with the mode of analysis of scientific reasoning that he calls "the Euler recipe" (Smith 2002, 245). In order to derive the equation of motion of a mechanical system, we must proceed as follows:

- (a) Specify the class of objects constituting the system to be studied.

- (b) Specify the qualities giving rise to mutual forces between these objects, according to 'special force laws'. For example, mass gives rise to gravitational attraction, and electric charge gives rise to electrostatic attraction or repulsion according to Coulomb's law.

(c) For each object O in the system, calculate the vector of the force acting on it, which results from its relation to each other object in the system with which it shares such a force-generating quality. For example, given an electrically charged object, determine the force it exerts and the force it undergoes with respect to all other charged objects in the system by virtue of Coulomb's law.

(d) For each object in the system, calculate the vector sum of all the forces that acted on it.

(e) For each object, set the sum of forces acting on it equal to

$$G \frac{m_1 m_2}{d^2}$$

This analysis indeed shows that special force laws, such as the law of gravitation, which says that the force between two massive objects equals $G \frac{m_1 m_2}{d^2}$, are not used to directly derive any prediction about the evolution of concrete objects to which they apply. If the prediction of the evolution of the system is wrong, this does not show that the law (or laws) used in (b) and (c) are false. The law can be true even if its application to the system is subject to the proviso that all non-negligible factors have been included in the description of the system. Such a proviso does not concern the law, but rather the entire algorithm. If the acceleration of a real object does not correspond to the law of gravitation, we need to look for the error in the first two steps of the algorithm: the description of the system has neglected to include some objects (step 1) or qualities (step 2) that are sources of non-negligible interactions.

Smith concludes that fundamental laws do not concern the evolution of concrete systems and that the equations of motion describing this evolution should not be called laws. Smith's argument recalls that formulated by Russell against the principle of causality:

As soon as the antecedents have been given sufficiently fully to enable the consequent to be calculated with some exactitude, the antecedents have become so complicated that it is very unlikely they will ever recur. (Russell [1917] 1959, 188)

Russell concludes that there are "two sorts of laws: first, those that are empirically verifiable but probably only approximate; secondly, those that are not verifiable, but may be exact" (Russell [1917] 1959, 197). The former correspond, within Smith's schema, to the equations of motion, while the latter correspond to the laws.

6 Laws and their Application

Smith's analysis contains an important point that I agree on: giving an account of the existence of exceptions requires making sense of the distinction between laws and their application, rather than looking for a peculiar logical form of cp laws. However, Smith's interpretation of the equations describing the evolution of systems is unsatisfactory. Contrary to his thesis, equations of motion bearing on particular systems are laws according to all traditional criteria for lawhood: they can be refuted and confirmed, and they can be used for explanation, prediction and counterfactual reasoning. Smith's account remains silent about the content of fundamental laws; Smith is happy with the negative thesis that they do not concern concrete systems. As far as his analysis goes, fundamental laws could be mere calculating devices. Yet, at least as far as special force laws are concerned, the causal criterion of reality³ gives us grounds to regard the forces they determine as real: forces resulting from those laws are real to the extent that they cause - or causally contribute to determine - the evolution of concrete systems.

There are several ways to interpret the reference of expressions belonging to the statements of cp laws in a realist way. According to Silverberg (1996) and Hüttemann (1998), cp laws bear on *ideal* circumstances that are rarely if ever realized. Hüttemann (1998, 129) states that "laws *describe* the behaviour of physical systems under very special conditions that are hardly ever realized, namely, in isolation". Yet, this suggestion does not solve our problem: if laws concern isolated systems, how is it possible that they determine the evolution of non-isolated systems in such a way that we can predict, explain and counterfactually reason about them?

7 Dispositional Properties and Dispositions

The most promising account of the nature of laws makes use of the notion of dispositional property. Let us abandon the theory - endorsed by both defenders and critics of cp laws - according to which there is a general difference between fundamental laws and cp laws. This move is possible if we make the hypothesis that laws bear directly not on concrete systems, but rather on *aspects* or *properties* of these concrete systems.

³ According to this criterion, dating back to Plato (*The Sophist*, 247d-e), it is a necessary and sufficient condition for an entity to be real that it modifies causal interactions. In Armstrong's terms, "everything that exists makes a difference to the causal powers of something" (Armstrong 1997, 41). I analyse the consequences of the application of this principle to natural properties for the modal status of laws in Kistler 2002.

The difference between fundamental laws and “system laws” (Schurz 2002) is one of degree.⁴ The simpler the properties to which a law applies (e.g. mass, electric charge, and partial forces) in order to express relations of dependency between such properties – which are *dispositional properties*, or ‘powers’ – the more fundamental the law is. Dispositional properties, such as mass and electric charge, are not directly observable, but they endow their bearers with a certain number of *dispositions*: the identity of a dispositional property can be specified – albeit not exhaustively analysed – by reference to a set of dispositions D_i , which consist in manifesting M_i in test-situation T_i .

Consider an object O_1 with mass m_1 which is at distance d from a second object O_2 with mass m_2 . According to the law of universal gravitation, O_1 is subject to a force F with magnitude $G \frac{m_1 m_2}{d^2}$. To be subject to force F is a dispositional property: it is not directly observable or manifest, but its possession makes true a set of conditionals applied to O_1 . If O_1 is subject to F but not to any other force, then O_1 will accelerate with $G \frac{m_2}{d^2}$, towards O_2 . If O_1 is subject to F and to a second force F_2 of the same size as F but going in the opposite direction, then O_1 won’t accelerate at all. If O_1 is, in addition to F , also subject to F_2 , which goes in the opposite direction but has twice the strength of F , then O_1 will move with acceleration $G \frac{m_2}{m_1}$ away from O_2 .

8 What is an Exception?

It would be paradoxical to construe exceptions to the law $(x) (Fx \rightarrow Gx)$ as situations in which an object O is both F and non- G . Rather, such a conjunction of facts constitutes a refutation. This shows that the statement $(x) (Fx \rightarrow Gx)$ is false and does not express a law. Such a situation cannot therefore be considered an exception to that law.

To avoid this paradox, exceptions should be defined within the framework of the distinction between the law itself, which bears on certain properties, and the concrete objects (or systems) that possess those properties and to which the law is applied. This distinction is grounded in the distinction between 1) concrete objects and events, which have many properties, not necessarily lawfully linked to each other, and 2) the natural properties that those concrete objects possess. Laws bear directly on properties; more precisely, they are determination relations between natural properties. They have only an in-

⁴ I borrow the expression “system laws” from Schurz (2002). Gerhard Schurz uses the expression “laws of nature” to describe what I call “fundamental laws”, thereby suggesting that system laws are not laws of nature. However, system laws – just like Smith’s equations of motion – are laws of nature according to all traditional criteria: they can be used in explications, predictions and counterfactual reasoning. Moreover, they are ‘natural’ to the extent that they are discovered rather than created.

direct impact on the concrete objects possessing those properties and on the regularities wherein these objects partake.⁵ On the dispositional account of laws, a law, such as the law of gravitation, bears directly not on the concrete massive object O , but rather on one of its properties, namely its being massive. This law is the (strictly universal) fact that, in situations in which another object with mass m_2 is at a distance d , the property of bearing m_1 always brings with it (without exception) the dispositional property of being subject to the force $G \frac{m_1 m_2}{d^2}$.

We can thus stick to the traditional thesis that such a law is universal. There is no exception to the association between the presence of two masses m_1 and m_2 at a distance d and the presence of an attractive force F whose precise size is determined by the law.

Here, though, we should prevent a major mistake that Nancy Cartwright seems to make repeatedly when offering her version of a dispositional account of laws.⁶ Calling the property of being subject to a force F a “dispositional property” might erroneously suggest that the massive object O only has the disposition to be subject to the force, but is not always actually subject to it. Indeed, Cartwright seems to suggest that there can be exceptions in which the object O is not subject to the force determined by the law. I disagree with Cartwright on this point. I reject her idea that laws, especially fundamental physical laws, are only true *ceteris paribus*, in the sense that a property instance of the antecedent does not always bring with it a property instance of the consequent, which is typically a ‘capacity’.

Coulomb’s law says that the force between two objects of charge q_1 and q_2 is equal to $q_1 q_2 / 4\pi\epsilon_0 r^2$. Yet, this is not the force the bodies experience. [...] Coulomb’s is never the force that actually occurs. [...] Coulomb’s law tells not what force charged particles experience. [...] To say it is in their nature to experience a force of $q_1 q_2 / 4\pi\epsilon_0 r^2$ is to say at least that they would experience this force if only the right conditions occur for the power to exercise itself “on its own”. (Cartwright 1999, 82)

The idea developed in the above passage spoils the solution to the problem of exceptions that led to the introduction of dispositional properties in the first place. For if Coulomb’s law itself has exceptions, that is, if there are situations in which its antecedent is present but not its consequent, then we are back to where we started: we do not have any explanation of the origin of such exceptions, and interpreting the consequent property dispositionally is of no help; at

⁵ I do not have space here to argue in favour of the thesis according to which those properties are particular entities, rather than universal entities. See Kistler 1999, 2002.

⁶ This mistake is clearly analysed by Markus Schrenk (2007).

best, such a conception pushes us to postulate a *second* dispositional property which endows the object with the disposition to experience the force – where this disposition is not always manifest. Therefore, we are once again faced with the problem of understanding what distinguishes exceptional situations in which the disposition does not manifest from regular situations in which it does, leading to an infinite regress. It is better to face the problem directly.

The hypothesis that laws bestow dispositional properties on objects having their antecedent properties allows us to solve the problem of exceptions only to the extent that it enables us to situate the origin of exceptions outside the law, between the possession of the consequent property and the behaviour by which this property typically manifests itself. The hypothesis that the consequent property is dispositional allows us to stick to the traditional idea that the law itself is strict and has no exceptions. Exceptions, in the proper sense, are thus test-situations for the dispositional property, in which it does not manifest itself in the typical way.

In a situation that is exceptional with respect to the law of gravitation, an object is subject to a gravitational force but does not exhibit the behaviour that is usually associated with that force. The application of the law – the inference from the law to the generalisation bearing on concrete systems possessing the properties on which the law bears – is legitimate only under a ‘proviso’: it is legitimate as long as nothing interferes, that no other force acts, or *ceteris paribus*.

According to the traditional view, laws are generalisations over concrete objects. If this were true, these laws would be false. Instead of reasoning by *modus ponens*, and concluding – to quote the title of Cartwright’s (1983) book – that the “laws of physics lie”, I think we should reason by *modus tollens*: given that the laws are not *all* false, for a reason that has nothing to do with their particular content, they are not generalisations bearing on concrete objects, but rather generalisations bearing on the properties of these objects.

Certainly, in most normal cases – outside of metaphysics seminars – we are interested in explaining, predicting and reasoning counterfactually about *concrete* objects. Reflection on exceptions teaches us that the transition from the law to its application to concrete objects is a far from trivial step.⁷

The analysis of the situation is the same in the case of fundamental laws and in the case of laws that are valid only for a limited category of objects, i.e. ‘system laws’. In both cases, whether the law applies, i.e. whether it is sufficient for a satisfactory explanation or prediction, depends on the strength of the influence exerted by all

⁷ It is not an inductive inference. Not only does the consequent not *always* manifest in the typical way but, generally, it doesn’t even do so *often*.

factors present in the situation, other than those mentioned in the antecedent of the law.

The difference is only due to the number of factors that are not mentioned in the antecedent of the law: this number is much greater in the case of fundamental laws, for their antecedents contain only a small number of simple factors, whereas the antecedent of a system law contains the specification of the type of system for which the law is supposed to hold. Such a specification implicitly contains a large number of properties: Mendel's law of segregation, for example, is a system law to the extent that it can only be applied to sexually-reproducing diploid organisms, i.e. a particular type of system with numerous properties. In Cartwright's terms, sexually-reproducing diploid organisms are "nomological machines": the law applies only to them. Both in the case of fundamental laws and in the case of system laws, the consequent is a dispositional property that does not, in so-called 'exceptional' circumstances, manifest in the typical way. Simply, in the case of system laws, the inference from the instance of the consequent to its manifestation seems less problematic than in the case of fundamental laws, because in the former case the antecedent contains a specification of the system and thus excludes many potentially interfering factors. Yet, this is only a difference of degree, to the extent that factors that are not specified in the antecedent can in any case prevent the consequent from manifesting.⁸

9 The Challenge of Circularity

Peter Lipton (1999) and Markus Schrenk (2007) have put forward a powerful objection to the analysis of exceptions in terms of dispositional properties. They note that the attribution of dispositions is faced with a set of well-known difficulties that are very similar to the problems raised by exceptions to laws.

A fragile object is an object such that, if it fell on hard ground from a height, it would break. As we have already seen, we must distinguish between the dispositional property itself (fragility) and the various 'behavioural' dispositions its possessor is endowed with in different test-situations. A dispositional property bestows many dispositions on its bearer (normally, an infinite number); we do not need to know all

⁸ According to Leszek Nowak (1972, 536), fundamental laws undergo a process of "concretization": step by step, the idealizations found in the antecedent of a fundamental law are dropped. At each step the law becomes more concrete, i.e. it comes closer to describing real systems where conditions are not ideal and many factors contribute to constraining their evolution, eventually resulting in a system law. This approach is further developed in Hanzel 1999.

of them in order to ascribe a disposition to an object. It is impossible to explicitly enumerate all the dispositions – specified in conditional form (test-situation, manifestation) – bestowed on the bearer by the dispositional property. This impossibility is one of the reasons in support of the idea that a dispositional property has a proper reality beyond the finite set of its particular manifestations. The same reasoning applies when we argue for the existence of theoretical properties:⁹ they allow us to explain different phenomena in a simple and unified way even if they cannot be identified with the conjunction of the finite number of events they produce. Similarly, the ascription of a dispositional property allows us to give a unified explanation of a potentially infinite set of manifestations in different situations.

The infinite number of the dispositions bestowed by a dispositional property is not the only reason why we cannot completely analyse the dispositional property D in conditional terms as follows: if an object possessing D is subject to test T_i , it produces manifestation M_i . Carnap (1936) has shown that the analysis of D in terms of ‘test-manifestation’ conditionals is inadequate if we give these conditionals the form of *material implications*. Recent research (Martin 1994; Mumford 1998; Bird 1998; Schmitz 2007) shows that dispositions cannot even be analysed completely and exclusively in terms of *counterfactual conditionals*. The reason is that every disposition comes with its ‘antidotes’: given a disposition D , an antidote to D is a property whose presence in a test-situation T for D inhibits the disposition’s typical manifestation M . The fragility of object O does not guarantee the truth of the conditional: if O fell on hard ground from a height, O would break. The impact could be absorbed by an air flow acting against the direction of the fall. It seems that the test of the disposition leads to the manifestation only *ceteris paribus*, i.e. on condition that no antidote is present.

Here is Lipton and Schrenk’s objection: the analysis of laws in terms of dispositional properties merely postpones the problem of exceptions or, even worse, it merely renames it instead of solving it.

⁹ In my article “The Causal Efficacy of Macroscopic Dispositional Properties” (Kistler 2007), I mention three aspects that distinguish dispositional properties from theoretical ones: 1) In order to be (conceived as) dispositional, a property needs to be one among other properties of the object and of the situation in which the object is set. Part of those other properties are unknown. No restriction of this kind conditions the ascription of a theoretical property. 2) Each disposition bestowed on the possessor by the dispositional property is expressed by a counterfactual conditional which necessarily contains a *ceteris paribus* clause. However, the ascription of a theoretical property may entail strict counterfactual conditionals. 3) We conceive of a property as dispositional to the extent that we conceive it as establishing a relation of dependence (*ceteris paribus*) of a manifestation with respect to a test-situation, which are both specified in *observational terms*. The identity of theoretical properties is in general determined by laws that do not necessarily involve observable properties.

The problem raised by the fact that the property referred to by the consequent of nomic statements 1-7 is not always present when their antecedent is present, arises again in the framework of the dispositional analysis of laws, on account of the fact that the dispositional property which constitutes the consequent of the law does not always manifest.

Lipton (1999, 166) uses the expression “Hume’s revenge” to refer to the thesis that “the detour through the disposition has made absolutely no difference so far as the problem of content is concerned”. Exceptions make the application of laws tricky because the fact that object *O* has property *F*, and that there is a law that $(x) (Fx \rightarrow Gx)$, allows us to infer that *O* is *G* only *ceteris paribus*, that is, under the proviso that nothing interferes. If we suppose that *G* is a dispositional property, then we can safely conclude that *O* is *G* regardless of the circumstances. However, we are faced with the analogous problem that, given a test-situation *T* for the presence of the dispositional propriety *D*, we can infer only *ceteris paribus* that *D* manifests in the characteristic way *M*. According to Schrenk, this shows that the dispositional analysis does not solve the problem of exceptions: “the disposition is a veiling strategy, hiding the *ceteris paribus* clause under the *burka* of the capacity term” (Schrenk 2007, 239). He concludes that “dispositionalism cannot claim to have solved or avoided the problems *ceteris paribus* clauses in laws create” (Schrenk 2007, 247).

10 Reply: Metaphysics and Scientific Method

We should not be surprised to discover that our thesis that laws directly bear on properties and express the fact that one property brings with it another, dispositional, property, does not make the problem with which we started *go away*. The problem of exceptions to laws and the problem of dispositional properties are both first of all scientific problems. Philosophical analysis cannot make them disappear; its goal can only be to understand the origin of these problems, as well as the scientific way of solving them, without aiming at solving them once and for all. Lipton and Schrenk’s objection seems to rest on a misunderstanding of the aim of philosophical analysis, to the extent that they object to our analysis that it does not yield an algorithm for solving scientific problems.

Euler’s algorithm is a schema that allows us to find scientific solutions to the problem of applying laws in classical mechanics. It is difficult to predict and explain the evolution of concrete systems using laws because we do not know *a priori* which properties and laws are relevant.

It is difficult to predict and explain the behaviour of a system starting from the attribution of dispositional properties for a similar rea-

son: the attribution of elasticity and resistance to the wings of an aeroplane, of viscosity to a motor oil within a range of temperatures, or of a certain hardness to an alloy used for dental inlays, can be used to predict and explain an object's behaviour in a concrete test-situation only if all relevant dispositional properties are taken into account, together with their antidotes.

The objection that the dispositional analysis does not 'solve' the problem of exceptions reveals the same questionable conception of the task of philosophy as Earman and Roberts express when they praise "Hempel's insight" and decry the futile "metaphysics of irreducible capacities" (Earman, Roberts 1999, 448). According to them, "there is no distinctively philosophical problem about *ceteris paribus*, but there is a scientific problem: what is needed is not finer logic chopping but better science" (Earman, Roberts 1999, 460). One could, with just as much – or, I would suggest, as little – reason, claim that there is no philosophical problem of induction, and no 'distinctively philosophical' Duhem-Quine problem concerning the empirical test of theoretical hypotheses, because all these problems are of an exclusively scientific nature. Science, to be sure, struggles with instances of these problems, but it ignores the philosophical task of analysing their general nature. Our way of explaining their origin and science's limited and fragile successes in overcoming them in particular cases consists in sketching a general metaphysical analysis of the objects of scientific explanations and predictions.

In particular, the metaphysical thesis that laws determine dispositional properties is not intended as an alternative to Hempel's analysis: on the contrary, its aim is to provide a conception of reality that helps us make sense of Hempel's insight about the difficulty of applying a law and of inferring an observable property on the basis of the theoretical properties constituting the law's consequent.

Let us recall Hempel's own example. The theory of magnetism predicts that the two halves of a bar magnet which has been cut are both magnets. Hempel's problem is that the inference from the satisfaction of a theoretical predicate to the satisfaction of an observational predicate is justified only under a proviso. Our construal of laws as relations between dispositional properties is a semantic hypothesis concerning the interpretation of Hempel's inferences. In other words, it is a hypothesis regarding the truth-makers of Hempel's conditionals. The theoretical sentence " $S^1_c \rightarrow S^2_c$ " states that: if b is a magnet, then "if b is broken into two bars b_1 and b_2 , then both are magnets and their poles will attract or repel each other" (Hempel 1988, 148). The statement " $S^2_c \rightarrow S^2_A$ " associates S^2_c – b 's satisfaction of the theoretical predicate that constitutes the consequent of the theoretical sentence – with the observational predicate S^2_A . Predicate S^2_A is: "if b is broken into two shorter bars and these are suspended by long thin threads close to each other at the same distance from the

ground, they will orient themselves so as to fall into a straight line” (Hempel 1988, 148).

Hempel does not interpret the theoretical sentence S^2_c independently from the inference to the observational sentence S^2_A . Thus, he refrains from explaining the need for a proviso. According to our interpretation, the predicates contained in S^1_c and S^2_c refer to our dispositional properties: S^1_c refers to the property of being a magnet; S^2_c refers to the property of being an object such that, if cut in two, its resulting pieces are magnets attracting or repulsing each other. The inference from S^2_c to S^2_A is the inference from the instantiation of the dispositional property to its characteristic manifestation: in the test-situation where we suspend the bars by long thin threads, the dispositional property S^2_c manifests in the fact that the bars orient themselves so as to fall into a straight line (S^2_A has the form of a test-manifestation conditional).

Such a ‘metaphysical interpretation’ enables us to understand two things: firstly, provisos about the legitimacy of the latter inference stem from the fact that the observed manifestation is the result of the whole set of dispositional properties of the whole set of objects composing the system. We should expect the pure manifestation indicated by S^2_A (the alignment) only insofar as the influence of other factors remains negligible.

Secondly, contrary to what Hempel claims, the proviso conditioning the inference from S^2_c to S^2_A has the same source as the Duhem-Quine problem. According to Hempel,

this consideration differs from the Duhem-Quine argument that individual hypotheses cannot be falsified by experiential findings because the deduction from the hypothesis of falsifying V_A -sentences¹⁰ requires an extensive system of background hypotheses as additional premisses, so that typically only a comprehensive set of hypotheses will entail or contradict V_A -sentences. The argument from provisos leads rather to the stronger conclusion that even a comprehensive system of hypotheses or theoretical principles will not entail any V_A -sentences because the requisite deduction is subject to provisos. (Hempel 1988, 154)

The proviso conditions the inference from the satisfaction of the theoretical predicate S^2_c to the manifestation described by S^2_A in a con-

10 Hempel calls “ V_A ” sentences in observational language; the latter contrasts with the theoretical language in which hypotheses and theories are expressed. However, in order to avoid assigning an absolute character to the distinction between observational language and theoretical language, Hempel opposes theoretical language to a language which is “antecedently understood”, that is, which is understood independently from the theoretical language at issue.

crete situation. According to our hypothesis, the issue is whether it is the *typical* manifestation of the dispositional property indicated by S^2_c in the described situation. This question is equivalent to whether the strength of the influence of all other dispositional properties present in the situation is negligible. However, the answer to this question depends on the whole set of laws that rule the set of properties instantiated in the system. In this sense, the inference from S^2_c to S^2_A depends on a whole set of hypotheses that do not directly bear on S^2_c and S^2_A : it is, after all, an aspect of the problem described by Duhem and Quine.

11 “Completers” and Absolute Exceptions

The dispositionalist account of laws may also shed light on the debate on the existence of what Fodor (1991) calls “absolute exceptions” and distinguishes from mere exceptions. Realizers $A(R_i)$ of the antecedent A of the law cp ($A \rightarrow B$) are usually not sufficient for B in themselves. However, there are typically circumstances C consisting of sets of properties at the level of A 's realizers $A(R_i)$ which are, together with $A(R_i)$, sufficient for B , where neither $A(R_i)$ nor C alone is sufficient for B . Such a set of properties C is called a “completer” (Fodor 1991, 23).¹¹ According to Fodor, the law cp ($A \rightarrow B$) has *mere* exceptions if there exists a completer for every realizer of A but if some instances of some realizers $A(R_i)$ of A are not accompanied by any completer. *Ceteris paribus* laws, then, are laws for which mere exceptions are nomologically possible. However, according to Fodor, there are also absolute exceptions, where a realizer of A does not have any completer. Fodor somewhat hesitantly accepts the existence of such exceptions, together with others (Mott 1992, 337; Silverberg 1996, 203; Earman, Roberts 1999, 458-9). An absolute exception to cp ($A \rightarrow B$) is a situation in which some $A(R_i)$, though being a realizer of A , nevertheless makes B nomologically impossible. An absolute exception may arise because “certain realizations of M may themselves be among the defeating conditions alluded to in the *ceteris paribus* clause” (Schiffer 1991, 7).

It is hard to find examples of absolute exceptions. Mott suggests the case of a person on hunger strike: there are no circumstances under which the hunger striker will eat. However, this is hardly compatible with a law according to which hunger strikers (A) *do* eat (B). On the contrary, the fact that there is no completer that would be sufficient, with $A(R_i)$, for B shows that there is no law $A \rightarrow B$, whether strict, or cp.

¹¹ The concept - though not the expression - is found in Schiffer 1991.

Fodor's proposal, then, is not relevant: Fodor states that $cp(A \rightarrow B)$ can be a law if A figures in a sufficient number of other laws that have no absolute exceptions. Earman and Roberts show that this condition would trivialize the notion of cp law. Fodor's suggestion would transform "the ludicrous statement that *ceteris paribus*, if a person is thirsty, then she will eat salt" (Earman, Roberts 1999, 458) into a law with absolute exceptions.

However, contrary to what Mott, Earman and Roberts suggest, it is not only Fodor's solution that is unsatisfactory. The very concept of absolute exception contains a mistake. In our analysis, there cannot be any such absolute exceptions. In an absolutely exceptional situation, A 's realizer makes either the consequent or the manifestation of the consequent impossible. The first case refutes the law because we stick to the traditional thesis that laws are strictly universal. The second case also refutes the law because the dispositional property that is its consequent necessarily makes a difference to the observable evolution of the system, even if it may be 'hidden' or 'overshadowed' by the influence of other factors. According to the causal criterion of reality, a property - be it dispositional or not - that has no effects at all is not really instantiated, so in that case too the law is refuted. Mott, Earman and Roberts do not go far enough in their criticism of Fodor's solution to the 'problem of absolute exceptions'. Those situations are really refutations rather than exceptions.

12 Conclusion

Earman, Roberts and Smith, together with Woodward (2002), are right when they say that "there are no cp laws". However, they are wrong in inferring from this that scientific explanation shouldn't be conceived as relying on laws (Woodward 2002), or that laws can be found only in fundamental physics (Earman, Roberts, Smith 2002). Rather, the mistake lies in the idea that the existence of exceptions to a law shows that the law is not strictly universal.

The difficulties raised by the notion of cp law can be avoided if we stick to the traditional idea that laws are strictly universal. Exceptions are situations in which the consequent of a law is a dispositional property that does not manifest itself in a typical way. It is not tautological (or vacuous) to state that the consequent is instantiated, for it always contributes to the manifest behaviour of the system possessing the dispositional property. This makes it possible to detect its presence by empirical means.

Bibliography

- Armstrong, D.M. (1983). *What Is a Law of Nature?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Armstrong, D.M. (1997). *A World of States of Affairs*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bird, A. (1998). "Dispositions and Antidotes". *Philosophical Quarterly*, 48(191), 227-34.
- Carnap, R. (1936). "Testability and Meaning". *Philosophy of Science*, 3(4), 419-71.
- Cartwright, N. (1983). *How the Laws of Physics Lie*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Cartwright, N. (1989). *Nature's Capacities and Their Measurement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cartwright, N. (1999). *The Dappled World. A Study of the Boundaries of Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dray, W.H. (1957). *Laws and Explanation in History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Earman, J.; Roberts, J. (1999). "Ceteris Paribus, There Is No Problem of Provisos". *Synthese*, 118(3), 439-78.
- Earman, J.; Roberts, J.; Smith, S. (2002). "Ceteris Paribus Lost". *Erkenntnis*, 57(3), 281-301.
- Fodor, J.A. (1974). "Special Sciences (Or: The Disunity of Science as a Working Hypothesis)". *Synthese*, 28(2), 97-115.
- Fodor, J.A. (1991). "You Can Fool Some of the People All of the Time, Everything Else Being Equal. Hedged Laws and Psychological Explanations". *Mind*, 100(1), 19-34.
- Glymour, C. (2002). "A Semantics and Methodology for Ceteris Paribus Hypotheses". *Erkenntnis*, 57(3), 395-405.
- Hanzel, I. (1999). *The Concept of Scientific Law in the Philosophy of Science and Epistemology. A Study of Theoretical Reason*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Hausman, D.M. (1992). *The Inexact and Separate Science of Economics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hempel, C.G. (1988). "Provisoes. A Problem concerning the Inferential Function of Scientific Theories". *Erkenntnis*, 28(2), 147-64.
- Hüttemann, A. (1998). "Laws and Dispositions". *Philosophy of Science*, 65(1), 121-35.
- Joseph, G. (1980). "The Many Sciences and the One World". *The Journal of Philosophy*, 77(12), 773-91.
- Keil, G. (2000). *Handeln und Verursachen*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
- Kistler, M. (1999). *Causalité et lois de la nature*. Paris: Vrin.
- Kistler, M. (2002). "The Causal Criterion of Reality and the Necessity of Laws of Nature". *Metaphysica*, 3, 57-86.
- Kistler, M. (2003). "Laws of Nature, Exceptions and Tropes". *Philosophia Scientiae*, 7(2), 189-219.
- Kistler, M. (2007). "The Causal Efficacy of Macroscopic Dispositional Properties". Gnassounou, B.; Kistler, M. (eds), *Dispositions and Causal Powers*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 103-32.
- Lange, M. (2002). "Who's Afraid of Ceteris-Paribus Laws? Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Them". *Erkenntnis*, 57(3), 407-23.
- Lipton, P. (1999). "All Else Being Equal". *Philosophy*, 74(288), 155-68.
- Martin, C.B. (1994). "Dispositions and Conditionals". *Philosophical Quarterly*, 44(174), 1-8.

- Mitchell, S.D. (2002). "Ceteris Paribus. An Inadequate Representation for Biological Contingency". *Erkenntnis*, 57(3), 329-50.
- Mott, P. (1992). "Fodor and Ceteris Paribus Laws". *Mind*, 101(402), 335-46.
- Mumford, S. (1998). *Dispositions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nowak, L. (1972). "Laws of Science, Theories, Measurement. (Comments on Ernest Nagel's *The Structure of Science*)". *Philosophy of Science*, 39(4), 533-48.
- Pietroski, P.; Rey, G. (1995). "When Other Things Aren't Equal. Saving Ceteris Paribus Laws from Vacuity". *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 46(1), 81-110.
- Russell, B. [1917] (1959). "On the Notion of Cause". Russell, B. *Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 180-208.
- Schiffer, S. (1991). "Ceteris Paribu Laws". *Mind*, 100(1), 1-17.
- Schmitz, F. (2007). "Dispositions and Counterfactuals. From Carpan to Goodman's Children and Grandchildren". Gnassounou, B.; Kistler M. (eds), *Dispositions and Causal Powers*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 45-66.
- Schrenk, M. (2007). "Can Capacities Rescue Us from Ceteris Paribus Laws?". Gnassounou, B.; Kistler M. (eds), *Dispositions and Causal Powers*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 221-48.
- Schurz, G. (2002), "Ceteris Paribus Laws. Classification and Deconstruction". *Erkenntnis*, 57(3), 351-72.
- Silverberg, A. (1996). "Psychological Laws and Non-Monotonic Logic". *Erkenntnis*, 44(2), 199-224.
- Smith, S. (2002). "Violated Laws, Ceteris Paribus Clauses and Capacities". *Synthese*, 130(2), 235-64.
- Sober, E. (1993). *Philosophy of Biology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sterelny, K.; Griffiths, P.E. (1999). *Sex and Death. An Introduction to Philosophy of Biology*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press.
- Van Fraassen, B.C. (1989). *Laws and Symmetry*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Woodward, J. (2000). "Explanation and Invariance in the Special Sciences". *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 51(2), 197-254.
- Woodward, J. (2001). "Law and Explanation in Biology. Invariance is the Kind of Stability That Matters". *Philosophy of Science*, 68(1), 1-20.
- Woodward, J. (2002). "There Is No Such Thing as a Ceteris-Paribus Law". *Erkenntnis*, 57(3), 303-28.

Allgemeines zur Lehre von den Dispositionen

Alexius Meinong

Zuerst in: *Beiträge zur Pädagogik und Dispositionstheorie. Eduard Martinak zur Feier seines 60. Geburtstages*, hg. von A. Meinong (A. Haase, Prag-Wien-Leipzig 1919), 33-54.

1 Einleitendes

Alles Erziehen, das Wort wie weit immer genommen, ist auf Künftiges gerichtet. Gilt es dabei doch jedesmal, das bevorstehende Leben des zu Erziehenden mit Werten auszustatten, deren er ohne das Zutun der Erziehung voraussichtlich entraten müßte. Dabei kommen natürlich nicht etwa beliebige Werte in Frage: der sparsame Hausvater, der seinen Kindern ein auskömmliches Erbe zu hinterlassen bestrebt ist, betätigt sich in diesem Bestreben nicht als Erzieher. Erziehung zielt vielmehr auf Werte, genauer eigentlich Wertobjekte, die Bestandteile des künftigen Lebens des zu Erziehenden ausmachen sollen, und zwar normaler Weise nicht zu einem vereinzelt Zeitpunkte dieses Lebens, sondern während kürzerer oder längerer, eventuell sehr langer Strecken desselben. Solcher Erfolg kann selbstverständlich nur erreicht werden, sofern die erzieherische Tätigkeit nicht bloß vorübergehende, sondern relativ dauernde Ergebnisse mit sich führt. Dieser Dauerhaftigkeit wird indes auch dort nicht leicht zu entraten sein, wo es die Erziehung einmal ausnahmsweise wirklich auf ein einzelnes Erlebnis abgesehen haben kann, z.B. auf ein würdiges Verhalten in Todesgefahr oder noch besser angesichts des wirklich eintretenden Todes. Auch ein solches in seiner Vereinzeltung ausrei-



Published 2020-06-30

Open access

© 2020 |  Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Public License



Citation Meinong, A. (2020). "Allgemeines zur Lehre von den Dispositionen". *JoLMA. The Journal for the Philosophy of Language, Mind and the Arts*, 1(1), 75-94.

chend wichtiges Erlebnis ist von der erziehlichen Ingerenz durch eine Zeitstrecke geschieden, und überdies ist zur Zeit dieser Ingerenz die Zeit jenes Eintretens meist innerhalb weiter Grenzen noch unbestimmt. So scheint zuletzt alle pädagogische Einflußnahme darauf hinauslaufen zu müssen, den zu Erziehenden mit relativ bleibenden Eigenschaft auszustatten, die seine Stellung der mehr oder minder zuverlässig vorauszusehenden Zukunft gegenüber günstiger zu gestalten versprechen. Wird also ihrem letzten Absehen nach alle Erziehung auf Erlebnisse gerichtet bleiben, die vorübergehend sind wie alle Erlebnisse, so wird das nähere Ziel solchen Tuns doch wohl jederzeit in der Eignung zu gewissen Erlebnissen liegen: man kann niemanden Erlebnisse aneignen, um so gewisser dagegen die Fähigkeit, Erlebnisse zu haben, sich diese zu eigen zu machen, sie in angemessener Weise auszugestalten usw.

In diesem Sinne erweist sich der Begriff der Fähigkeit, des Vermögens oder, wie man möglichst wenig präjudizierlich zu sagen gewöhnt hat, der Disposition als ein, wenn nicht geradezu als der Grundbegriff aller Pädagogik¹ und wer versucht, in seiner Klärung vorzudringen und ihn in einige seiner einfachsten Anwendungen zu verfolgen, darf hoffen, damit einen Beitrag zur pädagogischen Theorie zu liefern. In solcher Ansicht seien hier einige zumeist schon vor längerer Zeit konzipierte² Gedanken mitgeteilt, die an gegenwärtige Stelle zu setzen dadurch noch besonders legitimiert sein mag, daß sie bereits E. Martinaks so anerkannt wichtigen Untersuchungen „Über Prüfen und Klassifizieren“³ als theoretische Grundlage gedient haben.⁴

2 Der Dispositionsgedanke

Gleich jeder anderen Theorie muß auch die Theorie der Dispositionen mit der Festlegung ihres Grundbegriffes anheben und diese Festlegung wird aus Gründen, auf die ich schon vor langer Zeit hin-

1 „Unterrichtsfächer als Dispositionssysteme“, diese Festschrift S. 55 f.

2 Vgl. A. Höfler in dieser Festschrift oben S. 24 Anm.

3 E. Martinak, „Psychologische Untersuchungen über Prüfen und Klassifizieren. Vortrag gehalten in der ersten Vollversammlung des VII. deutschösterreichischen Mittelschultages“, Wien, 1900, Zeitschrift „Österreichische Mittelschule“, XIV. Jahrgang, Heft 2 und 3, und „Über Prüfen und Klassifizieren vom Standpunkte der Praxis“, Schlußreferat, erstattet in der dritten Vollversammlung des IX. deutschösterreichischen Mittelschultages, Wien, A. Hölder 1906.

4 Vgl. den ersten der angeführten Vorträge S. 7 des Sonderabdruckes - übrigens auch St. Witasek, „Beiträge zur speziellen Dispositionspsychologie“, Archiv f. systemat. Philosophie, Bd. III, S. 274, Anm. 1, sowie desselben Verfassers „Grundlinien der Psychologie“, Leipzig 1908, S. 86, Anm. Näheres zur Literatur bringt die folgende Abhandlung dieser Festschrift, S. 55, Anm. 2. Vgl. auch unten S. 75 ff.

zuweisen Anlaß hatte,⁵ vom Prinzipie der Definitionsfreiheit möglichst Sparsamen Gebrauch machend, vielmehr nach Tunlichkeit auf Erhaltung der der theoretischen Arbeit vorgegebenen Gedanken bedacht sein.⁶ In diesem Sinne wird man davon ausgehen können, daß man jemanden eine bestimmte Disposition z.B. künstlerischen Geschmack nachsagt, nicht sofern er eben zur fraglichen Zeit ein bestimmtes Erlebnis hat, aber auch nicht ohne jede Bezugnahme auf ein Erlebnis, sondern mit Rücksicht darauf, daß er unter günstigen Umständen, die nicht leicht an einen vereinzelt Zeitpunkt gebunden sind, gewisse Erlebnisse hat, die zumeist manchen Anderen unter denselben Umständen fehlen, indes man bei denjenigen Anderen, bei denen sie unter verwandten Umständen eintreten, ebenfalls von der nämlichen Disposition zu sprechen sich für berechtigt halten wird. Man wird dann die Disposition demjenigen in höherem Maße beilegen, bei dem das betreffende Erlebnis öfter, stärker, vollkommener auftritt u.dgl. Es liegt nahe, darauf hin dem betreffenden Subjekte unter dem Namen des künstlerischen Geschmackes eine relativ dauernde Eigenschaft nachzusagen, vermöge deren es etwa das künstlerisch Wertvolle in und außer der Kunst herausfindet, sich damit zu umgeben bemüht ist u.s.f., wobei die Beziehung dieser Eigenschaft zu den in Frage kommenden Erlebnissen sich natürlichst als die der Teilursache zur Wirkung herauszustellen scheint. Die Disposition zu einem Erlebnis resp. einer Erlebnisklasse wäre demnach als eine Eigenschaft zu bestimmen, die eine Teilursache zu dem betreffenden Erlebnis als Wirkung ausmacht: der Dispositionsbegriff stellt sich so als einer jener Begriffe dar,⁷ die ich schon vor langer Zeit⁸ als „abgeleitete Kausalbegriffe“ bezeichnet habe.

In der Tat wird unter den gegebenen Umständen kein Bedenken obwalten, dem Subjekt eine Eigenschaft zuzuschreiben, die es zu dem angegebenen Verhalten befähigt. Aber das, was mich befähigt, d.h. mir eine Fähigkeit erteilt, werde ich nicht leicht selbst eine Fähigkeit nennen. Und noch deutlicher kommt, daß die fragliche Eigenschaft nicht selbst die Disposition ist, zu Tage, wo die Eigenschaft nicht bloß aus dem Verhalten des Subjektes heraus gleichsam postuliert wird, sondern ihrer Beschaffenheit nach ganz bekannt ist. Wer kurzichtig ist, verhält sich beim Sehen in die Nähe und in die Fer-

5 In der Abhandlung über „Phantasievorstellung und Phantasie“, Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik, Bd. XCV, 1889, S. 161 f. (Gesammelte Abhandlungen, Bd.1, Leipzig 1914, S. 195f.).

6 Den prinzipiellen Bedenken M. Frischeisen-Köhlers in den Kant-Studien, 1918, Bd. XXII, S. 470f., hoffe ich bei anderer Gelegenheit begegnen zu können.

7 „Phantasievorstellung und Phantasie“, Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik, Bd. XCV, 1889, S. 218 (Gesammelte Abhandlungen, Bd.1, Leipzig 1914, S. 247).

8 Hume-Studien, II (1882), S. 133. (Ges. Abhandlungen, Bd. II, S. 126).

ne in ganz charakteristischer Weise, die für ihn freilich weit öfter einen Gewinn bedeutet, aber doch jedenfalls berechtigt, von Kurzsichtigkeit als von einer deutlich charakterisierten Disposition zu reden. Nun geht die Myopie häufig (als „Axenmyopie“) auf eine Anomalie in der Gestalt des Augapfels zurück; diese abnorme Gestalt kann also ganz wohl als die Eigenschaft betrachtet werden, auf der dann die als Kurzsichtigkeit bezeichnete Disposition beruht. Wird aber jemand geneigt sein, zu sagen, diese Gestalt sei die Disposition? Was hier ohne Gewaltsamkeit im Ausdruck nicht angeht, wird dann dort, wo die zu Grunde liegende Eigenschaft unbekannt ist, auch nicht besser am Platze sein.

Dem Mangel ist leicht abzuhelfen, indem man nicht die in Rede stehende Eigenschaft als Disposition ansieht, sondern erst die Eigenschaft, jene Eigenschaft zu haben. Prinzipiell ist dagegen auch nichts einzuwenden: steht A in einer Relation zu B, so kann man dem A auch allemal die Eigenschaft zuschreiben, zu B in der Relation zu stehen. So ist es wirklich nicht ungereimt, zu sagen, die Kurzsichtigkeit eines Menschen bestehe darin, daß er in gewisser Weise beschaffene Augen hat. Aber der natürliche Dispositions- oder Fähigkeitsgedanke zeigt nichts von solcher Kompliziertheit, und auch die Einbeziehung des seinerseits in besonderer Wendung auftretenden Kausalgedankens muß ich jetzt⁹ als dem Dispositionsgedanken fremd erkennen, indes der deutsche Sprachgebrauch hier einen anderen hoffentlich gangbareren Weg weist.

Von jemandem, der befähigt ist, sich einer fremden Sprache in Wort und Schrift korrekt zu bedienen, von dem sagt man ungezwungen, daß er diese Sprache sprechen, respektive schreiben „könne“. Von dem, der sich mit einer Rechenmaschine zu benehmen weiß, sagt man, daß er sie gebrauchen „könne“. Das Wort „können“ weist aber ohne Zweifel auf Möglichkeit hin:¹⁰ nichts liegt daher näher, als im Tatbestande der Disposition eben den Tatbestand der Möglichkeit zu sehen. Nur erhebt sich auch hier sofort ein Bedenken. Setzt sich, wer die Disposition so auffaßt, nicht dem alten Vorwurf aus, die *potentia* zur „leeren“ *possibilitas* abzuschwächen? Auch tritt in beachtenswerter Weise dem eben erwähnten deutschen Sprachgebrauch der französischen mit seiner Unterscheidung zwischen „*pouvoir*“ und „*savoir*“ gegenüber. Zwar bedeutet er, sofern wohl alles Wissen ein Können, dagegen bei weitem nicht alles Können ein Wissen ist, ohne Zweifel eine intellektualistische Übertreibung. Soviel aber wird dieser Sprachgebrauch doch jedenfalls bezeugen, daß der Begriff der Möglichkeit einer Determination bedarf, um zum Begriffe der Disposition zu werden.

⁹ Vgl. meine Ausführungen „Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit“, Leipzig 1915, S. 54 f.

¹⁰ Vgl. a.a.O. § 9.

Das Bedürfnis nach einer solchen Determination würde sich auch einstellen, wenn man die Disposition unter dem Gesichtspunkte des abgeleiteten Kausalbegriffes betrachten dürfte. Gibt aus einer Schar Bewaffneter, die durch eine bewohnte Gegend ziehen, einer aus Zufall oder Unbedachtsamkeit einen scharfen Schuß ab, der einen Bewohner tödlich trifft, so wird man diesem Bewohner sicher keine Disposition zum Erschossenwerden nachsagen, obwohl er vermöge seiner physischen Beschaffenheit und vermöge des Ortes, an dem er sich zur Zeit des Schusses aufgehalten hat, sicher Teilursachen zu dem Unglücksfall abgegeben haben wird. Offenbar kommt es dabei vielmehr auf eine nähere Zuordnung zwischen der Teilursache und dem Effekte an, der für die betreffende Disposition charakteristisch sein soll, eine Zuordnung von der Art, wie ich einige Ausgestaltungen davon einst unter dem Namen der Spontaneität, Inklination und Initiative etwas näher gekennzeichnet habe.¹¹ Ihrer an dieser Stelle zu gedenken, hat zugleich den Wert, einerseits neuerlich ersichtlich zu machen, wie sehr sie, deren Begriffe eben wirklich Kausalbegriffe sind, von den Dispositionen wegführen, wie andererseits bei ihnen gleichwohl Verhältnisse vorliegen, die ihre Verwandtschaft mit dem bei der Dispositionen Obwaltenden nicht verkennen lassen. Darin liegt nun freilich die Gefahr, auch dann, wenn man versucht, wieder auf eine größere Komplikation zu gelangen, als der natürliche Dispositionsgedanke zu tragen vermag. Der Gefahr dürfte indes zu begegnen sein, wenn man sich der Relation des Mittels zum Zwecke als *differentia* bedienen darf.

Daß man das nun zunächst wirklich darf, ergibt kurze Erwägung. Wer eine bestimmte Fertigkeit erlernt, etwa die in der Behandlung eines Musikinstrumentes, der bildet sich doch ohne Zweifel eine gewisse Beschaffenheit an, durch dies als Mittel er den Zweck zu erreichen hofft, das Instrument zu spielen. Hier ist also die der Disposition zu Grunde liegende Eigenschaft des Subjektes ganz ausdrücklich das Mittel, das aber, wozu die Disposition disponiert, ganz ausdrücklich der Zweck.

Nun ist es freilich für eine Disposition durchaus nicht wesentlich, erworben und vollends absichtlich erworben zu sein. Ist sie es nicht, dann ist die Eigenschaft freilich kein Mittel zu einem wirklich vorgegebenen Zwecke, aber Zweckmäßigkeit kommt ihr ohne Zweifel auch dann zu; und den Zweckgedanken trotz seiner sonach einigermaßen fiktiven Natur darauf anzuwenden, entspricht durchaus der Weise, wie man sich auch sonst so oft der teleologischen Betrachtung bedient.

11 „Phantasievorstellung und Phantasie“, Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik, Bd. XCV, 1889, S. 218 ff. (Gesammelte Abhandlungen, Bd.1, Leipzig 1914, S. 246 ff.).

Daß aber dem Zweck-, resp. Zweckmäßigkeitsgedanken keine allzu große Komplikation eigen ist, mag in Frage zu stellen sein, solange man, wie es ja gebräuchlich war, auch den Zweckgedanken als eine Ausgestaltung des Kausalgedankens, den Zweckbegriff also ebenfalls als abgeleiteten Kausalbegriff ansieht. Dem entgegen habe ich darzutun versucht,¹² daß der Zwecke vielmehr als Eigengegenstand des Begehrens dem Sollen nächstverwandt ist. Es ist entbehrlich, auf das Nähere dieses der genaueren Untersuchung noch sehr bedürftigen Sachverhaltes hier einzugehen: es muß auf ihn nur hingewiesen werden, weil, sofern meine Auffassung im Rechte ist, die Präsentation durch gewisse Begehrenungen beim Zweck und der Zweckmäßigkeit einen Erfassungstatbestand von relativer Unkompliziertheit gewährleistet.

Hat es damit seine Richtigkeit, so besteht kein Hindernis, die Disposition als die Möglichkeit eines (physischen oder psychischen) Erlebnisses zu bestimmen, dem am Subjekt eine Eigenschaft als Mittel zugeordnet ist oder wenigstens als solches zugeordnet sein kann, das also ihm gegenüber in der Relation der Zweckmäßigkeit steht. Dieser Bestimmung könnte freilich noch der Zweifel entgegengehalten werden, ob der hiermit als obligatorisch in den Dispositionsbegriff einbezogenen Eigenschaft des Subjektes wirklich eine so vorherrschende Stellung im Dispositionsgedanken zukomme. Sieht es doch so aus, als ob dieser Gedanke gerade dort zur ungezwungensten Anwendung gelange, wo die in Rede stehende Eigenschaft unbekannt ist, indes diese im Bekanntheitsfalle die Aufmerksamkeit oder das Interesse von der Disposition gleichsam auf sich abzulenken scheint. Nun kann man sich aber leicht davon überzeugen, daß Analoges ziemlich häufig gerade dort stattfindet, wo man ein Ding unter dem Gesichtspunkte des Mittels erfaßt. Die Uhr ist ein Mittel zur Zeitbestimmung, das Automobil ein Mittel, Personen oder Lasten fortzubewegen, das Telephon ein Mittel, sich auf Distanz zu verständigen, und jedermann erfaßt diese Dinge als Mittel zu diesen Zwecken. Es liegt aber den Allermeisten ganz fern, bei solcher Betrachtung gerade diejenigen von den vielen Eigenschaften der betreffenden Dinge herausheben zu können oder auch nur zu wollen, auf die sich deren Funktion als Mittel gründet. Der Zweckgedanke knüpft hier eben an das ganze Ding als Mittel an, und es ist schwerlich etwas Anderes, was unter analogen Voraussetzungen beim Dispositionsgedanken begegnet.

Es steht also nichts im Wege, die Disposition unter den Gesichtspunkt des Zweckes zu stellen und dies etwa kurz durch den Satz zum Ausdruck zu bringen: „Disposition ist Zweckmöglichkeit.“ Nun

12 In der Schrift „Über emotionale Präsentation“, *Sitzungsberichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Philos.-histor. Klasse, Bd. CLXXXIII* 1917, S. 39 ff., 111.

kommt aber an den im Vorangehenden beigebrachten Beispielen von Zweckmäßigkeit noch eine Bestimmung in Betracht die sich zunächst sowohl vom Standpunkte des Zweckgedankens als auch von dem des Möglichkeitsgedankens aus erfassen läßt. Die Zuordnung des Mittels zum Zweck kann entweder auf die Natur des Mittels, resp. des Zweckes gegründet sein und insofern dem Mittel dauernd anhaften; sie kann aber auch vorübergehend sein, indem sie etwa auf einer Zufallskonstellation beruht. Ein Sanatorium ist vermöge seiner Einrichtungen ein- für allemal daran angelegt, der Heilung Kranker zu dienen, indes ein abgebranntes Streichholz nur vorübergehend und ausnahmsweise dazu verwendet werden mag, in Ermangelung eines besseren mit Bleistift oder Feder zu ersetzen. Unsere Beispiele haben augenscheinlich Zuordnungen der ersten Art, also relativ dauernde Zuordnungen aufgewiesen. Ähnliches läßt sich auch von relativ permanenten im Gegensatz zu relativ vorübergehenden Möglichkeiten ausführen: nennt man ein Schiff beweglich, ein Trinkglas gebrechlich, so hat man es natürlich mit Möglichkeitsbestimmungen zu tun, die wesentlich dauernderen Charakter haben als etwa die Gefährlichkeit von Tells Pfeil für seinen Sohn, die nur solange bestand, als der Apfelschuß zu tun war. Tiefer in diese Charakteristik dieses Gegensatzes dringt indes eine andere Betrachtungsweise die auf einen Sachverhalt führt, der für die gesamte Möglichkeitstheorie von prinzipieller Bedeutung sein dürfte.

Gesetzt, es sei ein ausreichend genauer Würfel gegeben, daß die Möglichkeit, damit drei zu werfen, auf $1/6$ angeschlagen werden kann: darf dann das Bestehen dieser Möglichkeit ohne jeden Vorbehalt behauptet werden? Angenommen, der Würfel läge an einem unzugänglichen Ort verborgen in alle Ewigkeit: bestände dann überhaupt die Möglichkeit eines Wurfresultates? Offenbar verlangt diese Möglichkeit, um zu bestehen, daß sich irgend jemand findet, der Wurfbewegungen zu machen vermag, daß eine Unterlage da ist, auf der der geworfene Würfel liegen bleibt, daß wirklich gelegentlich geworfen wird usw. Es gibt eben einen Komplex von Bedingungen, von denen behauptet werden darf, daß, wenn auch nur eine davon unerfüllt ist, auch die Möglichkeit des Wurfresultates ausgeschlossen bleibt. Man könnte diesen Komplex passend den Komplex der Möglichkeits- Supplemente nennen. Er hat die fürs Erste einigermaßen paradox erscheinende Eigenschaft, daß er nicht nur, wenn er fehlt, die Möglichkeit nicht aufkommen läßt, sondern auch dann nicht, wenn er gegeben ist: denn in dieser Rolle führt er eine gewisse Tatsächlichkeit mit sich, aber eben darum wieder keine Möglichkeit (außer etwa die von der betreffenden Tatsächlichkeit abgeleitete „Auchmöglichkeit“¹³ Die Möglichkeit weist hier also auf den

13 Zu diesem Terminus vgl. "Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit", S. 99.

Supplementenkomplex als Voraussetzung hin, aber weder auf den seienden noch auf den nichtseiendem sondern aus den nach seinem Sein ebenso unbestimmten, als der unvollständige Gegenstand seinem Sein nach unbestimmt ist.¹⁴

Um dieser eigentümlichen speziell für die Theorie der Möglichkeitskumulation wichtigen¹⁵ Voraussetzung Willen möchte ich Möglichkeiten dieser Art als „suppletorische Möglichkeiten“ benennen. Zu ihnen treten die obigen Beispiele von der Beweglichkeit und Gebrechlichkeit in deutlichen Gegensatz, sofern hier von Supplementen, vollends von seinsunbestimmten, in keiner Weise die Rede zu sein braucht. Nicht unpassend könnte man darauf hin hier von „insuppletorischer Möglichkeit“ reden, wenn die Sprache nicht einen vielleicht noch deutlicheren Ausdruck zur Verfügung stellte.

Möglichkeit ist, wie ich an anderem Orte¹⁶ dargelegt habe, von Natur ein Attribut von Objektiven, denen sie in ganz besonders enger Weise anhängt, so daß ich mich für berechtigt gehalten habe, von einer besonderen „Inhäsität“ der Möglichkeit an ihr Objektiv zu reden und in dieser geradezu ein konstitutives Moment aller Möglichkeit zu sehen.¹⁷ Diese Inhäsivität überträgt sich nun gleichsam vom betreffenden Objektiv auf dessen Subjekt,¹⁸ das ich, wenn unvollständig

bestimmt, den Träger,¹⁹ wenn vollständig bestimmt, den Repräsentanten²⁰ der betreffenden Möglichkeit genannt habe. Besteht die Möglichkeit, daß A ist oder daß A B ist, so ist diese Möglichkeit nicht nur dort dem Seins-, hier dem Soseinsobjektiv, sondern jedesmal auch dem Subjekte A inhäsiv. In diesem Sinne ist es zwar vielleicht nicht ganz unmißverständlich aber doch keineswegs sprachwidrig, „syn-

14 Vgl. a. a. O. S. 178 f.

15 Hier kurz nur eine Anwendung: Meinem Argument auf S. 53 der Schrift „Zum Erweise des allgemeinen Kausalgesetzes“ (Sitzungsberichte der philosophischen Klasse der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Bd. CLXXXIX 1918) ist der scharfsinnige Einwand entgegengehalten worden, ich hätte daraus, daß etwas zu bestimmter Zeit einzutreten die Möglichkeit habe, geschlossen, daß es zu dieser Zeit unmöglich tatsächlich sein könne, indes doch nicht abzusehen wäre, was mit der fraglichen Möglichkeit anderes gemeint und vorausgesetzt sein möchte, als eben die Möglichkeit des tatsächlichen Eintretens des betreffenden Geschehnisses. Ich erwidere: die Zufälligkeit, der ich entgegentrete, nimmt freilich die Möglichkeit des Geschehnisses an, aber eben nichts als sie, daher insbesondere keine Supplemente, die sich in einer angemessenen Möglichkeitskumulation (vgl. Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit § 44) geltend machen würden. Negation des Supplementenkomplexes hebt aber, wie oben gezeigt, die Möglichkeit auf. Anders nur etwa bei „logischen“, d. h. a priori einsichtigen Möglichkeiten, die, wenigstens bei positiven Objektiven, nur Bestandsmöglichkeiten sind, indes Kausalität es ausschließlich mit Existenz zu tun hat.

16 Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit, § 14.

17 A.a.O., S. 143 ff., 147.

18 A.a.O., S. 221.

19 A.a.O., S. 218.

20 A.a.O. S. 228f.

thetische Urteile a priori“ möglich, das runde Viereck unmöglich zu finden; dagegen scheint der sonach bei Seinsobjekten ganz bereitwillig sich anbietende Sprachgebrauch ein Analogon beim Sosein nicht leicht aufzuweisen daß der Sache nach auch hier gegen die Inhärenz an das Subjekt keine Einwendung zu erheben ist, das beweisen die obigen Beispiele vom Schiffe und vom Glase. Denn „beweglich“ und „gebrechlich“ kann doch nichts anderes betreffen als eben die Möglichkeit, sich zu bewegen, resp. zu brechen; aber eine Wendung wie „das Glas ist möglich zu brechen“ oder dgl. geht doch sicher nicht an; man muß sich mit einem Umwege wie etwa „dem Glase kommt die Möglichkeit zu, zu brechen“ zufrieden geben. Inzwischen fehlt gleichwohl auch hier der Sprache für direktere Ausdrucksweise nicht das geeignete Mittel. Es ist in dem oben bereits herangezogenen Worte „können“ gegeben das auf Sein wie Sosein in gleich natürlicher Weise anwendbar, jedenfalls auf das Subjekt des möglichen Objektivs bezogen auftritt: synthetische Urteile a priori „kann“ es geben, das Schiff „kann“ sich bewegen, das Glas „kann“ brechen.

Man wird vermuten dürfen,²¹ daß in der Bedeutung des Wortes „können“, so gewiß es sich dabei um Möglichkeit handelt, doch eine eigene Wendung des Möglichkeitsgedankens gleichsam nach dem Subjekte des möglichen Objektivs hin vorliegt, der gemäß man Grund hat, der Möglichkeit vielleicht in etwas engerem Wortsinne das Können etwa als „übertragene“ Möglichkeit an die Seite zu stellen. Daß damit zugleich dem Gegensatze von *potentia* und *possibilitas* Rechnung getragen ist (wo bei *possibilitas* immerhin die logische oder doch steigerungsunfähige Möglichkeit²² in den Vordergrund tritt), versteht sich.

Wie nahe man durch diese Gegenüberstellung der des Suppletorischen und Insuppletorischen kommt, lassen die obigen Beispiele ohne weiteres erkennen. Nur daß etwa auch vom Würfel gesagt werden darf, geworfen „könne“ er die Drei ergeben, stört einigermaßen die Zuordnung. Soviel aber läßt sich ohne Vorbehalt behaupten, daß alle eigentliche Existenzmöglichkeit suppletorisch und alle insuppletorische übertragen, also ein Können ist. Zugleich ist nun auch ohne Weiteres klar, daß alle Disposition unter den Gesichtspunkt des insuppletorischen Könnens fällt, - nicht minder zugleich, daß der Hinweis hienan eine geeignetere Charakteristik der Disposition ausmacht als der obige auf die Dauerhaftigkeit. Denn diese ist zwar im Allgemeinen durch die Unabhängigkeit von Supplementen mitgegeben; aber am Ende ist doch nicht prinzipiell ausgeschlossen, daß eine Veränderung in betreff der Eigenschaft, auf der das dispositionelle Können beruht, nicht einmal

21 Was mir bei Niederschrift der Ausführungen auf S. 53ff des Buches *Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit* noch entgangen ist.

22 Vgl. a.a.O. § 21.

auch eine recht kurze Dauer der Disposition mit sich zu führen imstande wäre. Alle Disposition ist also insuppletorisches Können und man braucht nun nur noch das oben aufgewiesene teleologische Moment mit hereinzuziehen, um eine hoffentlich nicht unadäquate Wezensbestimmung des Dispositionsgedankens zu erhalten. Ist es statthaft, sich an Stelle des oben vorübergehend gebrauchten Wortes „Zweckmöglichkeit“ nun des analog gebildeten Ausdruckes „Zweckkönnen“ zu bedienen, so darf als Ergebnis der im Vorangehenden durchgeführten Untersuchungen die definitorische Aufstellung in Anspruch genommen werden: Disposition ist insuppletorisches Zweckkönnen. An diesem Zweckkönnen ließe sich dann noch etwa ausdrücklich auseinanderhalten, ob die dem Können zu Grunde liegende Eigenschaft tatsächlich als Mittel auftritt (vielleicht ganz direkt um des Zweckes willen erworben worden ist) oder nicht.

Was den Namen „Disposition“ selbst anlangt, so kann sich die Frage aufdrängen, ob man Grund hat, ihn gegenüber einigermaßen konkurrierenden Benennungen wie „Fähigkeit“, „Vermögen“, „Kraft“, „Veranlagung“, „Begabung“ vorzuziehen, Benennungen, die für deutsche Darlegungen mindestens das Eine ohne Zweifel voraus haben, daß es deutsche Worte sind. Inzwischen hat „Kraft“ augenscheinlich ein viel weiteres Anwendungsgebiet, sofern man z. B. auch in der Physik

von Kräften spricht, sich also keineswegs auf Subjekte, d. i. Lebewesen beschränkt, indes man nur Subjekten Dispositionen zuschreibt. Dagegen wird man von „Fähigkeiten“ freilich bloß bei Subjekten reden, kann aber damit leicht nur Möglichkeit ohne engere Zuordnung meinen. Ein Forscher dritten oder vierten Ranges verdankt einem glücklichen Zufall vielleicht einmal in seinem Leben eine glänzende Entdeckung: er beweist damit, daß er einer solchen Entdeckung fähig war, wie einer, der einmal aus Not stiehlt, dadurch beweist, daß er eines Diebstahls fähig ist; aber eine Disposition zu großen Entdeckungen ist jenem darum doch so wenig eigen, wie diesem eine Disposition zum Stehlen. Das Wort „Vermögen“ nimmt für das, worauf es im Sinne des Mittels oder Quasi-Mittels hinweist, einen gewissen Wert in Anspruch. Wer zu Katarrhen disponiert, dem sagt man nicht leicht ein Vermögen zu katarrhalischen Erkrankungen nach. „Begabung“, „Veranlagung“, „Anlage“ (etwa auch „Talent“) weist zweifellos auf Dispositionen hin, aber speziell auf angeborene, indes auch Erworbenes aus dem Bereiche der Dispositionen nicht auszuschließen ist. So wird der theoretische Gebrauch, der ja ziemlich einhellig zugunsten des Wortes „Disposition“ entschieden hat, konserviert zu werden verdienen. Doch mag sich mit Rücksicht auf das eben über „Kraft“ Gesagte empfehlen, die Disposition noch ausdrücklich als Zweckkönnen an Subjekten zu bestimmen.

Wichtiger als die Berechtigung des Wortes ist hier wie überall die dies Gedankens, so daß die Frage nicht wohl unaufgeworfen bleiben kann, ob in der Natur des Dispositionsgedankens eine Legitimi-

on dafür liegt, ihn zum Ausgangspunkt für eine ihm besonders zugewandte theoretische Untersuchung zu machen. Dafür legt indessen schon die vorwissenschaftliche Sprache ausreichend deutliches Zeugnis ab durch ihren Reichtum an Worten mit dispositioneller Bedeutung, und es zeigt sich, namentlich soweit dabei psychische Dispositionen in Betracht

kommen, das Bedürfnis, sie durch Worte zu fixieren, nicht in letzter Linie darauf gegründet, daß, wo es gilt, einem Subjekte psychische Eigenschaften zu attribuieren, man sich allenthalben auf Dispositionen hingewiesen findet. Denn wollen sich psychische Erlebnisse schon ihrer Natur nach der Behandlung als (und wären es auch nur vorübergehende) Eigenschaften nicht fügen,²³ so versagen sie vollends gegenüber dem Bemühen, zu einigermaßen dauernden Bestimmungen zu gelangen, indes Dispositionen hierzu ganz unzweifelhaft Eignung besitzen. Bleibendes ist wichtiger als Vorübergehendes: so kann es leicht begegnen, daß namentlich, wo es sich um Werttatbestände handelt, das Interesse für die Disposition zu einem Erlebnis, obwohl es nur vom Interesse für das Erlebnis herkommen kann, doch dieses Interesse gewissermaßen verdrängt. Es kann dann geschehen, daß die Sprache eine Reihe von Worten aufweist, in deren Bedeutung es liegt, nicht mehr die Disposition nach dem Erlebnis, sondern das Erlebnis nach der Disposition zu charakterisieren: Ausdrücke wie „geistvoller Einfall“, „scharfsinnige Unterscheidung“, „kühner Entschluß“, „böswillige Unterstellung“ sind Beispiele hierfür.²⁴ Besonders viele Belege bietet die ethische Betrachtungsweise, der bereits die beiden letzten der eben angeführten Paradigmen angehören. Charakterisiert sich doch schon der Fundamentalgegensatz zwischen ethisch guten und bösen Entschlüssen nicht so sehr nach den dabei aktuell hervortretenden Erlebnissen, als nach den Gesinnungen, die durch sie betätigt sind:²⁵ Gesinnungen aber sind nicht Erlebnisse, sondern Dispositionen. Auch wenn ein Verhalten als tugendhaft oder lasterhaft bezeichnet und dann noch näher auf das Eigenartige der betreffenden Tugenden oder Laster eingegangen wird, hat man es selbstverständlich mit Dispositionen zu tun.

Vielleicht gibt es kein besseres Mittel, die Bedeutsamkeit des Dispositionsgedankens anschaulich zu machen, als den Hinweis auf die Analogie seiner Funktionsweise zu der des Gedankens einer Außenwelt, wenn man diesen bloß als eine Hypothese betrachtet, deren Berechtigung nur durch das ausgemacht wird, was sie für die theo-

23 Vgl. meine Ausführungen *Über die Erfahrungsgrundlagen unseres Wissens*, Berlin 1906, S. 29.

24 Vgl. meine *Psychologisch-ethischen Untersuchungen zur Werttheorie*, Graz 1894, Seite 41 f.

25 Vgl. a.a.O., S. 140 ff.

retische Bearbeitung der uns unmittelbar gegebenen, insbesondere natürlich der intellektuellen Erlebnisse leistet. Ich meine keineswegs, daß hierin die einzige Legitimation für den Glauben an die Existenz einer Außenwelt liegt:²⁶ es sei aber der Einfachheit wegen angenommen, es gäbe sonst keine. Dann hat unsere Hypothese die Aufgabe, die Auffindung von Gesetzmäßigkeiten in dem scheinbar regellosen Gewirr des unmittelbar Gegebenen resp. Erinnerten zu ermöglichen. Es kann das in der Weise geschehen, daß etwa vorübergehende aber sich wiederholende Empfindungen auf dauernde Ursachen bezogen werden, die dann Gelegenheit. Zur Aufstellung von Gesetzmäßigkeiten bieten, denen die Empfindungen

für sich allein augenscheinlich nicht unterworfen sind. Ähnlich werden die verschiedensten intellektuellen wie emotionalen Erlebnisse eines und desselben Subjektes, sofern sie wiederholt auftreten, durch die Voraussetzung einer auf eine relativ dauernde Grundlage gebauten, nicht minder dauernden Disposition unter einander zu verbinden [*sic*], es werden zugleich aber auch mit Hilfe der dauernden Dispositionsgrundlagen zwischen zeitlich getrennten Erlebnissen desselben Subjektes Zusammenhänge herzustellen sein, denen gegenüber der Einfluß vergangener Erlebnisse auf künftige sich nicht mehr als ein dem Verständnis unlösbares Rätsel darzustellen

braucht. Die Analogie greift natürlich auch auf unser praktisches Verhalten über: wie der äußeren Wirklichkeit, so werden wir uns auch der inneren akkomodieren und sie auch wohl nach unseren Wünschen und Bedürfnissen beeinflussen können, wenn wir uns erst einen Gesichtspunkt eigen gemacht haben, unter dem die Vorgänge hier wie dort sich als gesetzmäßig auffassen und eventuell verstehen lassen.

So weitgehend ist die Übereinstimmung, daß man sich gedrängt fühlen mag, zu fragen, warum sie sich im ganzen doch nicht als auffallender erweist. Die Antwort liegt wohl darin, daß der Außenwelt das Moment der Phänomenalität zustatten kommt, die der Disposition naturgemäß fehlt. Die Außenwelt wird, gleichviel wie unvollkommen, durch unsere Wahrnehmungsvorstellungen präsentiert und jeder Zeit am leichtesten durch diese Vorstellungen erfaßt. Dispositionen dagegen können als bloße Möglichkeiten nicht wahrgenommen werden: ihre realen Grundlagen könnten es vielleicht, liegen aber gleichsam nicht zu Tage und bleiben oft auf die Dauer unbekannt. Insofern lassen sich die Dispositionen nur in Relation zu den Erlebnissen erfassen, zu denen sie disponieren, so daß die Ähnlichkeit der Sachlage im Vergleich mit der gegenüber der Außenwelt ganz zurücktritt.

²⁶ Vgl. *Über die Erfahrungsgrundlagen unseres Wissens*, S. 91.

3 Die Momente der Disposition

Disposition, so haben wir gefunden, ist Zweckkönnen. Ein solches Können ist gegenüber der Möglichkeit ohne determinierenden Beisatz insbesondere in zwei Hinsichten unterschieden. An das Subjekt, dem es zugehört, tritt dieses Können sozusagen nicht unmittelbar heran, kommt ihm vielmehr erst unter Vermittlung einer mehr oder minder dauernden Eigenschaft zu, aus die die Disposition sich gründet. Diese Eigenschaft ist ferner nach einem Erlebnis orientiert, wie das Mittel nach seinem Zweck. Beides liegt im prägnanten Sinne des Wortes „Können“ im Gegensatz zu dessen gewöhnlichen Sinne, oder auch darin, daß man z.B. von einem Neugeborenen zwar sagen kann, es sei möglich, daß er ein großer Künstler wird, indes man die Disposition zu hervorragenden Kunstleistungen erst demjenigen nachsagen wird, der erwachsen genug ist, um die Veranlagung zum Künstler bereits irgendwie verraten zu haben. Außerdem ist die Disposition, was ja nicht von jeder Möglichkeit gilt, steigerungsfähig, und in der Praxis wird man eine Disposition nicht leicht konstatieren, wenn die vorliegende Möglichkeit einen allzu niedrigen Grad aufweist.

Wie man sieht, find in der Eigenschaft, auf die die Disposition sich gründet, und dem Erlebnis, auf das die gleichsam gerichtet ist, Bestimmungen gegeben, die, obwohl nicht eigentlich Bestimmungen der Disposition, diese doch ganz wesentlich charakterisieren und auch eine gewisse Variabilität der Dispositionen mit sich führen. Ihnen treten Bestimmungen ähnlichen Charakters an die Seite, die im Dispositionsbegriff zwar nicht explicite enthalten, wohl aber implicite mitgegeben sind und sich der Beachtung aufdrängen, sobald man die Umstände mit in Betracht zieht, unter denen die Disposition einerseits entsteht, andererseits, wenn man so sagen darf, zum Vorschein kommt. Ich will diese Bestimmungen als „Momente“ der Disposition bezeichnen und ihnen hier einige kurze Erwägungen widmen.

Den Ausgangspunkt aller Dispositionsbetrachtung macht, wie wir gesehen haben, ein Erlebnis aus, dieses Wort so weit verstanden, daß darin neben den inneren oder psychischen Erlebnissen auch die äußeren oder physischen den Erlebnisse einbegriffen sind. Es handelt sich da um das, wozu eine Disposition disponiert, das also, was die betreffende Disposition in natürlicher Weise charakterisiert und sie so von anderen Dispositionen unterscheidet. Sagt man von jemandem, er könne turnen, Klavier spielen, stenographieren, Kopfrechnen, vergleichen, kombinieren u. a., so erscheinen die betreffenden Dispositionen auffälligst nach solchen Erlebnissen bestimmt; nicht minder, wenn etwa von Dispositionen zur Begriffsbildung²⁷ oder auch von demjenigen gehandelt wird, was unter dem Namen „Interesse“ gewissen Gefüh-

²⁷ Vgl. E. Mally, „Über Begriffsbildung,“ diese Festschrift, S. 94 ff.

len und Begehungen zugeordnet erscheint.²⁸ Solche Erlebnisse habe ich den betreffenden Dispositionen als deren Korrelate gegenüberstellt [sic]; St. Witasek²⁹ und insbesondere St. Martinak³⁰ hat dafür das minder farblose Wort „Leistung“ gebraucht, dessen Anwendung wirklich in vielen Fällen vorzuziehen sein wird, dem Worte „Korrelat“ jedoch hinsichtlich der Weite des Anwendungsgebietes insofern nachsteht, als bei Erlebnissen, die nicht Aktivitätscharakter haben, nicht wohl von „Leistung“ geredet werden kann. Dagegen kann es natürlich auch für solche Erlebnisse Dispositionen geben; so wird der Ausdruck „Korrelat“ um seiner, wie es scheint, vorbehaltlosen Allgemeinheit willen doch nicht ganz außer Gebrauch zu legen sein.³¹

So selbstverständlich jede Disposition eine Disposition zu etwas ist, so selbstverständlich ist sie eine Disposition an etwas, näher an einem Subjekte, das sie „hat“, indem es auch das Korrelat „hat“, falls dieses verwirklicht ist. Nun ist aber die Dispositionsmöglichkeit, und jede Möglichkeit ist, wie gezeigt³² als „Können“ einem Gegenstande inhäsiiv, den ich als den Träger dieser Möglichkeit bezeichnen zu sollen meinte. Als unvollständiger Gegenstand existiert er, falls ihm überhaupt Existenz zukommt, nur „implexiv“ in einem vollständigen Gegenstande, dem „Repräsentanten“ der Möglichkeit. Dieser fällt bei der Disposition mit deren Subjekt zusammen, so daß man ganz wohl auch vom Repräsentanten der Disposition reden könnte.

Wie aus dem Gesagten erhellt, vereinigen sich zum Träger einer Möglichkeit diejenigen Bestimmungen am Repräsentanten, die der betreffenden Möglichkeit als (selbstverständlich) ihrer Existenz nach bestimmte, also nicht etwa bloß suppletorische Voraussetzungen wesentlich sind. Das ist natürlich auch bei der Disposition der Fall. Dadurch treten gewisse Bestimmungen am Dispositionssubjekte in eine Art Ausnahmestellung: sie sind das am Subjekte, worauf die Disposition eigentlich beruht, das, was sie ausmacht und können daher passend unter dem Namen „Dispositiongrundlage“ zusammengefasst werden. Es war von ihr im Vorangehenden als von der die Disposition begründenden Eigenschaft oder Beschaffenheit des Subjektes schon wiederholt die Rede. Das Verhältnis zwischen Grundlage und Korrelat derselben Disposition ist durch die Tatsache gegeben, daß die Existenz der Grundlage die Möglichkeit der Existenz des Korre-

28 Vgl. O. Tumlitz, „Die Disposition des theoretischen Interesses und ihre aktuellen Korrelate“, diese Festschrift, S. 79 ff.

29 „Grundlinien der Psychologie“, S. 86.

30 „Psychologische Untersuchungen über Prüfen und Klassifizieren“, S. 8.

31 Vgl. übrigens R. Meister, „Unterrichtsfächer als Dispositionssysteme“, diese Festschrift, S. 59 Anm. 12.

32 Vgl. oben in dieser Festschrift, S. 39.

lates impliziert.³³ Des Näheren handelt es sich augenscheinlich um kausale Implikation in der Weise, daß die Grundlage zum Korrelat in der Relation der Teilursache zur Wirkung steht. Insofern dürfte meine früher vertretene Aufstellung, daß der Dispositionsbegriff ein abgeleiteter Kausalbegriff sei, wenigstens dem Umfange ihrer Anwendbarkeit nach nichts Unrichtiges in sich schließen.

Besteht, wie wir gesehen haben, ein Hauptwert der Dispositionsbetrachtung darin, daß bei ihr den relativ vorübergehenden Korrelaterlebnissen ein relativ Dauerndes gegenübertritt, als das sich jetzt zunächst die Dispositionsgrundlage herausstellt, so ist klar, daß diese Grundlage unter den zum Korrelat als Wirkung gehörigen Teilursachen nicht leicht die Position der „letzten Ursache“ wird einnehmen können. An einen solchen letzten Ursache kann es aber natürlich nirgends fehlen, wo das Korrelat aus dem Zustande der in bloßer Existenzmöglichkeit gelegenen Potentialität in den durch Existenztatsächlichkeit konstituierten Zustand der Aktualität übergeht, wo also, wie man oft kurzer sagt, die Disposition aktualisiert wird. Diese letzte Ursache habe ich den „Erreger“ der Disposition genannt. Die Festlegung eines besonderen Terminus wird durch die Rolle legitimiert, die dieser letzten Ursache bei vielen Gesetzmäßigkeiten des dispositionellen Gebietes zukommt. Während aber Subjekt, Korrelat und Grundlage selbstverständlich bei keiner Disposition fehlt [sic], kann die Disposition ebenso selbstverständlich gar wohl bestehen, auch wenn sie nicht erregt wird. Ja es scheint eine Tendenz vorzuwalten, nur bei mangelnder Aktualisation, also bei fehlendem Erreger von einem dispositionellen Tatbestande zu reden, der im Aktualisierungsfalle gleichsam einem Vollkommeneren Platz zu machen scheint.

Stellt so die Grundlage normalerweise das eigentlich Konstante an der Disposition dar, so schließt das ein Entstehen und Anderswerden dieser Grundlage so wenig aus, als man angesichts der Erfahrung, Anstand nehmen dürfte, vom Entstehen und Anderswerden von Dispositionen zu reden. Wo also die Dispositionsgrundlage nicht etwa zugleich mit dem Subjekte ins Dasein tritt, fehlt es natürlich auch nicht an Ursachen für das Auftreten und die Beschaffenheit von Dispositionsgrundlagen und man kann solche Ursachen nicht unpassend als „Begründer“ der betreffenden Dispositionen bezeichnen. Dem, was sich als der sozusagen direkte Aspekt einer Dispositionstatsache darstellt, steht der Begründer allerdings noch um einiges ferner als der Erreger; aber wieder gibt es charakteristische Dispositionsgesetze, die den Begriff desselben zu konzipieren als unentbehrlich erscheinen lassen.

33 Es liegt also vor, was sich in der Schrift „Zum Erweise des allgemeinen Kausalgesetzes“, *Sitzungen der Wiener Akademie der Wissenschaften* 1918, *Philos.-hist. Kl. Bd. CLXXXIX*. S. 43 als „Möglichkeitsimplikation“ gekennzeichnet habe.

Dem Subjekte, dem Korrelate, der Grundlage, dem Erreger und dem Begründer der Disposition also möchte ich unter dem Namen der „Momente“ der Disposition einen bevorzugte Stellung in der Dispositionstheorie einräumen. An die vier letztgenannten derselben sollen im Folgenden noch einige kurze Bemerkungen geknüpft werden.

1. Dürfte eben das Korrelat als der natürliche Ausgangspunkt aller Dispositionsbetrachtung bezeichnet werden, so ist es nichts als selbstverständlich, daß man Dispositionen zunächst nach ihren Korrelaten charakterisiert und unterscheidet. Das schließt nun aber nicht aus, daß Dispositionen ab und zu auch nach etwas anderem benannt würden: wo einem Menschen Erfahrungheit, seinem Wesen Ursprünglichkeit (oder Urwüchsigkeit) nachgesagt wird, liegen Beispiele hierfür vor. Es kann eben für eine Disposition neben dem, was sie leistet, auch ihre Provenienz kennzeichnend sein. Zudem ist in solchen Fällen die Ausschaltung des Korrelates doch bloß eine äußerliche, weil nur in der Bedeutung des angewendeten Wortes gelegene: erfahren nennt man jemanden nicht in erster Linie, um anzuzeigen, daß er Erfahrungen gemacht hat, sondern um auf bestimmte Verhaltensweisen Bezug zu nehmen, die aus den erlebten Erfahrungen resultieren.

Der im Vorangehenden als selbstverständlich gemachten Voraussetzung, daß alle Dispositionskorrelate Erlebnisse sein müssen, widerspricht die Tatsache, daß es neben Dispositionen zu Aktuellem auch Dispositionen zu Dispositionen zu geben scheint. Bildsamkeit ist ein Beleg dafür; auch was man dem Schüler als Fleiß nachzurühen pflegt, zeigt sich nicht so sehr auf einzelne Leistungen als auf die Erwerbung von Dispositionen zu solchen Leistungen gerichtet. Und in der Tat ist, sofern die Disposition sich uns als Möglichkeit herausgestellt hat, sonach Disposition zu Dispositionen soviel als Möglichkeit zu Möglichkeit bedeutet, dagegen theoretisch nichts einzuwenden. Aber dem natürlichen Dispositionsgedanken scheint dies doch wenig zu entsprechen, und sieht man Beispiele wie die obigen näher an, so findet man, daß es sich dabei allemal um Dispositionen nicht so sehr zu Dispositionen als zum Erwerb von Dispositionen handelt. Dispositionen aber werden erworben, indem man die Grundlagen zu ihnen erwirbt. Setzt man also nur noch etwa den „unmittelbaren“ Dispositionen „mittelbare“ an die Seite,³⁴ so wird man bei der Aufstellung: „alle Dispositionskorrelate sind Erlebnisse“ wohl ohne die Gefahr, erheblich irre zu gehen, bleiben dürfen; und sofern alle Erlebnisse, wenigstens alle ausreichend elementaren, entweder äußere oder innere, physische oder psychische sind, ist damit zugleich die Grundeinteilung aller Dispositionen in physische und psychische Dispositionen oder, was dasselbe ist, in Dispositionen zu Physischem und Psychischem gegeben.

³⁴ Mit A. Höfler, *Psychologie*, Wien 1897, S. 257.

Steht ferner, wie dargetan, die Dispositionsgrundlage dem Korrelat gegenüber, wie die Teilursache der Wirkung, so ist ohne weiteres klar, daß, erst wenn dieses Korrelat K selbst wieder Teilursache einer anderen Wirkung ist, diese Wirkung zugleich auch unserer Disposition gegenüber die Stellung sozusagen eines zweiten Korrelates K' einnimmt. Die Disposition zu K ist dann zugleich auch Disposition zu K', gleichsam unter Vermittlung des K, so daß man nun auch dem K gegenüber von einer unvermittelten, dem K Strich gegenüber von einer vermittelten Disposition reden kann. Geht z.B. die technische Sauberkeit in den Ausführungen eines Orchesters nicht zum geringsten Teile auf die Genauigkeit zurück, mit der der Dirigent die einzelnen Orchesterstimmen auseinanderhält, so bedeutet die Fähigkeit hierzu zugleich eine Disposition zum guten Dirigieren. In ähnlicher, von Fällen wie den betrachteten oft gar nicht streng auseinander zu haltender Weise ist die Disposition für den Teil zugleich die Disposition für das Ganze, und es kann sich dabei auch um Gegenstandsteile handeln, die als minder vollständige Gegenstände an vollständigeren³⁵ auftreten. Die Disposition für das Universellere, z.B. gutes Gedächtnis im Allgemeinen ist auch eine Disposition für das Besondere, z.B. für das Merken von Jahreszahlen.³⁶ Allgemein kann man wohl sagen: eine Disposition zum logisch Früheren führt allemal auch eine Disposition zum logisch Späteren mit sich. Daß dagegen die Umkehrung des Satzes keineswegs zutreffen muß, verdient besonders deshalb hervorgehoben zu werden, weil wenigstens unter gewissen Umständen das Recht zu einer solchen Umkehrung doch besteht. Indem der angehende Klavierspieler seine Übungsstücke erlernt, lernt er Klavier spielen kurzweg. Durch den Hinweis auf die „Disposition höhere Ordnung“ ist das kaum zu erledigen; zweifellos spielt dabei aber die wichtige Gesetzmäßigkeit mit, der zufolge die Disposition für ein Korrelat K um so sicherer auch die für ein K' impliziert, je ähnlicher das K' dem K ist. Oft pflegt man doch schon notgedrungen unter K nicht nur absolut gleiche, sondern auch innerhalb gewisser Grenzen ähnliche Objekte zusammenzufassen.

Besondere Beachtung verdienen jene Veränderlichkeiten am Korrelat, die in irgendeiner Weise unter dem Gesichtspunkt des Quantitativen fallen, wo dann die Steigerung am Korrelat *ceteris paribus* auch die Steigerung der Disposition bedeutet, von der das in der Möglichkeitstheorie sowohl bewährte Gesetz des *Potius*³⁷ gilt, das den Schluß von der gesteigerten Disposition auf die minder gesteigerte

35 Über unvollständige Gegenstände vgl. „Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit“, S. 170 ff.

36 Über Differentiation allgemeiner Dispositionen zu spezielleren vgl. R. Meister, „Unterrichtsfächer als Dispositionssysteme“, S. 55 dieser Festschrift, besonders Anm. 4.

37 Vgl. „Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit“, S. 97 f.

(*a potiori ad deterius*)³⁸ gestattet. Von Steigerung des Korrelates ist dabei meist schon in einem teleologisch erweiterten Sinne die Rede, demgemäß das „besser Können“ dem „minder gut Können“ an die Seite tritt. daß einer besser Violine spielen kann, manifestiert sich nicht nur in größerer Kraft der Tongebung. Noch beträchtlicher wird die Erweiterung, wenn man mit E. Martinak³⁹ der „intensiven“ die „extensive“ Leistung an die Seite stellt, wo dann z.B. Bereicherung des erlernten Wortschatzes einer fremden Sprache eine Vermehrung des Sprachwissen bedeutet.

2. Wenden wir uns nunmehr dem Erreger der Disposition zu, der natürlich genauer als Erreger des Korrelates zu bezeichnen wäre, so finden wir von denen eben beim Korrelat benutzten Gesichtspunkten insbesondere zwei auch auf ihn anwendbar. Als von Natur reale Teilursache untersteht zunächst auch er dem Gegensatz von Physisch und Psychisch. Nur überträgt sich seine Bestimmtheit in dieser Hinsicht nicht in gleicher Weise auf die Disposition selbst, wie wir es beim Korrelat gefunden haben; vielmehr kann eine Disposition, die durch einen physischen Erreger aktualisiert wird, je nach dem Korrelat in gleicherweise physisch oder psychisch sein wie eine durch einen psychischen Erreger aktualisierte. So kommt es bei Aktualisierung sowohl der Ernährungs- wie der Empfindungsdispositionen auf einen physischen, bei willkürlicher Beeinflussung äußerer wie innerer Erlebnisse auf einen psychischen Erreger an. Das Zweite, was am Erreger wie am Korrelat zur Sprache kommen muß, ist die Eventualität der Steigerung, um festzustellen, daß man das Wesen der Dispositionssteigerung nicht etwa, wie es oben noch den Anschein haben konnte, in der Steigerung des Korrelates suchen darf. Denn auch bei gleichbleibender Leistung kann von verschiedenen Dispositionsstärken gesprochen werden, was einfachst an den Reiz- und Unterschiedsschwellen zu konstatieren ist: je niedriger die Schwelle, desto größer die Empfindlichkeit, woraus dann aber zugleich an der verkehrten Richtung, in der sich Dispositions- und Erregerstärke verändert, zu erkennen ist, daß Dispositionssteigerung ganz gewiß auch nicht mit der Steigerung des Erregers zusammenfällt.

3. Was die Dispositionsgrundlage anlangt, so ist auch diese der Gegensatz zwischen physisch und psychisch natürlich schematisch ohne weiteres anwendbar, aber auch hier keineswegs so, als ob einer Disposition mit physischer Grundlage deshalb physisch, eine mit psychischer Grundlage deshalb psychisch sein müßte. Darf aber die Grundlage gleich der Disposition selbst als etwas relativ Konstantes in Anspruch genommen werden, so verdient Beachtung, daß die di-

38 Zum Terminus „deterius“ vgl. „Zum Erweise des allgemeinen Kausalgesetzes“ a.a.O. S. 56 f.

39 „Über Prüfen und Klassifizieren vom Standpunkte der Praxis“, S. 18 ff.

rekte Empirie innere Erlebnisse von ausreichender Konstanz kaum zur Verfügung stellt. Das legt die Vermutung nahe, die Grundlagen auch der psychischen Disposition möchten physisch sein, falls man nicht etwa Gründe findet, sich hypothetisch auf psychische Konstanz zu berufen, denen gegenüber unsere direkte Erfahrung versagt. Auf die Schwierigkeiten psychischer oder psychophysischer Kausalität wird die Dispositionstheorie bei der Grundlage vermutlich so wenig ausdrücklich einzugehen brauchen wie beim Erreger.

Darf, wie berührt, die Grundlage (namentlich bei psychischen Dispositionen) als das in der Regel direkt Unbekannte gelten, so kommt um so größere Wichtigkeit der Frage zu, ob Dispositionen mit universell resp. komplexen Korrelaten, also universellen und komplexen Dispositionen (eventuell Dispositionskomplexen) universelle resp. komplexe Grundlagen zukommen. Prinzipiell ist dagegen sicher keine Einwendungen zu erheben, und namentlich die Präsumtion möglichst weitgehender Analogie zwischen dem Bau des Korrelates und dem der Grundlage wird es an heuristischem Wert nicht fehlen lassen. Was jetzt die experimentelle Dispositionspsychologie unter dem Namen der „Korrelation“⁴⁰ untersucht, hat seine Wurzel ohne Zweifel in den Grundlagen ihrer Verträglichkeit und Abhängigkeit. Aber auch jener Gegenstand wesentlich höherer Ordnung, auf den E. Martinak unter dem Namen des „Dispositionssystems“ aufmerksam gemacht hat,⁴¹ stellt die Dispositionstheorie der Zukunft vor die hier schon recht schwierige Aufgabe, vom Verhältnis Rechenschaft zu geben, in dem die Dispositionsgrundlagen einem solchen System gegenüberstehen.

Es entspricht der eben erwähnten Analogie, nun auch die Steigerung am Korrelat auf eine Steigerung der Grundlage zurückzuführen. Das Bedürfnis danach ist umso dringender, als wir uns davon überzeugen konnten, daß die Steigerung der Disposition nicht etwa in der Steigerung des Korrelates bestehen kann, da Steigerungen der Disposition auch bei unveränderten Korrelate zu Tage treten, falls der Erreger graduelle Veränderungen aufweist. Daß aber andererseits nicht etwa der Erreger dasjenige Moment ausmacht, in dessen Stärkeveränderungen die Stärkeveränderungen der Disposition selbst bestehen, das erhellt schon aus dem entgegengesetzten Sinn dieser beiden Veränderungen. Dagegen ist es leicht, die am Erreger und die am Korrelate auftretenden Dispositionssteigerungen als derselben Gesetzmäßigkeit folgend zu agnoszieren, sobald man auch hinsichtlich der

40 Die terminologische Übereinstimmung mit dem, was ich schon seit um so vieles längerer Zeit „Korrelat“ der Disposition nenne, ist natürlich nur eine zufällige.

41 Vgl. „Über Prüfen und Klassifizieren vom Standpunkte der Praxis“, S. 22 und jetzt insbesondere R. Meister, „Unterrichtsfächer als Dispositionssysteme“, S. 38 ff. dieser Festschrift.

am Erreger zur Geltung kommenden Steigerungsfälle die Grundlage mit in Betracht zieht. Gehört nämlich *ceteris paribus*, also insbesondere bei gleichem Erreger zum größeren Korrelat auch die größere Grundlage, so daß der Relation $K < K'$ bei den Korrelaten die Relation $G < G'$ bei dem zugehörigen Grundlagen der Dispositionen $D < D'$ zur Seite steht, so wird es, falls nicht sozusagen äußere Hindernisse vorliegen, jederzeit möglich sein müssen, dem Erreger E einen Erreger E' an die Seite zu stellen, der, kleiner als E, gleichwohl im Subjekte S', dem mit der größeren Grundlage G' auch die stärkere Disposition D' zukommt, das nämliche Korrelat K hervorbringt, wie der Erreger E im Subjekte S. Denn würde der Erreger E' bis zur Höhe von E gesteigert, so würde er im Subjekte S' vermöge der diesem eigenen Grundlage G' das Korrelat K' hervorbringen. Was sich so dem ersten Blick als ein besonderes, ausschließlich für den Erreger geltendes Dispositionssteigerungsgesetz darstellen möchte, verliert seine anscheinende Eigenartigkeit, sobald man den schon an den gesteigerten Korrelaten erkennbaren Anteil der Grundlage in Rechnung bringt.

Nun ist aber im gegenwärtigen Zusammenhange noch einer anderen Weise zu gedenken, in der die Dispositionssteigerung zu Tage treten kann. Man sagt von jemandem, daß er zu Katarrhen disponiere, wenn er solche unter Umständen bekommt, unter denen andere noch davon frei bleiben, daß sie ihm also öfter zustoßen als anderen und das unter sonst gleichen Umständen die Möglichkeit einer Erkrankung bei ihm größer ist. Wie man sieht, handelt es sich hier ganz direkt um einen höheren Möglichkeitsgrad, was an sich nicht befremden kann, da wir in allen Dispositionen Möglichkeiten angetroffen haben. Während aber sonst gerade die Größe dieser Möglichkeit nicht in Frage kommt, so daß man es auch bei Steigerungen der Dispositionen zunächst mit steigerungsunfähigen Möglichkeiten⁴² zu tun zu haben scheint, ist in Fällen von der eben in Rede stehenden Art gerade die Möglichkeit das Gesteigerte. Dennoch gehören solche Steigerungsfälle durchaus in den gegenwärtigen Zusammenhang, sofern auch hier die Rückführung auf die Grundlage und deren Steigerungen nächstgelegt erscheint. In der Tat kann nichts natürlicher sein, als Erhöhung einer Möglichkeit auf Steigerung der zunächst maßgebenden Teilursache, eben der Grundlage, zurückzubeziehen, zumal sich dabei der Anteil der übrigen Teilursachen, insbesondere der letzten, als ein relativ akzidenteller, weil von der Beschaffenheit dieser Teilursachen relativ wenig abhängiger herauszustellen pflegt. Bei psychischen Korrelaten redet man dann im Falle ihrer Aktualisierung von Betätigungen der Spontaneität,⁴³ um damit das Vorwie-

⁴² Vgl. "Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit", S. 136 ff.

⁴³ Vgl. "Über Phantasievorstellung und Phantasie", *Zeitschr. f. Philos. und philos. Kritik*, a.a.O. S. 218 ff. (auch Ges. Abhandl. Bd. I S. 46 ff.)

gen innerer Einflüsse gegenüber äußeren zur Geltung zu bringen.

Zusammenfassend wird man wohl sagen dürfen: alle Steigerung von Dispositionen geht auf Steigerung der Grundlagen zurück. Daß aber die Dispositionssteigerung einfach in der Grundlagensteigerung besteht, der Steigerungsgedanke also nur von der Grundlage äußerlich auf die Disposition übertragen ist, darf man mindestens angesichts der Fälle nicht behaupten, wo die Steigerung der Disposition sich als Steigerung der Wahrscheinlichkeit manifestiert. Hier wenigstens greift der Steigerungsgedanke zunächst direkt an der Disposition selbst an, so gewiß diese ihrem Wesen nach Möglichkeit ist.

Daß der Begründer nicht jeder Disposition in derselben Ausnahmelosigkeit eigen ist, wie Korrelat, Grundlage und (*cum grano salis*) Erreger, darauf ist oben bereits hingewiesen worden. Es ist dies übrigens ohne weiteres klar, wenn man die Eventualität der Dispositionsbegründung bloß innerhalb der Lebensgrenzen des die Disposition an sich tragenden Subjektes ins Auge fasst. Denn an dem tatsächlichen und zwar recht häufigen Vorkommen angeborene Disposition wird man heute nicht leichter zweifeln, als man an das Vorkommen der einst so vielberufenen angeborenen Erlebnisse (nämlich Vorstellungen und Überzeugungen) glaubt, unter deren Namen man übrigens wohl in den meisten Fällen immer schon dispositionelle Tatbestände gemeint, nur noch nicht klar genug als solche erkannt haben wird, so lange der Unterschied des Dispositionellen vom Aktuellen der Theorie noch nicht ausreichend geläufig war. Immerhin pflegt man sich heute mit der bloßen Konstatierung der Angeborenheit nicht zu begnügen, vielmehr so gleich den Ursprung solcher Dispositionen in Erwägung zu ziehen, in dem man statt von Angeborenheit sogleich von Erbllichkeit der Dispositionen handelt.⁴⁴ Unter dem Gesichtspunkte des Dispositionsbegründers kann von ihnen hier weiter nicht die Rede sein.

Umso mehr kommen im gegenwärtigen Zusammenhange die erworbenen Dispositionen in Frage, aus deren Mannigfaltigkeit hier, ohne auf Vollständigkeit Anspruch zu machen, zwei Typen hervorgehoben seien, deren Charakteristik sich in ganz auffallender Weise ergibt, wenn man ihren Begründer mit ihrem Korrelat zusammenhält. Ich meine die sich so ergebenden Dispositionsklassen am besten durch die Worte „Gewöhnungsdispositionen“ und „Suggestiondispositionen“ bezeichnen zu können.

Daß es sich zunächst bei „Gewöhnung“ auch für den vulgären Wortgebrauch um eine Dispositionsbildung handelt, erhellt daraus, daß der Effekt der Gewöhnung sich allemal als etwas relativ Dauernendes darstellt. Dagegen scheint die Natur dieses Effektes zwischen zwei Gegensätzlichkeiten zu schwanken, die schon die Sprache des

⁴⁴ Vgl. E. Martinak, „Einige neuere Ansichten über Vererbung moralischer Eigenschaften und die pädagogische Praxis“, Wien 1893.

Alltags durch *Termini* von kontrastierende Bedeutung wie etwa „angewöhnen“ und „abgewöhnen“ festzuhalten versucht. Was dabei zur Geltung kommen soll, ist ohne Zweifel dies, daß die Gewöhnung den betreffenden Dispositionen bald förderlich, bald abträglich ist. Das legt aber dann die Frage nahe, um welcher Gemeinsamkeit willen in Fällen so verschiedenen Verhaltens doch immer wieder von Gewöhnung geredet wird. Die Antwort ergibt der Umstand, daß alle Gewöhnungsdispositionen durch Erlebnisse begründet werden, die den Korrelaten der so zustande kommenden Dispositionen gleichartig sind.

Wie geht es etwa zu, daß man sich an einem Geruch, sei es an einen guten, sei es an einen üblen, „gewöhnt“? Offenbar so, daß das Organ einem Geruchsreiz ausgelegt ist, die Wirkung des Reizes aber, auch wenn er unverändert bleibt, abnimmt, eventuell die Null erreicht. Es kann auch geschehen, daß die Empfindung, soviel sich merken läßt, ziemlich unverändert bleibt, dagegen die Annehmlichkeit oder Unannehmlichkeit, also das begleitende Gefühl, abnimmt und schwindet. Da der Reiz unverändert bleibt, kann die Veränderung nur am Subjekt liegen, das sich augenscheinlich ändert unter dem Einflusse des Reizes. Dieser hat zu Anfang eine bestimmte dispositionelle Beschaffenheit des Subjekts angetroffen; Er hat diese Disposition aktualisiert und insofern als deren Erreger funktioniert: das Korrelat war die Empfindung resp. das Gefühl in seiner ursprünglichen Stärke. Unter dem Einflusse des Reizes geht die vorgegebene Disposition in eine schwächere über, die an einem schwächeren Korrelat zu Tage tritt. Die Gewöhnung stellt sich hier also als Dispositionsherabsetzung dar, an der besonders der Umstand in die Augen fällt, daß das, was die Disposition herabsetzt, das Erleben des Korrelates ist. Lässt man also, was ja unbedenklich ist, die Veränderung einer vorgegebenen Disposition als Begründung einer neuen gelten, so kann man einfach sagen, es handelt sich hier um einen Begründer, der mit dem Korrelat wesensgleich ist, und dieser Begründer hat eine Ursache, die mit dem Erreger der vorgegebenen Disposition zusammenfällt. Gewöhnungen diese Art nennt man Ermüdung; es ist sofort klar, daß die eben gegebene dispositionelle Charakteristik auf alle Ermüdung paßt, obwohl man den Terminus *Gewöhnung* darauf meist nicht zwanglos, sondern nur im Sinne einer Erweiterung seine üblichen Bedeutung anwenden kann. Die darin zu Tage tretende Gesetzmäßigkeit aber ist wohl eine schlechterdings allgemeine; es scheint kein inneres oder äußeres Erlebnis zu geben, daß nicht ermüdete.⁴⁵

Nun spricht man von Gewöhnung aber auch noch in ganz anderem Sinne, indem man etwa sagt, der Maschinenschreiber „gewöh-

45 Einen ersten Überblick über einschlägige Tatsachen bringt meine Abhandlung „Über Sinnesermüdung im Bereiche des Weberschen Gesetzes“, *Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftl. Philos.* Bd. XII, 1888, S. 1-5 (Ges. Abhandl. Bd. I, S. 79-83).

ne sich“ an eine Schreibmaschine ihm bisher unbekanntem System, indem er eine Weile darauf schreibt. Konnte im vorigen Beispiele die geringe Konstanz der in Frage kommenden Dispositionen ihren Dispositionscharakter dem ersten Blicke einigermaßen verschleiern, so entfällt hier dieses Hindernis ganz und gar; es handelt sich eben deutlich um die Disposition zum Schreiben auf der neuen Maschine, – übrigens aber wieder um Veränderung dieser Disposition, nur diesmal im entgegengesetzten Sinne, nämlich um eine Steigerung gegenüber der Herabsetzung im vorigen Beispiel. Aber wie dort die Herabsetzung, so wird hier die Steigerung herbeigeführt durch Erleben, näher durch wiederholtes Erleben des Korrelates, und die oben konstatierten Übereinstimmungen zwischen dem Korrelat und dem Begründer der abgeänderten Disposition resp. zwischen dem Erreger und der Ursache des Begründers besteht auch hier, so daß es nunmehr nahe liegt, durch dieses Übereinstimmungsverhältnis alles zu charakterisieren, was man Gewöhnung nennt, ohne an dem entgegengesetzten Sinn, indem diese Übereinstimmung Dispositionsveränderungen mit sich führt, Anstoß zu nehmen. Fälle der eben beschriebenen Dispositionssteigerung aber nennt man Übung⁴⁶ und dehnt, ähnlich wie bei Ermüdung, den Terminus auch auf viele Fälle aus, wo man sprachgebräuchlich nicht mehr von Gewöhnung zu reden pflegt. Während jedoch alles physische und psychische Geschehen der Ermüdung unterliegt, ist der Bereich der Übung kein ebenso weiter: Ihn endgültig abzustecken, ist eine noch zu lösende Aufgabe experimenteller Untersuchung, auf die näher einzugehen an gegenwärtige Stelle der Raum fehlt. Ich begnüge mich daher, für das psychische Gebiet eine Vermutung auszusprechen, die sich in sofort ersichtlicher Weise vielfach verifiziert, bis zur völligen Bestätigung aber als heuristisches Prinzip Dienste zu leisten geeignet sein möchte. Hält man sich an die schon dem täglichen Leben geläufige Gegensätzlichkeit von Aktiv und Passiv,⁴⁷ so lässt sich, soviel ich sehe, behaupten, daß nur aktive Erlebnisse sich üben, indes passive (wie Fühlen und Erleben von Vorstellungen mit Ausschluß der diesen bearbeiteten aktiven Erlebnisse) einem anderen Dispositionsgesetz unterstehen, auf das wir sogleich Bezug zu nehmen haben werden.

Zunächst muss das Verhältnis zwischen Ermüdung und Übung klargestellt werden, das sich wegen der Gegensätzlichkeit des Sinnes der jedesmal wesentlichen Dispositionsänderung schon dem ersten Blick als deutlicher Antagonismus präsentiert, der zur Unverträglichkeit zu führen droht, da das eine der beiden Gesetze, das der Ermüdung, mit dem Anspruch auf ausnahmslose Gültigkeit auftritt, also

⁴⁶ Vgl. „Psychologisch-ethische Untersuchungen zur Werttheorie“, S. 172 f.

⁴⁷ Einen (wie mir heute freilich scheint, noch nicht ganz zutreffenden) Versuch genaueren Beschreibung vgl. Bei St. Witasek, *Psychologie*, S. 84 f.

wenigstens überall dort, wo auch das Übungsgesetz in Kraft ist, zu Kollisionen führen zu müssen scheint. Es fehlt inzwischen die Gelegenheit zum Konflikte, sofern zwischen Ermüdung und Übung prinzipiell eine Spanne Zeit tritt, die nun noch einen anderen Tatbestand gesetzmäßiger Dispositionsänderung in den Kreis unsere Betrachtung einzubeziehen verlangt. Schon das tägliche Leben weiß, daß, wenn nach der Ermüdung einige Zeit vergangen ist, sich eine der Ermüdung entgegengesetzten Dispositionsänderung geltend macht, die man Erholung nennt und der man, wenigstens ihrer psychischen Seite nach, heute nicht ohne alles Verständnis gegenübersteht. Bedeutet demnach die Erhöhung im wesentlichen eine *restitutio in integrum*, so ist schon von vornherein sehr wahrscheinlich, daß die so zu erzielende Integrität nicht das genaue Erreichen des Ausgangspunkte der Ermüdung darstellen werde. Näher zeigt hier nun die Erfahrung zwei Typen, indem die Erholung in manchen Fällen den Ausgangspunkt nicht erreicht, in anderen Fällen dagegen, so sehr dies auf den ersten Blick befremden könnte, den Ausgangspunkt überschreitet.

Dieser zweite Fall ist der der Übung, die sich allemal erst einstellt, wenn, um nicht zu sagen indem, die Ermüdung durch Erholung überwunden ist. Dem steht aber, wie gesagt, der Fall gegenüber, wo die Erholung, auch wenn ihr beliebig viel Zeit gelassen ist, zur Wiederherstellung des früheren Dispositionszustandes nicht mehr zu führen vermag, und Ermüdung trotz Erholung wieder nur neuerliches Sinken der Dispositionsstärke zur Folge hat. Eine ebenso volkstümliche und unmißverständliche Bezeichnung wie „Übung“ steht hier nicht zu Gebote: Ich habe aber gemeint, den Terminus „Abstumpfung“ hierfür mit ausreichender Deutlichkeit in Anwendung nehmen zu dürfen.

Kann man nun auch sagen, wann Ermüdung mit Erholung zur Übung, wann sie zu Abstumpfung führt? Die Antwort ist in dem oben über das Verhältnis der Aktivität zur Übung Gesagten enthalten. Liegt es in der Natur der Erlebnisse, die man als Tätigkeiten bezeichnen kann, daß sie der Übung zugänglich sind, so wird man von allem, was Leiden heißen darf, zu erwarten haben, daß es der Abstumpfung unterliegt. Innerhalb welcher Grenzen dies zutrifft, das ist Angelegenheit der Übungs- resp. Abstumpfungskurve, auf deren Gestalt hier so wenig eingegangen werden kann wie auf die Ermüdungs- resp. Erholungskurve. Daß man, ganz summarisch betrachtet, so häufig erst langsames, dann rasches dann wieder langsames Ansteigen resp. Herabsinken antrifft, kann dem Gedanken der engen Zusammengehörigkeit dieser verschiedenen Gesetzmäßigkeiten nur erhöhtes Gewicht verleihen.

Übrigens gibt es noch einen verwandten Tatbestand von Dispositionsveränderung, der vornehmlich auf dem Gebiete der Empfindungen unter dem Namen des Anklingens bekannt, sich zweifellos auch auf anderen Gebieten inneren Geschehens, möglicherweise aber überall, wo solches Geschehen anhebt, vorfindet. Es ist der Tatbestand einer

Dispositionsteigerung unter Einwirkung etwa eines Empfindungsreizes, einer Steigerung die zu jenem Maximum führt, bei dem dann die Ermüdung einsetzt. Dagegen stimmt das Abklingen in der Richtung mit der Ermüdung, im Mangel an einem besonderen Erreger mit der Erholung überein. Ob es sich dabei überhaupt noch um einen Dispositionsgesetz handelt, könnte fraglich erscheinen, dürfte man nicht glauben, daß während des Abklingens etwa für einen Empfindungsreiz größere Empfindlichkeit besteht als nach dem Abklingen.

Auf alle diese so mannigfaltigen Tatsachen den Namen „Gewöhnung“ anzuwenden, verlangt, wie erwähnt, trotz der oben aufgewiesenen Gegensätzlichkeit im Erfolge des herkömmlich Gewöhnung Genannten, eine ausdrückliche Konvention. Diese schiene mir aber immerhin das natürlichste terminologische Mittel der Kennzeichnung gegenüber der zweiten Gruppe von Dispositionsbegründungen, die ich, gleichfalls unter konventioneller Erweiterung des vorherrschenden Wortgebrauches, oben als Suggestionstatbestände bezeichnet habe. Besonders paradigmatisch dafür scheinen mir die Tatsachen, die man oft als Fälle des Gesetzes der Nachahmung⁴⁸ zusammenfasst, das einfachst etwa bei wahrgenommenen Bewegungen zu Tage tritt, die durchaus nicht willkürliche Bewegungen sein müssen, vielmehr auch z.B. unwillkürliche Ausdrucksbewegungen sein können. Wenn freilich ein Kind weint oder lacht, weil es ein anderes weinen oder lachen sieht resp. hört, so mag man bezweifeln, ob derlei überhaupt etwas mit Dispositionen zu tun habe und sich nicht vielmehr ausschließlich innerhalb des Aktuellen abspiele. Wenn aber einer im Sprechen den Dialekt seiner Umgebung annimmt, so betätigt er das ja auch, wenn niemand anders spricht; hier aktualisiert sich also doch wohl eine Disposition, und zwar eine zu einem Korrelat, daß sich durch seine Ähnlichkeit mit dem charakterisiert, was das Subjekt gehört, oder allgemein, was es wahrgenommen hat. Das ihm aber diese Disposition durch seine Umgebung aufsuggestiert worden ist, kann doch in ziemlich ungezwungener Weise gesagt werden. Nur ist das Wahrnehmen dabei augenscheinlich gar nicht wesentlich; denn Analoges trägt sich zu, wo das Wahrnehmungsurteil gleichviel aus welchem Grunde ausgeschlossen und durch ein anderes Urteil ersetzt ist. Gelangt es dem X zur Kenntnis, daß der Y eine gewisse Überzeugung hat, so ist der X geneigt, sie zu teilen, und die Neigung wird wachsen, wenn auch Z der betreffenden Meinung ist. Was dem Y gefällt oder was er werthält, dem wird sich auch der X mit einer gewissen Bereitwilligkeit zuwenden, es sich gefallen zu lassen oder

⁴⁸ Vgl. „Psychol.-eth. Unters. Zur Werttheorie“, S. 173, B. Groethuysen, „Das Mitgefühl“, *Zeitschrift für Psychologie*, Bd. XXXIV, 1904, S. 179 ff., jetzt auch J.K. von Hotzlin, „Das Gesetz der spontanen Nachahmung“, *Archiv für die ges. Psychologie*, Bd. XXXVIII, 1918, S. 1 ff.

es wertzuhalten. Und was der Y will, ebenfalls zu wollen, ist dem X sehr nahe gelegt; ob das dann die Gestalt der Unterordnung unter den Willen des Y oder ganz im Gegenteil eine Interessenkonflikt und insofern einen Gegensatz gegen den Willen des Y mit sich führt, also zu Gunsten oder zu Ungunsten des Y ausschlägt, ist für den Tatbestand der Dispositionsbegründung erstaunlich gleichgültig.

Dagegen stimmen die angeführten Fälle immer noch darin überein, daß der Dispositionsbegründer ein Urteil ist; aber auch dies scheint entbehrlich. Bekanntlich resultiert die Tendenz, einen Tatbestand zu verwirklichen, oft genug aus dem bloßen Denken an diesen Tatbestand, auch wenn es ausschließlich durch Annehmen ohne Glauben, also durch bloßes Annehmen oder am Ende nur Vorstellen geschieht, so daß man wohl ganz allgemein wird sagen dürfen: Das Erfassen eines Gegenstandes begründet die Disposition, ihn zu realisieren,⁴⁹ falls er innerhalb der Sphäre des Realisierbaren liegt. Ob dieses Erfassen dann zugleich ein Urteilen ist, wird für die Stärke der resultierenden Disposition ebenso wenig gleichgültig sein als in dieser Hinsicht der sonstige Zustand des Subjektes gleichgültig ist. In seiner allgemeinsten Gestalt aber kann unser Dispositionsbildungsgesetz davon absehen, wie es auch nicht darauf Rücksicht zu nehmen braucht, ob das, was hier als „Suggestion“ in Anspruch genommen erscheint, dem Typus der Fremdsuggestion oder dem der Autosuggestion folgt. Wesentlich scheint nur, daß hier das Erfassen eines Gegenstandes die Disposition zu diesem oder zu einem ähnlichen Gegenstände als Korrelat begründet, indes bei der Gewöhnung in unserem weiteren Sinne der Gegenstand, der hier als Erlebnis auf besonderes Erfasstwerden nicht angewiesen ist, sozusagen die Disposition zu sich selbst (oder natürlich auch wieder zum Auftreten eines Ähnlichen) beeinflusst.

Daß über den Wert des hier Skizzierten nur Beobachtung und insbesondere Experiment das erste und letzte Wort zu sprechen hat, versteht sich; hier gebricht es an Raum, die Entscheidung dieser Instanz anzurufen. Noch weniger kann an dieser Stelle versucht werden, auf die Ausgestaltung und Bedeutung der hier kaum mehr als berührten Gesetzmäßigkeiten einzugehen und dadurch die Berichtigung der früher ja nicht selten angegriffenen dispositionstheoretischen Betrachtungsweise im Einzelnen darzutun. Vielleicht darf ich indes gleichwohl der Hoffnung Ausdruck geben, es werde das, was auf Grund mündlicher Mitteilung mehr als einmal im Laufe der Jahre seine anregende Kraft bewährt hat, auch in seiner gegenwärtigen, besonderes fragmentarischen Gestalt für den Fortgang der Forschung auf psychologischem und pädagogischem Gebiete Nutzen stiften können.

⁴⁹ Vgl. A. Bain, angeführt bei B. Groethuysen, „Das Mitgefühl“, a.a.O., S. 171.

General Remarks on the Theory of Disposition

Alexius Meinong

1 Introduction¹

All education [*Erziehen*], in the broadest sense of the word, is directed towards the future. The aim is always to endow the future life of the person to be educated with values, which he would probably lack without the help of education. Of course, not just any values come into question. The parsimonious housefather, who strives to leave his children an adequate inheritance, does not act as an educator in this endeavour. Rather, education aims at values, or more precisely at objects of value [*Wertobjekte*], which are to form part of the future life of the person to be educated, and normally not at a single moment in this life, but during shorter or longer, possibly very long periods of it. Such success can, of course, be achieved only if the educational activity produces results which are not merely temporary but relatively permanent. However, it will not be easy to pass over this permanence even in those cases, in which, for once, education exceptionally aims at a single experience, e.g. at dignified behaviour in facing the danger of death or, even more to the point, vis à vis the actual arriv-

Translated by Lindsay Parkhowell and Sascha Freyberg with the support of Pietro D. Omodeo (all Università Ca' Foscari Venezia).

1 The translators' interest in educational theories is linked to the research lines of the ERC project *Institutions and Metaphysics of Cosmology in the Epistemic Networks of Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Horizon 2020, GA n. 725883 *EarlyModernCosmology*).



Published 2020-06-30

Open access

© 2020 | Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Public License



Citation Meinong, A. (2020). "General Remarks on the Theory of Dispositions", transl. by L.Parkhowell and S. Freyberg. *JoLMA. The Journal for the Philosophy of Language, Mind and the Arts*, 1(1), -126.

DOI 10.30687/JoLma/2723-9640/2020/01/007

al of death. Such an experience² is important, despite its being singular, and is separated from the educational intervention by a period of time, and moreover, at the time of this [educational] intervention the time of its occurrence is usually still undetermined. Thus, in the end, all educational influence seems to have to amount to equipping the educated with relatively lasting qualities [*Eigenschaften*], which promise to make his position more favourable in the more or less reliably foreseeable future. Therefore, if all education remains eventually directed towards experiences, which are temporary like all experiences, the more immediate goal of such an activity will surely always lie in creating the aptitude for certain experiences: one cannot instill experiences in anybody, but rather the ability to have experiences, to make them one's own, to form them in an appropriate way, etc.

In this sense, the concept of capacity [*Fähigkeit*], ability [*Vermögen*] or, as one is accustomed to say with as little prejudice as possible, 'disposition' [*Disposition*] proves one of, if not *the*, fundamental concept of all pedagogy,³ and those who try to clarify it and consider some of its simplest applications may hope to make a contribution to pedagogical theory. In view of this purpose, here are a few thoughts, most of which were conceived some time ago,⁴ which may be particularly legitimized by the fact that they have already served as a theoretical basis⁵ for E. Martinak's widely acknowledged inquiries into *Über Prüfen und Klassifizieren* [On Examination and Classification].⁶

² Translators' note: we consequently translate *Erlebnis* as 'experience' throughout although the semantic of the German expression is broader. Sometimes *Erlebnis* also refers to the objective circumstances of the 'event' that can make an experience possible.

³ See Meister, R. "Unterrichtsfächer als Dispositionssysteme". *Festschrift [Beiträge zur Pädagogik und Dispositionstheorie: Eduard Martinak zur Feier seines 60. Geburtstages]*, 55 ff.

⁴ See Höfler, A. in this *Festschrift*, 24 (see fn). Translators' note: If Meinong mentions "this *Festschrift*" he is referring to the context of the original publication of his article in: *Beiträge zur Pädagogik und Dispositionstheorie. Eduard Martinak zur Feier seines 60. Geburtstages*. Hrsg. von A. Meinong. Prag-Wien-Leipzig: A. Haase, 1919, 33-54

⁵ See the first of the mentioned contributions [Meister, "Unterrichtsfächer als Dispositionssysteme"], 7 of the *Festschrift* as well as St. Witasek, "Beiträge zur speziellen Dispositionspsychologie". *Archive f. systemat. Philosophie*, vol. III, 274 fn. 1, and, "Grundlinien der Psychologie" (Leipzig 1908), 86 (see fn). The following essay of this *Festschrift*, 55, fn. 2, provides more information on literature. See also in this *Festschrift*, 75 ff.

⁶ Martinak, E. "Psychologische Untersuchungen über Prüfen und Klassifizieren". Talk delivered at the first general assembly of the seventh German-Austrian Middle School Conference (Vienna 1900), *Österreichische Mittelschule XIV*/ 2 and 3, and "Über Prüfen und Klassifizieren vom Standpunkte der Praxis", final talk at the third general assembly of the ninth German-Austrian Middle School Conference, Vienna, A. Hölder 1906.

2 The idea of disposition

Like any other theory, the theory of dispositions must also be elevated by the determination of its basic concept. For reasons which I had occasion to point out long ago,⁷ this determination aims to preserve the ideas [*Gedanke*] resulting from the theoretical work as much as possible, while making use as sparingly as possible of more arbitrary definitions.⁸ In this sense, one can assume that one can attribute a certain disposition to someone, e.g. artistic taste [*künstlerischer Geschmack*], not if he has a certain experience at the time in question, and also not without any reference to an experience. Instead, under favourable circumstances, which are not easily tied to a specific moment in time, it is possible to ascribe the same disposition to people who have the same experience under similar circumstances. We will consider ourselves entitled to ascribe the same disposition to those others, who have it [the same experience] under similar circumstances, as well as to those who do not have it. The disposition will then be more greatly attributed to those who have the experience in question more often, more strongly, more perfectly, etc. It is obvious to attribute to the subject in question a relatively lasting quality under the name of artistic taste, by which he finds out what is artistically valuable in and outside of art, tries to surround himself or herself with it, etc., whereby the relationship of this quality to the experiences in question naturally appears to be that of the partial cause of the effect [*Teilursache zur Wirkung*]. The disposition to an experience or a class of experience, respectively, would thus have to be determined as a property that constitutes a partial cause to the experience in question as an effect: the concept of disposition thus presents itself as one of those concepts,⁹ which I have long ago¹⁰ called “derived causal concepts” [*abgeleitete Kausalbegriffe*].

Indeed, under the given circumstances, there can be no doubt in attributing to the subject a quality that enables him or her to behave in the manner indicated. But that which enables me [*mich befähigt*], i.e. gives me a capacity [*Fähigkeit*], I am not easily able to refer to as

⁷ In the treatise on “Phantasievorstellung und Phantasie”. *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* XCV (1889), 161 f. Cf. *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, vol. 1. Leipzig, 1914, 195 f.

⁸ On another occasion, I hope I will be able to address the fundamental concerns of M. Frischeisen-Koehler, *Kant-Studien* XXII (1918), 470 f. [Translators’ note: Meinong uses the expression “Prinzip der Definitionsfreiheit”, which refers to a rather nominalist understanding of the philosophical freedom to use and redefine concepts. His “sparing” use of such language implies a commitment to stay closer to common language].

⁹ “Phantasievorstellung und Phantasie”. *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik*, XCV, 1889, 218. Cf. *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, vol. 1. Leipzig, 1914, 247.

¹⁰ *Hume-Studien* II (1882), 133. Meinong, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, 2: 126.

a capacity [*Fähigkeit*]. And it becomes even clearer that the property in question is not itself the disposition, to the point where the property is not only postulated, as it were, from the behavior of the subject, but is directly known from its nature [*Beschaffenheit*]. The one who is short-sighted behaves in a quite characteristic way when looking near and far, which admittedly means a loss for him far more often than an advantage, but which in any case entitles him to speak of short-sightedness as a clearly characterized disposition. Now, myopia often (as “axenmyopia”) is due to an anomaly in the shape of the eyeball; this abnormal shape can thus be regarded as the characteristic [*Eigenschaft*] on which the disposition called myopia is based. But will anyone be inclined to say that this shape [*Gestalt*] is the disposition? If in the case of myopia we cannot use this expression without some violence, then it is even less appropriate when in other cases the underlying property is unknown [*zu Grunde liegende Eigenschaft*]. This deficiency can easily be remedied when one doesn’t see a disposition as the characteristic in question, but instead only as the characteristic of having that characteristic. In principle, there is no objection to this: if A is in relation to B, then A can always be ascribed the property of being in relation to B. So it is really not inconsistent to say that the short-sightedness of a human being consists in the fact that he has eyes that have a certain deficiency. However, the usual idea regarding disposition or capacity [*Dispositions- oder Fähigkeitsgedanke*] does not display such complexity, and I have to recognize that even if the idea of cause appears in a way that is congenial to the situation at hand, it is nevertheless alien to the idea of disposition.¹¹ Hopefully, the common use of the German language can reveal another, more viable route.

Of someone who is able to use a foreign language correctly in speech and writing, it is said that he “can” speak or write this language. Someone who knows how to use a calculating machine is said to “be able” to use it. The word “can”, however, undoubtedly points to possibility:¹² nothing is therefore more obvious than to see in the element of disposition the very fact [*Tatbestand*] of possibility. But here too a doubt immediately arises. Does not anyone who interprets disposition in this way expose himself to the old reproach of weakening the *potentia* to the “empty” *possibilitas*? Also, it is remarkable that the just mentioned usage in German is contrasted with the French usage with its distinction between “pouvoir” and “savoir”. While it is true that all knowledge is a skill, and that by no means are all skills knowledge, this distinction is also somewhat of an intellectual exaggeration. However, this use of language shows us that the concept of

¹¹ See my explanations in “Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit”. Leipzig, 1915, 54 f.

¹² “Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit”. Leipzig, 1915.

‘possibility’ [*Möglichkeit*] needs a determination in order to become the concept of ‘disposition’.

The need for such a determination would also arise if one were allowed to consider disposition from the point of view of the derived concept of causality. If, out of a group of armed men passing through an inhabited area, one of them accidentally or carelessly fired a shot which fatally hits an inhabitant, then this inhabitant will certainly not be said to have a disposition to be shot, although by virtue of his physical condition and by virtue of the place where he was at the time of the shot he will certainly have had partial causes for the accident. Obviously, what is more important is a closer correlation between the partial cause and the effect which is supposed to be characteristic of the disposition in question, a correlation of the kind I once described relative to some of its configurations in more detail under the name of spontaneity, inclination and initiative.¹³ These examples have the purpose of making it clear once again how much their understanding involves actual causal concepts which lead away from [the idea of] dispositions. On the other hand, there are nevertheless relations [*Verhältnisse*] present in the aforementioned examples which are akin to those relations working inside dispositions. Of course, therein lies the danger that even if one tries to come back to a greater complication it may be more than the natural thought of disposition is able to bear. The danger can be faced, however, if one is allowed to use the relation of the means to the end as a *differentia*.

A brief consideration shows that one is, in fact, allowed to do that. The person who learns a certain skill [*Fertigkeit*], such as the handling of a musical instrument, undoubtedly acquires a certain quality [*Beschaffenheit*] as a means through which he hopes to achieve his end, namely, of playing the instrument. Here, then, the character of the subject which the disposition is based upon is quite explicitly the means, while, however, that towards which the disposition is disposed is very explicitly the end. Now, of course, it is not at all essential for a disposition to be acquired, or to be acquired in a completely intentional way. If it is not, then of course it is not a means to a concretely [*wirklich*] given end, but functionality [*Zweckmäßigkeit*] undoubtedly plays a role even then; and the idea of the end [*Zweckgedanke*], in spite of the fact that its use in this context may be somehow fictitious, is very much in keeping with the manner in which teleological observation [*Betrachtung*] is so often used.

The idea of an end or of functionality [*Zweck-, resp. Zweckmäßigkeitsgedanken*] as something not overly complicated may be questionable. This is the case so long as the idea of an end is regarded as a

¹³ “Phantasievorstellung und Phantasie”. *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik*, XCV, 1889, 218 ff. *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, vol. 1. Leipzig, 1914, 246 ff.

form of the idea of causality, i.e., when the concept of an end is also regarded as a derivation of the concept of causality. In contrast to this view, I have tried to show¹⁴ that the end, as a desired object in its own right, is closely related [to the desire] for what ought to be [Sollen]. There is no need to go into the details of this matter, which is still very much in need of closer examination: it only needs to be referred to because, if I am correct, the presentation of the end and functionality through a certain desire offers a relatively uncomplicated comprehension [of the issue at stake].

If this is correct, then there is no problem with defining the disposition as the possibility of an experience (whether physical or psychological), which is then assigned to the subject as a quality which can work as a means and also stands in relation to functionality.

This determination could of course be countered by the question over whether the quality of the subject, which is hereby included as obligatory, really has such a predominant position in the idea of disposition. It would appear, after all, as if this idea could be applied most easily in precisely those places where the quality in question is unknown, whereas, if it is known, this quality seems to distract attention or interest from the disposition, as it were. Now one can easily convince oneself that analogies are quite often found where a thing is understood from the point of view of the means. The watch is a means of determining time, the automobile a means of moving people or loads, the telephone a means of communicating at a distance, and everyone understands these things as means to these ends. But it is far from most people's minds to be able, or even to want, to single out from the many characteristics of the things in question the very ones on which their function as means is based. Here the idea of the end is connected to the whole thing as a means, and that's exactly what we find with the idea of disposition every time we encounter it under similar conditions.

Hence, nothing can prevent us from considering disposition with the perspective of an end and to express this succinctly, for example, by saying: "Disposition is the possibility of an end [Zweckmöglichkeit]". Now, however, the examples of functionality [Zweckmässigkeit] given in the preceding pages lead to a determination [Bestimmung] that can be grasped from both the standpoint of the idea of purpose as well as from that of the idea of possibility. The correlation [Zuordnung] of the means to the end can depend on the nature of the means, or [it can] be considered in relation to the goal, and therefore permanently be inherent to these means; or it can be transitory, in that it is based on a merely accidental constellation.

¹⁴ In the essay "Über emotionale Präsentation". *Sitzungsberichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Philos.-histor. Klasse*, vol. 183, 1917, 39 ff., 111.

For example, by virtue of its facilities, a sanatorium is designed once and for all to serve the healing of the sick, whereas a burned match may only be used temporarily and exceptionally in the absence of a pencil or pen, for lack of a better option. Our examples have clearly shown correlations [*Zuordnungen*] of the first kind, i.e. relatively permanent ones. The same can also be said of relatively permanent as opposed to relatively temporary possibilities: if a ship is called mobile, a drinking glass fragile, then of course we are dealing with possibilities [*Möglichkeitsbestimmungen*] which have a much more permanent character than, for example, the danger of Tell's arrow had for his son, which only existed as long as the time in which the apple was to be shot. At this point, the introduction of another fact will lead to a better understanding of the opposition at hand [between permanent and temporary possibilities] and may prove to be of fundamental importance for the whole theory of possibility [*Möglichkeitstheorie*].

Suppose that there is a sufficiently accurate dice so that the possibility of throwing a three amounts to 1/6: may the existence of this possibility then be asserted without any reservation? Suppose the dice were to be hidden in an inaccessible place for all eternity: would there even be the possibility of a result? Obviously, in order to exist, this possibility requires that someone be found who is able to make throwing movements, that there be a surface on which the dice can be thrown, that the dice really be thrown now and then, etc. There is a complex of conditions, of which it can be said that, if only one of them is not fulfilled, then the possibility of the result of the dice's roll is also excluded. One could appropriately call this complex the complex of supplementary possibilities [*Komplex der Möglichkeits-Supplemente*]. It has the property, which seems to be somewhat paradoxical for the time being, that it not only does not allow the possibility to arise if it [the complex] is not present, but also does not allow for it if it is given: because although in this case it has a certain factuality, nevertheless it excludes possibility (except for the so-called "also-possibility" [*Auchmöglichkeit*]¹⁵ derived from the factuality in question). Here, therefore, possibility refers to the complex of supplementary possibilities as a precondition, but neither to what is and what is not, but rather to what is indeterminate owing to its being [*Sein*], as an incomplete object is.¹⁶

For the sake of this peculiar precondition, which is especially important for the theory of possibility cumulation [*Möglichkeitskumulation*],¹⁷

¹⁵ On this term, see "Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit", 99.

¹⁶ See "Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit", 178 f.

¹⁷ This is just one application. My argument at p. 53 of the essay "Zum Erweise des allgemeinen Kausalgesetzes". *Sitzungsberichte der philosophischen Klasse der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien*, vol. 189, 1918, has been countered by an acute objec-

I would like to call possibilities of this kind “supplementary possibilities” [*suppletorische Möglichkeiten*]. The above examples of mobility and frailty are in clear contrast to this third kind of possibility, as long as there is no need to speak of supplements, completely undetermined by being, in any way. It would not be inappropriate to speak of “insuppletorial possibility” [*insuppletorischer Möglichkeit*] here, if language did not provide a perhaps even clearer expression.

Possibility, as I have pointed out elsewhere,¹⁸ is by nature an attribute of objectivities [*Objektiven*] and is attached to them in a particularly close way, so that I feel justified in speaking of a special “inhesiveness” [*Inhäsivität*] of the possibility to its objectivity and to see in this almost a constitutive moment of all possibility.¹⁹ This inhesiveness is now transferred, as it were, from the objectivity in question to its subject,²⁰ which I will call, albeit in an incompletely determined way,²¹ the ‘carrier’ [*Träger*], whereas if it is fully determined it should be called the ‘representant’ [*Repräsentant*]²² of the possibility in question. If there is the possibility that A is or that A is B, then this possibility is not only inherent in the objectivity of being in the former case [A is], and the objectivity of its specific being in the latter case [A is B], but each time is also inhesive to the subject A. In this sense it is perhaps not unambiguous but no means in violation of language to find “synthetic a priori judgments” possible, but the circular square impossible; on the other hand, the use of language that is quite readily presented in the case of objects of being does not seem to easily demonstrate an analogy in the case of specific being [*Sosein*]. The above examples of the ship and the glass prove that here too there is no objection to the subject’s adhesiveness. For “mobile” and “fragile” cannot concern anything else but the possibility of moving or breaking; but a phrase such as “it is possible to break the glass” or the like certainly does not apply; one must be satisfied with a detour such as “the glass has the possibility of breaking”. In the meantime, however, lan-

tion. From the fact that something has the possibility to occur at a certain time, I should have argued that at present time it is not possible since there is no way of knowing what else is meant by the possibility in question apart from the effective occurrence of the concerned event. I reply as follows: The occurrence that I deal with presupposes, of course, the possibility of the event but nothing more than that, in particular no supplements which would constitute a corresponding accumulation of possibility (cf. “Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit”, § 44). However, the negation of the complex of supplements, as shown above, removes possibility. It is different with ‘logical’, that is, a priori possibilities, which, at least by positive objectivities, are only formal possibilities [*Bestandmöglichkeiten*], while causality exclusively concerns existence.

18 “Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit”, § 14.

19 “Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit”, 143 ff., 147.

20 “Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit”, 221.

21 “Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit”, 218.

22 “Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit”, 228 f.

guage does not lack the appropriate means for a more direct expression. It is given in the above mentioned word “can” [*können*] which is applicable to ‘specific’ being [*Sosein*] as such in the same natural way, at least in relation to the subject of the possible objective: synthetic judgements a priori “can” exist, the ship “can” move, the glass “can” break. One may presume²³ that the meaning of the word “can” [*können*], although it certainly relates to possibility, nonetheless introduces a specific turn relative to the idea of possibility, as it were, according to the subject of the possible objectivity, which has reason to place the ability [*Können*], for instance as “transferred” possibility, alongside the possibility, perhaps in a somewhat narrower sense of the word. It is easily understandable that, at the same time, the opposition between the *potentia* and *possibilitas* is taken into account (where, at least when considering *possibilitas*, it is the logical or [if not that] at least the growth-incapable possibility²⁴ that comes to the fore.

How close this comparison comes to that of the supplementary and insupplementary [*Suppletorischen und Insuppletorischen*] and the insuppletorial is easily seen in the above examples. Only the fact that the dice “could” result in the three when thrown disrupts the classification to some extent. This much, however, can be said without reservation: all actual possibilities of existence are supplementary and all insupplementary possibilities are carried over, that is to say, they are proficiencies [*Können*]. At the same time, it is now also clear without further ado that all dispositions fall under the perspective of the insupplementary proficiency—while this reveals a more suitable characteristic of the disposition than the one above concerning permanence. For this is generally given by the independence of supplements; however, a short duration of the disposition can be brought about in principle by a change in the property on which the dispositional proficiency is based. All disposition is therefore insupplementary proficiency, and one now only needs to include the teleological moment shown above in order to hopefully obtain a suitable, definitive idea of disposition. If we agree that the tentatively introduced the phrase “end-possibility” [*Zweckmöglichkeit*] is suitable, then perhaps now we can employ the analogous expression “end-capacity” [*Zweckkönnen*]. Therefore, the results of the investigation carried out in the preceding pages may provide a definition: “Disposition is insupplementary end-capacity”. Using this concept of “end-capacity” makes it possible to distinguish explicitly whether the property [*Eigenschaft*] on which the proficiency is based actually occurs as a means (perhaps acquired directly for the sake of the end) or not.

²³ This is something that I still neglected when I wrote my explanations at p. 53 ff of the book *Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit*.

²⁴ See *Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit*, §21.

As far as the term “disposition” is concerned, the question may arise as to whether there are grounds for preferring it to more or less competing terms such as “capacity” [*Fähigkeit*], “ability” [*Vermögen*] “force” [*Kraft*], “predisposition” [*Veranlagung*], “giftedness” [*Begabung*], terms which, in the German context, have at least one advantage, namely that they are German words. Meanwhile, “force” apparently has a much wider field of application, insofar as, for example, one speaks of forces also in physics, which is by no means limited to subjects, i.e., living beings, while one ascribes dispositions only to subjects. On the other hand, one could, of course, only speak of “faculties” in the case of subjects, but could easily mean possibility without closer specification. A researcher of the third or fourth rank owes a brilliant discovery perhaps once in his life to a happy coincidence: he proves with it that he was capable [*fähig*] of such a discovery [in the same way as] a man who once steals out of need proves by it that he is capable of stealing. However, a disposition to great discoveries in the former case is just as inappropriate an attribution as a disposition to steal is in the latter case. The word “ability” [*Vermögen*] takes on a certain value for what it refers to in the sense of the means or quasi-means [*Quasi-Mittel*]. Whoever is predisposed to catarrhs is not easily said to have an “ability” for catarrhal diseases. “Giftedness”, “predisposition” [*Veranlagung*], “constitution” [*Anlage*] (for example also “talent” [*Talent*]) undoubtedly point to dispositions, but especially to innate dispositions, whereas acquired dispositions cannot be excluded. Thus, the theoretical use, which has quite unanimously decided in favour of the word “disposition”, deserves to be preserved. However, with regard to what has just been said about “force”, it may be advisable to still explicitly define disposition as an end-capacity [*Zweckkönnen*] in subjects.

Here what is more important than the justification of the word is, as is the case everywhere, the idea of disposition, so that the question cannot remain unanswered as to whether the nature of the idea of disposition legitimizes making it the starting point for a theoretical investigation. For this, however, even pre-scientific language bears sufficiently clear testimony through its wealth of words with dispositional significance, and this is evident, especially insofar as psychological dispositions are taken into account. The need to fix them in words is not ultimately based on the fact that, where it is necessary to attribute psychological traits [*psychologische Eigenschaften*] to a subject, one is always confronted with dispositions. For if, by their very nature, psychic experiences resist treatment as traits (even if they were only temporary),²⁵ they fail completely in the face of the ef-

²⁵ See my explanations in *Über die Erfahrungsgrundlagen unseres Wissens*. Berlin 1906, 29.

fort to arrive at reasonably permanent determinations, whereas dispositions are unquestionably fitting for this end. The permanent is more important than the temporary: so it can easily happen that, especially where value facts [*Werttatbestände*] are concerned, the interest in the disposition for an experience suppresses the interest in the experience itself, although it can only arise from this former interest. It can then happen that language has a series of words which characterize not the disposition for the experience, but the experience for the disposition: Expressions like “brilliant idea”, “astute distinction”, “bold decision”, “malicious insinuation” are examples of this.²⁶ The ethical approach, to which the last two examples just mentioned already belong, offers a great deal of evidence. The fundamental contradiction between ethically good and evil resolutions is not so much characterized by the experiences that actually result from them as it is by the intentions [*Gesinnungen*] which are activated by them.²⁷ Intentions [*Gesinnungen*], however, are not experiences but dispositions. Even if a behaviour is described as virtuous or vicious, when the peculiarity of the virtues or vices in question is examined in more detail, one sees one is of course dealing with dispositions.

Perhaps there is no better way to illustrate the importance of the idea of disposition than to point out the analogy of its function to that of the idea of an external world, if one considers it merely as a hypothesis. The justification of this hypothesis is only determined by what it has provided, namely experiences, especially intellectual ones, that enable us to form theoretical interpretations. I do not think that this is the only legitimation for the belief in the existence of an external world.²⁸ but for the sake of simplicity, let us suppose that there is no other. Then our hypothesis has the task of making possible the discovery of regularities [*Gesetzmäßigkeiten*] in the seemingly random tangle of what is directly given or remembered. This can be done in such a way so that temporary but repetitive sensations are brought into relation with permanent causes, which then offer the possibility of establishing regularities to which the sensations are apparently not subject in themselves. Similarly, the most diverse intellectual and emotional experiences of a subject, insofar as they repeatedly occur, are connected with each other by the precondition of a relatively permanent disposition built on a no less permanent basis. At the same time, however, with the help of the continuous foundation of the disposition, connections can be made between temporally separate experiences of the same subject, which in turn helps us to understand how past experiences influence future ones, so that this relation no longer presents

²⁶ See my *Psychologisch-ethischen Untersuchungen zur Werttheorie*. Graz, 1894, 41 f.

²⁷ See *Psychologisch-ethischen Untersuchungen zur Werttheorie*, 140 ff.

²⁸ See *Über die Erfahrungsgrundlagen unseres Wissens*, 91.

itself as a unsolvable mystery. The analogy naturally also applies to our practical behaviour: just as we adjust to external reality, we are also able to accommodate our inner reality and influence it according to our wishes and needs once we have adopted a point of view under which external and internal processes can be grasped as conforming to laws and contingently understood in those terms. Such is the extent of the alignment [of the external and internal realities] that one may feel urged to ask why it does not prove to be more conspicuous. The answer is probably that the outside world is allowed the moment of phenomenality [*Phänomenalität*] which is naturally lacking in disposition. The outside world, however imperfect, is presented through our sensible representations [*Wahrnehmungsverstellungen*] and is always most easily grasped through these representations. On the other hand, dispositions cannot be perceived as mere possibilities, and even if their foundational elements [*Grundlagen*]²⁹ can be perceived as such, they do not easily come to light and, in the long term, remain unknown. In this respect, dispositions can only be grasped in relation to the experiences they give rise to, and therefore the similarity of this example to that of the outside world should be withdrawn.

3 The Moments of Disposition

Dispositions, as we have found, are end-capacity [*Zweckkönnen*]. There are two particular ways in which such a capacity is distinguished from possibility without further determination. This capacity does not directly approach the subject to which it belongs, as it were, but only comes to it through the mediation of a more or less permanent quality, upon which the disposition is based. Moreover, this quality is oriented towards an experience, like the means towards its end. Both are meant in the succinct sense of the word “capacity” in contrast to its usual meaning. It’s the same way in which one says of a newborn child that it is possible for him or her to become a great artist, while the disposition to outstanding artistic achievement will only be attributed to the one who is adult enough to have somehow already revealed their disposition to be an artist. Moreover, the disposition, which does not apply to every possibility, is improvable [*steigerungsfähig*], and in practice it will not be easy to establish a disposition if the present possibility is too small.

As we can see, there are determinations in the quality on which the disposition is based and the experience to which it is, as it were,

²⁹ Translators’ note: we would like to point out that the German term *Grundlagen* contains both the sense of ‘foundations’ and ‘basis’ in English and that therefore we have alternated between these two words as appropriate.

directed. Although these are not actually determinations of the disposition, they characterize it quite substantially and also entail a certain variability of dispositions. They are accompanied by determinations of a similar character, which are not explicitly included in the concept of disposition, but are given implicitly and forced upon us as soon as we take into consideration the circumstances under which the disposition emerges and, if we may say so, also becomes visible. I shall refer to these determinations as “moments” of disposition and dedicate some brief considerations to them here.

As we have seen, the starting point of all consideration of disposition is an experience, this word understood in such a way that it includes not only the inner or psychological experiences but also the outer or physical experiences. It is a matter of what a disposition gives rise to, that is, what naturally characterizes the disposition in question and thus distinguishes it from other dispositions. If one says that a person can do gymnastics, play the piano, take shorthand notes, do mental arithmetic, compare, combine, etc., then the dispositions in question appear to be most conspicuously determined by such experiences; no less so if, for example, the dispositions in question are concerned with the formation of concepts³⁰ or with what appears to be associated with certain feelings and desires under the name “interest”.³¹ I have compared such experiences with the respective dispositions in terms of their correlates; St. Witasek³² and especially E. Martinak³³ used the more colourful word “achievement” [*Leistung*] for this purpose, which will really be preferable in many cases but is inferior to the word “correlate” [*Korrelat*] with respect to the breadth of the field of application; the word “achievement” is not used in connection with experiences which do not have the character of activity. On the other hand, there can of course also be dispositions for such experiences; thus, the term “correlate” is much more suitable due to its generality.³⁴

It is obvious to say that every disposition is a disposition *to* something as well as *from* something, that is to say, that it is close to a subject that “has” it, and which also “has” its correlate, so long as this has been realized. Now, however, disposition is possibility, and when every possibility is, as I have shown,³⁵ a “capacity” that is in-

³⁰ See Mally, E. “Über Begriffsbildung”, in this *Festschrift*, 94 ff.

³¹ See Tumlitz, O. “Die Disposition des theoretischen Interesses und ihre aktuellen Korrelate”, in this *Festschrift*, 79 ff.

³² “Grundlinien der Psychologie”, 86.

³³ “Psychologische Untersuchungen über Prüfen und Klassifizieren”, 8.

³⁴ See also Meister, R., “Unterrichtsfächer als Dispositionssysteme”, in this *Festschrift*, 59 fn. 12.

³⁵ See this *Festschrift*, 39.

herent in an object, then this is what I meant by naming it the bearer [*Träger*] of this possibility. It exists as an incomplete object, if it has existence at all, only as “implexive” in a complete object, which is the “representative” [*Repräsentanten*] of possibility. When speaking of disposition, this representative coincides with its subject, so that one can speak of the representative of disposition.

As is becoming clear, those determinations of the representative unite to form the bearer of a possibility, which are essential to the possibility in question and determine its existence, which is to say, they are not merely supplementary preconditions [*suppletorische Voraussetzungen*]. Needless to say, this is also the case with disposition. Through this, certain determinations of the subject of disposition enter into a kind of exceptional position: they are those things from the subject upon which the disposition is actually based, that which constitutes it, and can therefore be appropriately called the “basis of disposition” [*Dispositionsgrundlage*]. This has already been repeatedly mentioned as the quality or condition of the subject that establishes the disposition. The relationship between the basis and the correlate of the same disposition is given by the fact that the existence of the basis implies the possibility of the existence of the correlate.³⁶ This is obviously a causal implication in the sense that the basis and the correlate are related to the effect [*Wirkung*] as partial causes [*Teilursache*]. In this respect, my earlier statement that the concept of disposition is a derived causal concept should not, at least not to the extent of its applicability, imply anything incorrect.

If, as we have seen, one of the main values of the consideration of disposition consists in the fact that the relatively temporary experiences of the correlate are contrasted with relatively permanent experiences of the same, which is what the basis of disposition now turns out to be, then it becomes clear that among the partial causes belonging to the correlate as effect, this basis cannot easily take the position of the “final cause” [*letzten Ursache*]. Of course, there can be no lack of such a final cause, where the correlate passes from the potentiality that is situated in the mere possibility of existence into the state of actuality constituted by existential factuality. In this state, as it is often briefly said, the disposition is actualized. I have called this last cause the “stimulant” [*Erreger*] of disposition. The definition of a special term is legitimized by the role that this final cause plays in many regularities [*Gesetzmässigkeiten*] of the dispositional field. But while subject, correlate and basis are naturally always present in the disposition of the final cause, the disposition can just

36 This is the case of what I called “possibility implication” [*Möglichkeitsimplikation*] in the writing “Zum Erweise des allgemeinen Kausalgesetzes”. *Sitzungen der Wiener Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1918, *Philos.-hist. Kl.*, vol. 189, 43.

as obviously exist even if it is not stimulated. Indeed, there seems to be a tendency to speak of a dispositional fact only in the case of lack of actualization, that is, in the case of lack of stimulation of a dispositional fact which, in the case of actualization, seems to make way for a more perfect one.

If the basis normally represents what is actually constant in the disposition one can, in view of the experience, properly speak of the emergence and changes of the basis and can include them. Where the dispositional basis does not come into existence at the same time as the subject's [basis], there are of course no causes for the occurrence and the nature of basis of the disposition and one can appropriately call such statements the "founder" [*Begründer*] of the dispositions in question. The founder is, however, much further away from the stimulant in relation to that which presents itself as the direct aspect of the objective fact of the disposition (so to speak); but again, there are characteristic laws of disposition which make it indispensable to formulate the concept of the founder.

Thus, I would like to give the subject, the correlate, the basis, the stimulant, and the founder of disposition a preferential position in the theory of disposition under the name of the "moments" of disposition. To the last four of these [1. the correlate, 2. the basis, 3. the stimulant, and 4. the founder] I shall make a few brief remarks in the following.

1. If the correlate [*Korrelat*] could be described as the natural starting point of all considerations of disposition, it is nothing but self-evident that dispositions should first be characterized and distinguished according to their correlates. But this does not exclude the possibility that dispositions might be specified from time to time according to something else: where a person is purported to have experience, whereas his nature is thought of as authenticity [*Ursprünglichkeit*] (or as being down-to-earth [*Urwüchsigkeit*]), there are examples of this. A disposition can be characterized not only by what it achieves but also by its provenance. Moreover, in such cases, the exclusion of the correlate is only an external one, because it is only present in the meaning of the word that is used: someone is not called experienced primarily to indicate that he has had experiences, but rather to refer to behaviours that result from what has been experienced.

The assumption of the preceding passages, namely that all correlates of the disposition must be experiences, contradicts the fact that there seem to be dispositions grounding other dispositions in addition to dispositions regarding the present concern. Formability [*Bildsamkeit*] is a proof of this; even when a student is praised as diligent this is not so much directed towards individual achievements as towards the acquisition of dispositions to such achievements. And indeed, insofar as the disposition has turned out to be a possibility, disposition grounding other dispositions therefore means as much

as possibility grounding other possibilities, and there is nothing theoretically wrong with this. However, it doesn't really seem to correspond to the natural idea of disposition, and if one looks more closely at examples such as those given above, one finds that dispositions are not so much about other dispositions as about the acquisition of dispositions. However, dispositions are acquired by acquiring the foundations [*Grundlagen*] of them, and therefore, if one only adds "mediate" [*mittelbaren*] dispositions to the "immediate" [*unmittelbare*] ones,³⁷ one can stick to the statement: "all correlates of the disposition are experiences" without the danger of being considerably wrong; and provided that all experiences, at least all sufficiently elementary ones, are either external or internal, physical or psychic [*psychische*], the basic division of all dispositions into physical and psychic dispositions, or, and this is the same thing, into physical and psychic dispositions, is given.

Furthermore, if, as shown above, the basis of the disposition is opposed to the correlate, such as the partial cause of the effect [*Teilursache der Wirkung*], it is clear without further ado that only when this correlate C itself is again the partial cause of another effect does this effect at the same time also assume the position of a second correlate C', so to speak, with respect to our disposition. The disposition to C is then at the same time also a disposition to C', which is, as it were, under mediation of C, so that one can now also speak of an immediate disposition to C, and of a mediated disposition to C'. If, for example, the technical fidelity of an orchestra's performance is not in the least due to the precision with which the conductor distinguishes between the individual orchestral parts, then the capacity [*Fähigkeit*] to do this also signifies a disposition to good conducting. In a similar way, and in cases such as those under consideration, which often cannot be strictly distinguished from one another, the disposition for the part [*den Teil*] is at the same time the disposition for the whole [*das Ganze*], and it can also be a matter of parts of objects that appear as less complete objects along with more complete ones.³⁸ The disposition for the more universal, e.g., good memory in general, is also a disposition for the specific, e.g., remembering dates.³⁹ In general one can say: a disposition for the logically previous always leads to a disposition for the logically subsequent. However, the fact that the inversion of this proposition does not have to be true at all deserves to be emphasized, especially because at least under certain circumstances the right to such an inversion does exist. For exam-

³⁷ With Höfler, A. *Psychologie*. Vienna, 1897, 257.

³⁸ On incomplete objects cf. "Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit", 170 ff.

³⁹ On the distinction of general dispositions from specific ones, cf. Meister, R. "Unterrichtsfächer als Dispositionssysteme", 55 in this *Festschrift*, esp. fn. 4.

ple, through practice the aspiring pianist learns to play the piano in a short time. This can hardly be done by referring to the “disposition of higher order” [*Disposition höher Ordnung*]; but undoubtedly the important regularity [*Gesetzmäßigkeit*] is involved, according to which the disposition for a correlate C implies even more surely one for K' in relation to the level of similarity C' has to C. Often one is forced to combine not only absolutely identical objects under C, but also, within certain limits, objects that are similar.

Particular attention should be paid to those variabilities of the correlate that are in any way related to the quantitative aspect, where then the increase in the correlate *ceteris paribus* also means the increase of the disposition. The law of *potius*,⁴⁰ which has been proven in the theory of possibilities, applies to this insight and it legitimizes the conclusion we can make from the increased disposition to the lesser one (*a potiori ad deterius*).⁴¹ In this context, the term “increase of the correlate” is usually already used in a teleologically broadened sense, according to which the “better ability” [*besser Können*] takes its place alongside the “less good ability” [*minder gut Können*]. For example, the fact that one can play the violin better is manifested not only in the greater force of the tone. The ‘broadening’ I mentioned earlier becomes even more obvious when E. Martinak⁴² places an “extensive” achievement [*Leistung*] alongside an “intensive” achievement where, for example, the enrichment of the vocabulary of a foreign language means an increase in knowledge of language in general.

2. If we now turn to the stimulant of disposition [*Erreger der Disposition*], which of course could be described more precisely as the stimulant of the correlate, we find that two of the aspects just used for the correlate are particularly applicable to it. As a naturally real partial cause, it too is subject to the dichotomy of physical and psychological. But its determination in this respect is not transferred to the disposition itself in the same way as we found it with the correlate; rather, a disposition that is actualized by a physical stimulant can, depending on the correlate, be equally physical or psychic as one that is actualized by a psychical stimulant. Thus, when both the nutritional and sensory dispositions are updated by a physical stimulant, and when both external and internal experiences are arbitrarily influenced by a psychic stimulant, the disposition is actualized by a psychic stimulant. The second thing that must be mentioned in relation to the stimulant as well as in the correlate is the possibility of

40 Cf. “Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit”, 97 f. [As he points out in his text, Meinong has already introduced what he here calls the “law of Potius” (from Latin for “more”) in his book *Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit* (Chap. 1, § 16, 97)].

41 On the term “deterius”, cf. “Zum Erweise des allgemeinen Kausalgesetzes”, 56 f.

42 “Über Prüfen und Klassifizieren vom Standpunkte der Praxis”, 18 ff.

increase, in order to establish that the nature of the increase in disposition must not be sought in the increase of the correlate, as might appear to be the case above. For even with constant performance [*Leistung*] one can speak of different strengths of disposition, which can be stated most simply using the stimulant and difference thresholds: the lower the threshold, the greater the sensitivity. However, at the same time, when seen from the opposite direction (in which the strength of the disposition and the strength of the stimulant changes), it can be said that the increase in disposition certainly does not coincide with the increase in the strength of the stimulant.

3. As far as the basis of the disposition [*Dispositionsgrundlage*] is concerned, the contrast between physical and psychic is, of course, schematically applicable without further additions, but also here it is by no means the case that a disposition with a physical basis must therefore be physical and a disposition with a psychic basis must therefore be psychic. If, however, the basis [*Grundlage*], like the disposition itself, may be said to be something relatively constant, then it is worth noting that direct empirical observation [*Empirie*] hardly provides inner experiences that have sufficient constancy. This suggests that the basis of psychic dispositions has to be physical, unless one finds reasons to hypothetically refer to psychic constants which our direct experience fails to provide. Disposition theory will presumably not have to deal with the difficulties of psychic or psychophysical causality when discussing the basis, just as in the case of [our consideration of] the stimulant.

As mentioned above, the basis (especially in the case of psychic dispositions) may be regarded as something that usually escapes direct knowledge. Therefore, the question of whether dispositions with universal or complex correlates, i.e. universal and complex dispositions (even disposition complexes [*Dispositionskomplexen*]) have universal or complex bases is all the more important. In principle, there can certainly be no objection to this, and especially the presumption of the greatest possible analogy between the construction of the correlates and that of the basis will not lack heuristic value. What the experimental psychology of dispositions is now investigating under the name of "correlation"⁴³ has its roots, without a doubt, in the bases with which it is compatible [*Verträglichkeit*] and on which it depends. But also that object of a much higher order, which E. Martinak has pointed out under the name of the "system of disposition",⁴⁴ con-

⁴³ The terminological agreement with what I have been calling the "correlate" of disposition for a far longer time is, of course, only a coincidence.

⁴⁴ Cf. "Über Prüfen und Klassifizieren vom Standpunkte der Praxis", 22, and now especially Meister, R. "Unterrichtsfächer als Dispositionssysteme", 38 ff. in this *Festschrift*.

fronts the disposition theory of the future with the already quite difficult task of giving an account of the relationship in which the bases of the disposition can be related to such a system.

Attributing the increase of the correlate to an increase of the basis corresponds to the analogy I have just mentioned. The need for this [analogical assumption] is all the more urgent since we have been able to convince ourselves that the increase in disposition cannot be an increase in the correlate, since increases in disposition also occur with unchanged correlates when the stimulant exhibits gradual changes. However, the fact that changes in the strength of the stimulant do not also constitute changes in the strength of the disposition itself is already illuminated by the inverse situation. By contrast, it is easy to acknowledge that the increases in disposition occurring with the stimulant and the increases in disposition occurring with the correlates follow the same regularity [*Gesetzmäßigkeiten*] as soon as one takes into account the basis for cases of increase occurring for the stimulant. If, *ceteris paribus*, i.e. especially with the same stimulant, the larger basis also belongs to the larger correlate, so that the relation $C < C'$ in the correlates is accompanied by the relation $B < B'$ in the associated basis of the dispositions $D < D'$, then it will—if there are no external obstacles, so to speak—always be possible to place a stimulant E at the side of the stimulant S', which, smaller than S, nevertheless produces the same correlate C in the subject S', which with the larger basis B' also has the stronger disposition D', as with the stimulant S in the subject X. For if the stimulant S' were to be increased to the level of S, it would produce the correlate C' in the subject X' by virtue of its own basis B'. What at first glance would like to present itself as a special law of an increasing disposition that applies exclusively to the stimulant, loses its apparent peculiarity as soon as one takes into account the part of the basis that is already recognizable in the increased correlates.

Now, however, in the present context, we must consider another way in which the increase in disposition can manifest. It is said of someone that he is prone to catarrhs if he gets them under circumstances in which others are still free from them, when they happen to him more often than to others and when under the same circumstances the possibility of his becoming ill is greater. As you can see, this example contains, directly, a higher degree of possibility, which in itself is not strange, since we have found possibilities in all dispositions. But while otherwise the size of this possibility doesn't come into question, so that even when the dispositions are increased it seems that possibilities cannot be increased, in cases of the kind just mentioned, it is precisely the possibility that is increased.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, such cases

⁴⁵ Cf. "Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit", 136 ff.

of increase are relevant to the present context in so far as here, too, a return to the basis and its increases seems a plausible step. In fact, nothing could be more natural than to base an increase of a possibility on an increase of the first decisive partial cause, namely the basis, especially since the proportion of the other partial causes, especially the last one, tends to turn out to be relatively accidental because it is relatively less dependent on the nature of these partial causes. In the case of psychic correlates, when they are actualized, one speaks of spontaneous activity [*Betätigungen der Spontaneität*]⁴⁶ in order to emphasize the predominance of internal influences over external ones.

In summary, one can arguably say: all increase in dispositions is due to increase in the bases. But it cannot be said that the increase of dispositions simply consists in the increase of the bases, that the idea of increase is only externally transferred from the bases to the disposition, at least not in the cases where the increase of dispositions manifests itself as an increase of probability. Here, at least, the idea of increase is directly tied to the disposition itself, as surely as—according to its nature [*ihrem Wesen nach*]⁴⁷—it is a possibility.

4. I have already mentioned above that the founder [*Begründer*] is not inherent in every disposition with the same cogency [*Ausnahmelosigkeit*] as the correlate, basis and (*cum grano salis*) stimulant are. Incidentally, this becomes totally clear if one considers the possibility of the founder of the disposition [*Dispositionsbegründung*] merely within the living boundaries [*Lebensgrenzen*] of the subject carrying the disposition. For it is more difficult to doubt the actual and indeed quite frequent occurrence of innate disposition today than to believe in the occurrence of what was once called innate experiences (namely, representations and convictions), by which terms one will, anyway, all along have meant dispositional facts in most cases, only they were not yet clearly enough recognized as such. In my opinion, this misrecognition happened so long as the difference between what is dispositional and what is actual was not yet sufficiently theoretically understood. After all, today one does not content oneself with the mere statement of innateness, but rather considers the origin of such dispositions, in which instead of innateness one deals immediately with the heritability [*Erblichkeit*] of the dispositions.⁴⁷ From the point of view of the founder of the disposition, they [innate dispositions] cannot be spoken of here.

In the present context, acquired dispositions increasingly come into question, and although there are many kinds of them, two types—

46 Cf. "Über Phantasievorstellung und Phantasie". *Zeitschr. f. Philos. und philos. Kritik*, 218 ff. (see also Meinong, *Gesammelte Abhandlung*, 1: 46 ff.).

47 Cf. Martinak, E. *Einige neuere Ansichten über Vererbung moralischer Eigenschaft ten und die pädagogische Praxis*. Vienna, 1893.

and this without claiming to be exhaustive—should be singled out for emphasis; their characteristics emerge in quite a conspicuous manner when their foundations are brought together with their correlates. The two resulting classes of dispositions can best be described by the words “habituation dispositions” [*Gewöhnungsdispositionen*] and “suggestion dispositions” [*Suggestionsdispositionen*].

That “habituation” [*Gewöhnung*] is first of all a disposition formation [*Dispositionsbildung*], even when it is used in vulgar speech, is made clear by the fact that the effect of habituation is always something relatively permanent. By contrast, the nature of this effect seems to fluctuate between two opposites, which even the language of everyday life attempts to capture using terms with contrasting meanings, such as “accustoming” [*angewöhnen*] and “giving up” [*abgewöhnen*]. What should become clear with these examples is undoubtedly the fact that habituation is sometimes beneficial and sometimes detrimental to the dispositions in question. But this then begs the question: what is the common ground between examples of such different bearings [*Verhalten*] so that one can always speak of habituation? The answer is given by the fact that all dispositions of habituation are founded on experiences that are similar to the correlates of the dispositions that come about in this way.

How does it happen, for example, that one becomes “accustomed” [*gewöhnt*] to a smell, be it a good one or a bad one? Obviously, in the following manner: that the organ is exposed to an olfactory stimulus, but the effect of the stimulus, even if it remains unchanged, decreases, possibly reaching zero. It can also happen that the sensation, as far as it can be remembered, remains quite unchanged, but the comfort or discomfort, i.e. the accompanying feeling, decreases and disappears. Since the stimulus [*der Reiz*] remains unchanged, the change can only be due to the subject, who apparently changes under the influence of the stimulus. The stimulus initially encountered a certain dispositional nature of the subject, it updated this disposition and in that way has functioned as a stimulant [*der Erreger*]: the correlate was the sensation or feeling in its original strength. Under the influence of the stimulus, the given disposition changes into a weaker one, which becomes apparent in a weaker correlate. Habituation is thus presented here as a reduction of the disposition, in which it can be particularly seen that what reduces the disposition is the experience of the correlate. If, therefore, one lets the change of a given disposition be regarded as the foundation of a new one—this is unobjectionable—then one can simply say that we are dealing here with a founder that is of the same nature as the correlate, and this founder has a cause that coincides with the stimulant of the given disposition. Habituation of this kind is called fatigue [*Ermüdung*]; it is immediately clear that the given dispositional characteristic fits to all fatigue, although the term habituation cannot be applied to it

casually, but only in the sense of an extension of its usual meaning. But the regularity that comes to light in this term is a general one; there seems to be no inner or outer experience that is not fatigued.⁴⁸

Now one also speaks of habituation in a completely different sense, for example, by saying that the typist “gets used” to a typewriter of a system unknown to him by writing on it for a while. If, in the previous example, the low constancy [*geringe Konstanz*] of the dispositions in question could, to a certain extent, obscure their dispositional character at first glance, this obstacle does not apply in the latter example at all, for there it is clearly a matter of the disposition to write on a new machine. However, it should be tangentially said that with this latter example it is again a matter of changing this disposition, only this time in the opposite sense, namely by an increase in comparison with the reduction in the previous example. However, the reduction we can see in the previous example is, just like the increase of the latter example, brought about by experience, particularly through the repeated experience of the correlate. Moreover, the agreements between the correlate and the founder of the transformed disposition, or between the stimulant and the cause of the founder, as stated above, also exist here. Hence, one tends to characterize through this agreement [*Übereinstimmungsverhältnis*] everything that is called habituation, without disagreeing with the opposing meaning, according to which this agreement brings about changes in disposition. Examples of the increase in disposition I have just described are called training [*Übung*]⁴⁹ and, similar to fatigue, the term can be extended to many examples where one is no longer used to speak of habituation. However, while all physical and psychic events are subject to fatigue, the field of training is not equally wide: to define it definitely is a task yet to be solved by experimental research, which is not dealt with here in more detail for lack of the room to do so. I am therefore content to make a conjecture [*Vermutung*] for the psychic field, which can be verified many times in an immediately obvious manner, but which is suitable for use as a heuristic principle until it is completely confirmed. If one adheres to the dichotomy of active and passive, which is already familiar in everyday life,⁵⁰ then it can be asserted, as far as I can see, that only active experiences are trained [*sich üben*], whereas passive experiences (such as feeling and experiencing ideas, excluding the active expe-

⁴⁸ A first overview of relevant facts can be found in my essay “Über Sinnesermüdung im Bereiche des Weberschen Gesetzes”. *Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftl. Philos.*, vol. 12, 1888, 1-5 (Meinong, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, 1: 79-83).

⁴⁹ Cf. “Psychologisch-ethische Untersuchungen zur Werttheorie”, 172 f.

⁵⁰ For an attempt at a more detailed description (which I presently consider still not quite correct), see St. Witasek, *Psychologie*, 84 f.

riences processed by them) are subject to a different law of disposition, to which we will have to refer immediately.

To begin with, the relationship between fatigue [*Ermüdung*] and training [*Übung*] must be clarified. Because of the contradictory nature of the meaning of the change of disposition, which is essential [*wesentlich*] each time, this relationship presents itself at first glance as a clear antagonism that threatens to lead to incompatibility, since one of the two laws, that of fatigue, appears with the demand of validity without exceptions, so that at least everywhere where the law of training is also in force there must be a conflict [between the two meanings of disposition]. Meanwhile, there is no opportunity for conflict provided that there is a period of time between fatigue and training, which now requires us to include yet another fact of regularities determining change [*gesetzmäßiger*] in the disposition in the field of our consideration. Through the example of everyday life we can see that when some time has passed after fatigue, rest, which is understood as a change of disposition contrary to fatigue, will assert itself, and, at least in its psychological aspect, rest cannot be faced today with some understanding. If, therefore, rest essentially means a *restitutio in integrum*, it is very likely from the outset that the integrity to be achieved in this way will not represent the attainment resulting from fatigue. To look at it more closely, experience shows two types, in that in some cases the *restitutio in integrum* does not reach that starting point [*Ausgangspunkt*], while in other cases, as much as this may seem strange at first sight, it exceeds the starting point.

This second phase is training, which only occurs when [*wenn*], not to say whilst [*indem*], the fatigue is overcome by recovery. On the other hand, however, as has already been mentioned, there is the example of where the recovery, even if it is given as much time as desired, is no longer able to lead to the restoration of the previous dispositional state, and fatigue, despite recovery, only leads to a further decrease in the dispositional strength. An equally popular and unmistakable term such as “training” is not available here: But I thought I could use the term “dullness” [*Abstumpfung*] with sufficient clarity.

Can one now also say when fatigue with rest leads to training and when it leads to dullness? The answer is contained in what has been said above about the relationship between activity and training. If it is in the nature of experiences, which can be called activities, that they are accessible to training, then one can expect everything that can be called suffering to be subject to dulling. The limits within which this occurs are a matter for the training or dullness curve, the shape of which can be addressed here just as little as the fatigue or recovery curve can be. The fact that, to sum up, one so often starts out slowly at first, then rapidly and then again slowly ascends or descends, can only lend greater weight to the idea of the close connection between these different regularities.

Incidentally, there is another related fact [*Tatbestand*] of a change of disposition, which is mainly known in the field of sensations [*Empfindungen*] under the name of resonance, and which can undoubtedly also be found in other fields of inner events [*inneren Geschehens*] and very possibly in every case of such events. It is the fact of an increase in disposition under the influence of a sensory stimulus [*Empfindungsreizes*] which leads to that maximum at which fatigue sets in. On the other hand, decay [*Abklingen*] corresponds to fatigue with respect to the direction, and it corresponds to recovery with respect to the absence of a stimulant. Whether this is still a law of disposition at all could appear questionable, if one were not to believe that during the decay there is greater sensitivity towards a sensory stimulus than after the decay.

To apply the term “habituation” to all of these very diverse facts, despite the aforementioned contradiction regarding the realization of what is customarily called habituation, requires an explicitly conventional use [of the term]. Habituation seems to me, however, to be the most natural terminological means of designation vis à vis the second group of dispositional foundations [*Dispositionsbegründungen*], which I have described above using the term suggestive facts [*Suggestionstatbestände*], and the same is true for a conventional extension of the predominant use of words. Particularly paradigmatic for this seem to me to be the facts, which are often summarized as cases of the law of imitation [*Gesetzes der Nachahmung*],⁵¹ which simply comes to light, for example, in the case of perceived movements, which need not necessarily be arbitrary movements, but can also be, for example, involuntary movements of expression. If, of course, a child cries or laughs because it sees or hears another crying or laughing, one may doubt whether such things have anything at all to do with dispositions and do not take place exclusively within the current situation. If, however, someone adopts the dialect of his environment in his speech, he does so even if no one else is speaking; here, then, a disposition has been actualized, and this is a correlate that is characterized by its similarity with what the subject has heard, or more generally, what he has perceived. But that this disposition has been imposed on him by his environment can be said in a rather informal way; except, apparently, that perception is not essential; for analogies are made where the judgment of perception is excluded for whatever reason and replaced by another judgment. If X realizes that Y has a certain conviction, X will be inclined to share it, and the inclination will increase if Z is of the same opinion. What Y likes or values, X will also approach with a

⁵¹ See “Psychol.-eth. Unters. Zur Werttheorie”, 173; Groethuysen, B. “Das Mitgefühl”. *Zeitschrift für Psychologie*, vol. 34, 1904, 179 ff., as well as von Hoetzlin, J.K. “Das Gesetz der spontanen Nachahmung”. *Archiv für die ges. Psychologie*, vol. 38, 1918, 1 ff.

certain willingness to like or value. And what Y wants to want is also very much suggested to X; whether this then takes the form of subordination to the will of Y or, on the contrary, brings about a conflict of interests and therefore an opposition against the will of Y, i.e. whether it turns out in favour of or against Y, is a matter of astonishingly indifference to the facts of the disposition.

On the other hand, the examples that have been cited still affirm that the founder of the disposition is a judgment; but even this seems to be dispensable. As is well known, the tendency to realize a fact often enough results from the mere thinking of this fact, even if it is done exclusively by assumption without faith, that is, by mere assumption or, in the end, by mere imagination, so that one may well say in general terms that the comprehension [*erfassen*] of an object establishes the disposition to realize it,⁵² if it lies within the sphere of the realizable. Whether this comprehension is then at the same time a judgement will not be indifferent to the strength of the resulting disposition any more than the other condition of the subject is indifferent in this regard. In its most general form, however, our law of disposition formation [*Dispositionbildungsgesetz*] can dispense with this, just as it does not need to take into account whether what appears to be a “suggestion” here follows the type of foreign suggestion [*Fremdsuggestion*] or that of autosuggestion [*Autosuggestion*]. The only thing that seems to be essential here is that the comprehension of an object establishes the disposition to this or a similar object as a correlate, whereas in our broader sense the object, which as an experience is not dependent on being comprehended in a special way, influences, so to speak, the disposition to itself [*zu sich selbst*] (or, of course, in the case of the occurrence of something similar).

It goes without saying that only observation and especially experimentation [*Experiment*] have the first and last word to say about the value of what is outlined here; this is not the place to go further into the matter. At this point, it is also not possible to go into the form and significance of the regularities [*Gesetzmäßigkeiten*] that are hardly touched upon here, and thus to explain in detail the correction of the disposition-theoretical approach that has often been attacked in the past. However, perhaps I may nevertheless express the hope that what has proved its stimulating power more than once over the years, on the basis of oral communication, will also be able, in its present, particularly fragmentary form, to benefit the progress of research in the psychological and educational fields.

⁵² See Bain, A. quoted by Groethuysen, B. “Das Mitgefühl”, 171.

States of Possibility. Meinong's Theory of Dispositions and the Epistemology of Education

Sascha Freyberg

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

Abstract The article deals with Alexius Meinong's concept of disposition and its role in education. It introduces the newly translated text *General Remarks on the Theory of Dispositions* and contextualises this late work by Meinong. Taking the lead from Meinong's definition of disposition as *Zweckkönnen*, the underlying assumptions are presented and put into the context of the German discourse on *Bildung*. The remarks of Eduard Martinak are taken into account as a point of reference, since they directly address Meinong's theory in the context of pedagogy. Finally, it is asked how the idea of forming dispositions might contribute to a historical epistemology of education.

Keywords Education. Pedagogy. History. Philosophy. Psychology. Dispositions. Possibility. Habits. Bildung. Meinong.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 The Context of Meinong's Theory. – 3 Disposition in Education. – 4 Meinong's Conception and its Elements. – 5 Bildung as Emancipation. – 6 Outlook on a Historical Epistemology of Education.



Edizioni
Ca' Foscari

Peer review

Submitted	2020-08-27
Accepted	2020-09-09
Published	2020-06-30

Open access

© 2020 | Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Public License



Citation Freyberg, S. (2020). "States of Possibility. Meinong's Theory of Dispositions and the Epistemology of Education". *JoLMA. The Journal for the Philosophy of Language, Mind and the Arts*, 1(1), 127-144.

If we are willing to conceive education as the process of forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional, toward nature and fellow men, philosophy may even be defined as the general theory of education.

(John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*)

1 Introduction

An introduction to the context and translation of Alexius Meinong's (1853-1920) "General Remarks on the Theory of Dispositions" (1919)¹ might best locate this text and its concern historically in its wider cultural background and systematically in the question of how education is possible. In this way the intricate relation of generality, phenomenological observation, logical procedure and particular orientation towards application as well as the language used in this work will probably become more transparent. The issue of possibility reminds us of metaphysical implications and presuppositions as well as orientation and actions to an end. While learning seems a matter of praxis, culture and cultural politics, as a cognitive process it also poses more general if not fundamental questions.

In philosophy today, Meinong is known as a member of the 'Brentano school' of philosophy and descriptive psychology (Smith 1994). Usually he is referred to in connection with his *Gegenstandstheorie*, a 'theory of objects', that takes into account all kinds of existing and non-existing, incomplete and higher-order intentional phenomena. His theory was greeted as well as opposed, for example by Bertrand Russell.² In his famous "On denoting" (1905a) Russell used Meinong's concept of "non-existing" and "incomplete objects" as a contrast foil. To some, this treatment seems like the major contribution of Meinong's work to the formation of analytical philosophy, while the theory itself "is dead, buried and not going to be resurrected" (Ryle 1972, 7), even though there are still points worth discussing as productive or at least provocative statements. While the

This article stems from the project *EarlyModernCosmology*, which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme (GA n. 725883).

1 In the following the text is referred to in the German versions as (D) quoting both the original publication in the *Festschrift* for Martinak edited by Meinong (ed. 1919, 33-54) and the republished version in Meinong's collected works (1978, 289-310). There is not much literature on Meinong's theory of dispositions. For a discussion from the perspective of analytical ontology and descriptive psychology see Mulligan (2003).

2 Russell reviewed two works by Meinong (Russell 1899) and his group (Russell 1905b) and discussed the onto-logic of Meinong's *Gegenstandstheorie* in his famous article "On denoting" (Russell 1905a).

interest in Meinong, his work and his legacy began to grow with the interest in the history of analytical philosophy and its connection to Husserlian phenomenology, it is the history of pedagogical concepts which will provide the orientation here. Since a commentary on Meinong's theory of dispositions from an analytical point of view (Mulligan 2003) already exists, the following text will take another route and discuss the context and explicit aim of Meinong's outline for a theory of disposition.³

2 The Context of Meinong's Theory

While studying history, economy and philosophy at the University of Vienna, Meinong encountered Franz Brentano and became his student and colleague. He turned from his historical interests towards philosophy and published studies on Hume, emphasising the relational aspects of Hume's psychology. For some years he was a lecturer in philosophy in Vienna before he was called to the university of Graz in 1882 (becoming full professor in 1889) continuing to work there until his death.⁴ In Graz he became a famous university teacher, the founder of an early laboratory for experimental psychology and the 'founding father' of what has come to be known as *Grazer Schule*, bringing together philosophical and psychological concerns in an empirically minded and application-oriented way. Among his students were known philosophers, psychologists and educators (like Christian von Ehrenfels, Stephan Witasek and Eduard Martinak) many of whom later received influential positions contributing to the emerging Gestalt psychology and to educational reform (Reicher 2001). Another particular field the *Grazer Schule* contributed to was philosophical propaedeutics, both for school and university teaching. Around 1900 changes in teachers education of the Austro-Hungarian Empire made pedagogy an obligatory subject which now formed as an academic discipline. This context provided Meinong and some of his students with the occasions for intervention and basic research (see Meinong 1921, 9).

Meinong's theory of dispositions became influential already long before he wrote the text (D), which was supposed to give an outline and some comments on the concept of dispositions. As Meinong points out in the beginning of his text, his remarks are based on older reflections in works like *Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit* (On

³ This text is now made available in translation for the first time (see this Journal issue).

⁴ For a short introduction to Meinong's life and work see Marek 2008-2019. Meinong himself gave a concise overview and introduction to his work as well as those of his former students in the first volume of *Deutsche Philosophie der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen* shortly before his death (Meinong 1921).

Possibility and Probability) (1915). Since Meinong used the idea of disposition already in his lectures, some of his colleagues and students took this concept up and used it in their own work (Höfler 1897; Martinak 1900). Thus Meinong's idea of disposition was presented for the first time in the works of other researchers and educators, such as his former student Eduard Martinak (1859-1943), who was to become an important figure in the Austrian educational system.⁵ Martinak used Meinong's idea of disposition in his arguments against the frequent use of exams and marks, which he famously presented in his "Psychologische Untersuchungen über Prüfen und Klassifizieren" (Psychological Inquiries on Examining and Classifying) (see Martinak 1900).⁶ On the basis of the concept of disposition, which emphasises the aim of *Bildung*, Martinak proposed a more balanced approach giving the motivational aspects of teaching more attention.

It is on the occasion of the *Festschrift* for Martinak in 1919 (when Martinak had joined the ministry of education) that Meinong wrote his "General Remarks on the Theory of Disposition".

3 Disposition in Education

Dispositions are discussed today in terms of realism and ontological accounts (Kistler, Gnassounou 2007), which make no principal distinction between things, organisms or humans. While Meinong's theory of objects is to a great extent in line with these endeavours, in his "General Remarks" he is interested in dispositions mainly in relation to the psychology and epistemology of education. Although Meinong develops his idea of dispositions in relation with his general theory, the basic concern of his text is given by the pedagogical context mentioned above. This becomes clear in the very first and last sentences. Meinong begins with a general statement:

All education, in the broadest sense of the word, is directed towards the future. (D 33/289)

⁵ Eduard Martinak (1859-1943) first worked as a teacher (Gymnasiallehrer) and school rector before turning to the field of philosophical propaedeutics, which brought him into contact with Meinong. He did his *Habilitation* in 1887 and became professor for philosophy and pedagogy at the University of Graz in 1904 (full professor for pedagogy in 1909). Martinak is known for his efforts in educational reform first in the Austro-Hungarian context and later in the Austrian republic. Between 1918-1921 he led the reform department at the Ministry of Education implementing the social democratic school reform of Otto Glöckel, first Minister of Education in the first Austrian republic.

⁶ Martinak's works on the psychology of language (1898) and semasiology (1901) are influenced by Meinong as well, but remain almost forgotten (see Knobloch 1986 for a positive evaluation from a linguistic and semiotic perspective).

At the end of his “General Remarks” Meinong expresses his hope that his outline of a theory of dispositions can provide a concrete contribution to “the progress of research in the psychological and educational fields” (D 54/310). For Meinong the concern with dispositions emerges from the genuine interest of every educator: to educate. But what does this mean?

The aim is always to endow the future life of the person to be educated with values. (D 33/289)

These values are of a certain kind and cannot merely be superimposed on the subjects.

Meinong hints with these remarks towards his theory of values, which he tries to connect with his more general “theory of objects”, which he saw as a new and genuine philosophical, if not scientific, discipline (Meinong 1921). For a reader not initiated to Meinong’s terminology, it is often difficult to understand his often complicated and cumbersome formulations. In the background of Meinong’s argument, as he himself states, are more general considerations and the attempt to coordinate the theory of dispositions with other parts of his ontology. With some parts he introduces slight changes, while with others he remains somewhat undecided, as in the case of the ontological status of properties (Mulligan 2003, 199). However, it is more important how Meinong relates to the actual problem of education, the aim of which he formulates like this:

[E]ducation aims at values, or more precisely at objects of value, which are to form part of the future life of the person to be educated. (D 33/289)

Since the educator cannot foresee all the situations in the life of the subjects, these “objects of value” have to be general and permanent, otherwise they would not help the educated person in his later life.

Now Meinong faces the problem of what exactly has to be formed in order to endow these values. It must be something which is relatively permanent or provides a certain continuity. Meinong approaches this question via a wide concept of experience. Experiences, he postulates, form the basis of every theory of disposition (D 43/299), even though an experience is always particular.⁷ Given that, as Meinong states, *all learning is based on experiences*, how can we

⁷ “Den Ausgangspunkt aller Dispositionsbetrachtung macht, wie wir gesehen haben, ein Erlebnis aus, dieses Wort so weit verstanden, daß darin neben den inneren oder psychischen Erlebnissen auch die äußeren oder physischen den Erlebnisse einbegriffen sind” (D 43/299).

claim a more general, permanent or even universal meaning for it? If somebody learns an instrument, we want the student to actually master the instrument and not only to repeat the lessons.

It is in this way that Meinong touches on the time-honoured problem of conceptual development or what has been called the learning paradox, which was first presented in Plato's Socratic dialogue *Meno* from the perspective of the inquiring subject.⁸ How can we explore new knowledge or master an unforeseen situation with the capacities we actually have at this point?

Meinong's answer to what makes the learning experience more general and permanent lies in his theory of dispositions. Since "all educational influence seems to have to amount to equipping the educated with relatively lasting qualities", it is not a particular experience or a certain kind of knowledge, which has to be addressed in principle. Rather education has to aim at "creating the aptitude for certain experiences" (D 33/289). Obviously, experiences, just like 'objects' and 'values' have to be taken in a broad sense, for, as Meinong claims, all kinds of knowledge and know-how are based on experience. Meinong makes the elliptical statement that "one cannot instill experiences in anybody" (D 33/289), which has to be understood as linked to the time dependence of learning and the unforeseeable form of particular future situations. Meinong uses the example of death: we cannot really make clear what it will mean for the individual to die, but we can form its ability to cope with the situation. In this way it becomes clear what Meinong means when he speaks about the basic concern of education as forming "the ability to have experiences, to make them one's own, to form them in an appropriate way, etc." (D 33/289). For Meinong this "ability" then guarantees a certain kind of permanence and it makes possible to use some experiences, i.e. learning or training, in a more general way.

In this sense, the concept of capacity [*Fähigkeit*], ability [*Vermögen*] or, as one is accustomed to say with as little prejudice as possible, 'disposition' [*Disposition*] proves one of, if not the, fundamental concept of all pedagogy. (D 33-34/289-290)

While the theory of dispositions is part of Meinong's more general theory (Mulligan 2003), his aim is to understand dispositions both

⁸ Meno asks Socrates: "And how will you enquire, Socrates, into that which you do not know? What will you put forth as the subject of enquiry? And if you find what you want, how will you ever know that this is the thing which you did not know?". Socrates rephrases the question in the following way, stating that a "man cannot enquire either about that which he knows, or about that which he does not know; for if he knows, he has no need to enquire; and if not, he cannot; for he does not know the very subject about which he is to enquire" (Meno, 80e-d; translated by B. Jowitt).

in their 'transcendental' function and their formability, which concerns the psychology of learning as well as the sense and states of possibility inherent in the process.

4 Meinong's Conception and its Elements

In order to achieve such a theory of disposition, Meinong first presents its basic concept (§ The Idea of Disposition) by asking: how can we attribute a disposition?

It is here that a general principle of Meinong's method stands out, namely the combination of observation and linguistic exploration. We observe but, at the same time, language as something like a reservoir of experiences or "a repository of tradition" (McDowell 1994, 126) guides our observation. That is why Meinong often includes considerations of ordinary language use in his analyses, while pointing to possible and probable conceptual antinomies. Meinong's answer is neither 'nativist' nor purely 'empiricist', while acknowledging arguments of both sides, but is based on something like a relational theory based on the idea of intentionality, which was a common ground for the 'Brentano School'. In his conception Meinong emphasises the relationships of phenomena and meta-phenomena, that is to say, he works out a network of psychological states, processes and underlying or supporting aspects.

The first problem for Meinong is to consider dispositions in terms of causes as "partial cause of the effect". If we ascribe, e.g. "artistic taste" (D 34/290) to somebody, Meinong argues, we will often see the disposition for such taste as a "partial cause" and dispositions therefore would have to be characterised as "derived causal concepts" (D 35/290). However, what is addressed in this way is not a disposition, but an ability, whereas a disposition is, for Meinong, what makes an ability possible:

[T]hat which enables me, i.e. gives me an ability, I am not easily able to refer to as an ability. (D 35/291)

This distinction is important, because in this way it becomes clear that, for Meinong, dispositions cannot only be grasped in terms of causality. They cannot be reduced to naturalistic aspects. To make this point stronger, Meinong refers to his own myopia arguing that the abnormal shape of his eyeball is a characteristic on which his disposition of myopia is based, but cannot be called the disposition itself. Meinong remains vague on this point when trying to come up with a positive proposition. If disposition is an "underlying property" (D 35/290), it is not yet distinguishable from what we can call a predisposition in a more causal or naturalistic sense. But this is the

way his argument unfolds: by further distinctions and examples to come ever closer to something like a definition, which he then looks at from different sides.

Meinong calls the foundational properties, often referred to as disposition or predisposition, the “base” [*Grundlage*] of a disposition, as in the case of the misshaped eyeball. He points out that it is not the disposition itself and that physical as well as mental features play a role and are interconnected. Properties like the “base”, the actualisation, aim-directedness or end, which he calls “correlate” [*Korrelat*], and the trigger or “stimulant” [*Erreger*] of a disposition have always to be considered in mutual relationship to each other and the disposition. Accordingly, Meinong first defines disposition tentatively as *Zweckmöglichkeit* (D 37/293), the possibility of achieving an aim. It is important to note that the definition of disposition starts from this consideration, which characterises it as what in other works on modal theory he called *Untertatsächlichkeit*, i.e. a state of possibility between the factual [*Tatsächlichkeit*] and the non-factual [*Untatsächlichkeit*] (see Poser 1972). If possibility is brought more concretely in relation with an aim and the ability to achieve it, it might get the character of a disposition. Meinong's concept of possibility already connects it with a certain kind of directedness and regularity. Possibilities are attributes of state of affairs, bound to them in particular way. He calls this connecting aspect “inhesiveness”. The possibility is not merely fictitious but already bound or connected to state of affairs or features of regularity, which Meinong calls “objectives”. These have to be understood as state of affairs in a very broad sense (Poser 1972, 189). However, possibility is still in need of a further determination to be seen as a disposition. As Meinong states, there always is a vehicle of possibility, which is an “incomplete object” existing in a “complete object”. This “complete object” in the case of disposition is the subject or the “representant of disposition” (43-44/299-300). Although possibility is defined by its “inhesive” relation to an “objective”, it is further determined by the actual properties and orientation of a subject. Attributing dispositions is based on the observation of their actualisation by *actions*.

While Meinong acknowledges the many facets and the importance of dispositional expressions, and considers alternative terms (like power, capacity, etc.), he nevertheless is convinced of the concept of disposition and tries to come up with a more precise definition. He achieves this by considering the circumstances of experiences.

Some favourable features of a situation might bring about a result of an action, which could lead one to attribute a certain disposition to the agent or subject. Meinong calls these features calls “supplements of possibility” (*Möglichkeits-Supplemente*) (D 38, 294). Since circumstances are accidental, they do not suffice for Meinong to characterise a disposition. Meinong's elaboration on this aspect proceeds in two

directions. At the one hand it shows that the term disposition is referring to something which can become a means to end for a subject. It is neither mere knowledge nor simply a know-how, but what makes them possible. On the other hand, as has been hinted at, Meinong tries to avoid a premature limitation of possibility by denying that disposition can be identified with a purely naturalistic property. In order to make this more transparent he introduces the conceptual elements of his theory. What he aims at is a definition which makes clear that dispositions should be attributed to the possibility of using an ability even in unfavourable circumstances. Meinong now provides the definition: "Disposition is insupplementary end-capacity" (D 40/296).

A disposition is what makes a capacity concretely possible to be actualised, even under unfavourable circumstances. There is no need for further supplements to support the possibility of actualisation (so it is "insupplementary"). The term "end-capacity" emphasises the orientation towards a goal, which, as has been shown before, for Meinong, is always somehow implied in the concept of disposition as the possibility of achieving an aim.

After Meinong has presented the basic definition of disposition, he turns to particular aspects and consequences (§ Moments of Disposition). He considers 1) correlate, 2) trigger or stimulant, 3) base and 4) aspects of formation. The first three points consider the interrelations in terms of an increase and decrease, while the last point is concerned with the actual formation of a disposition.

For our purpose it is not necessary to go through all the stages and distinctions of Meinong's theory of dispositions. The text proceeds by distinguishing elements and subtly analysing dependencies and other relations involved in the form and function of dispositions. The philosophical style is a combination of descriptive psychology and analytical ontology with some considerations of attribution and language use. Since the point here is to take Meinong's aim to contribute to a pedagogical theory seriously, we have to turn to his discussion of habits, training and suggestions.

As we have seen, dispositions do not only make abilities possible, they can be formed somehow and this formation in terms of *Bildung* is what educators have to achieve.

In the very last part of his article, Meinong finally gives some hints towards formation. They are based on the concept of habit. If disposition does not only concern those properties, which may be given by the constitution of the subject (base) and is always in relation to achievement or the possibility of actualisation (correlate), they form a field of possible formation. Formation is not only physically or mentally but also practically conditioned, and thus can be trained or at least stimulated or 'suggested'. Accordingly, Meinong distinguishes between "dispositions of habituation" and "dispositions of suggestion" (D 49/305), describing two ways of disposition formation (*Dispositionsbildung*).

When we become accustomed to something, dispositions are transformed and new dispositions may arise. They are “brought about or founded by experiences [...] that are correlates i.e. actualisations of the antecedent dispositions.[...] The change in the first disposition is the foundation of a new disposition and the cause of this foundation is the trigger of the first disposition” (Mulligan 2003, 205, see D 50/306). This process may involve an *increase* (when the typist gets used to a new type-writer) or a *decrease* of disposition (e.g. when we got used to a smell).⁹ The latter involves passive and the former active experiences, which provide the possibility of being trained. Both kinds of experiences may involve increase or decrease, but in different ways. The fact that active experiences can be trained involves the possibility of an indirect relation, as when somebody is being trained to look for specific situations, which may be favourable to a certain outcome. Since Meinong subscribes to the ephemeral nature of mental states, passive as well as active, inner as well as external experiences involve fatigue, just like actions (D 50/306). While we can recover from the fatigue of training, “repetition of passive experiences simply dulls, the strength of the relevant disposition decreases” (Mulligan 2003, 206). We get used to this passive experience and instead of an actualisation of the particular disposition decrease sets in and may result in boredom or ignorance. Active experience involves apprehension, epistemic seeing and action, while passive experience is rather sensational.

The second way of forming dispositions is formation by suggestion, which is also more passive. It can best be understood as influence, e.g. when the way somebody speaks is influenced by a local dialect. Here a certain manner or style is “suggested” to the subject, which “actualizes a disposition whose correlates resemble utterances he has heard in the past” (Mulligan 2003, 206; see D 50/306).

5 Bildung as Emancipation

It follows from the above that the argument of disposition for pedagogical purposes points towards the active experiences in learning. Martinak (1900) had already presented a version of the idea of disposition in the context of pedagogy, and pointed out that the frequent testing of students may hinder active experiences and the motivation for learning. When he gave his talk in front of an assembly of educators, everybody in the audience understood that this would mean to fail the task of *Bildung*. The significance of this concept as an ideal in German culture in the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century cannot

⁹ Mulligan explains: “Habituation is therefore a decrease in a disposition and what decreases is the experience of its correlate” (2003, 205).

be overestimated. In English it is translated as 'education', but etymologically it is connected to the verb *bilden* (forming) and the noun *Bild* (image), hence closer to the sense of 'formation'. It expresses a concept that refers to processes of cultivation of human capacities.

However the most important aspect of this concept is its fundamentally *emancipative purpose*. *Bildung* is deeply connected with German classicist ideas of emancipation. This connection forms the basis of seminal university reforms of Wilhelm von Humboldt. The aim of *Bildung* for Humboldt was not to train people for a particular profession but to build up the abilities of an emancipated subject. This could make it possible to cope with different societal demands and may have different professions in life (Humboldt 2017). The subject of education should become able to use the symbolic and material means not of one particular field, but to understand the structure of the means itself, to cope with different unforeseeable situations. It is obvious that this resonates with the emancipative intentions inherent in Meinong's and Martinak's idea of disposition.

While Martinak defined "disposition" as "a state of possibility", Meinong made further distinctions, but both agree that it means an enduring possibility to perform a task. A younger compatriot of Martinak and Meinong, namely Robert Musil,¹⁰ who did his doctoral work in philosophy and psychology under Carl Stumpf, explores in his novel *The Man Without Qualities* the other side of the ideal by describing the floating space of possibilities in modernity. His account supports the idea of disposition from a different side, but at the same time makes wider cultural implications visible, since possibility also involves the unreal, the never-to-be-realised. However, "[i]f there is a sense of reality, there must also be a sense of possibility" (Musil 1996, 10), not as an illusionary world, but as exploring and appropriating the layers of reality.

What Musil calls "the sense of possibility" forms a core element of the ideal of *Bildung*. This ideal as grounding Meinong's theory of disposition was shared by most intellectuals of the time. This and other common backgrounds have to be ignored if one wants to argue, like Barry Smith (1994) did, that the 'Brentano school' forms a particular "Austrian philosophy" in contrast to "German philosophy". While it is understandable that from a perspective of Anglophone analytical philosophy this particular genealogy is emphasised, it is nevertheless historically as well as systematically wrong and rather counter-productive. It does not only ignore the agent's view (see Marek

10 It is not too arbitrary to mention Musil here. Not only was he a kind of heir as a student of experimental psychology and philosophy, he was also a witness to and a novelist of the decline and end of the Austro-Hungarian State. Meinong, in his autobiographical presentation, felt compelled to devote the last pages to his melancholy about the outcome of the war, sensing the end of an entire epoch and its legacy (Meinong 1921).

2008-2019), but establishes the distinction along the lines of a sober, rational 'Austrian' and an irrational 'German' tradition.¹¹ Furthermore, it ignores the main direction of German academic philosophy of the time, namely neo-Kantianism, which also subscribed to the ideal of a rational "philosophy as science" (Köhnke 1991).

If we want to understand the background and context of the idea of disposition as developed by Meinong, it is of particular importance to see the entanglements of different directions in germanophone philosophy, not the least to acknowledge the common heritage in German classicism and philosophy (see Schnädelbach 1984). Lacking in centralised public means and bourgeois power (not to speak of democratic institutions), around 1800 the German-speaking countries were fashioned by their concerned intelligentsia as the place of revolution in thought, an ideal place of reflection with particular affinity to the pluralism of ancient Greece, destined to inaugurate a bottom-up movement and transformation of minds. In general, the development of the intellectual culture in the German-speaking countries is deeply connected to the idea of education, and in particular to the concept of education as a means of emancipation. Beginning with the emergence of standard high German (codified only much later in the nineteenth century), which has its roots in the Protestant attempts of a more direct relation to the Bible by way of vernacularisation, this story shows the inner connections of 'reformation', 'education' and 'emancipation'. At the same time, it makes the conservative and sometimes regressive undercurrents visible, e.g. if the holy word is internalised, brought into the inner self not for liberation but for a more effective submission. In any case, German (to speak of it as such is as tentative as to speak e.g. of standard Italian) became not only the language of poets and engineers, of thinkers and functionaries, but it also became the language of educators.¹²

While the twentieth century saw the fall of this ideal, its active destruction and perversion (dismissing a truly democratic education), it was very alive in Meinong's time. In a way it is the 'sense of possibility' that Meinong tackled throughout his work, culminating in his modal theory of existing and non-existing objects.

Meinong's remarks on disposition on the one hand present the high level of elaboration achieved at the time, but it also makes clear that it can become a problem as a "split of rationality" (Engler, Renn

11 In this way the narrative suggests a straight line of development leading to Nazism, thus surpassing even the claims of Lukacs' critique of German Romanticism and philosophy of life in his *The Destruction of Reason*.

12 The tragedy involved in the destruction and neglect of this ideal and its emancipative function is unbearably deepened when considering the hopes and continued efforts invested in it by Middle and Eastern European Jewry and its descendants since the time of Enlightenment.

2018). Seen from a historical point of view, the text confronts us with the problem of rationality itself. Thus, it was not the lack of rationality in philosophy but the lack of coordination between different ways of thinking which led to the decline of German philosophy and the "German mandarins" (Ringer 1969).

The problem of Meinong's theory in relation with its professed aims is the language it is presented in, which often seems to reify what actually is functional and relational in order to give a more formal account. In this way the relation of phenomena and meta-phenomena does not become clear as a full correlative interdependence (Cassirer 1910, 451). However, the text gives an example of the level of differentiation which, for better or worse, can be reached by reflecting philosophically on basic concepts and presuppositions and professes a deep concern with emancipative ideals.

6 Outlook on a Historical Epistemology of Education

In the perspective of a history and philosophy of education, Meinong's theory of disposition and its context may nevertheless provide relevant suggestions, in particular to a still largely unwritten historical epistemology of education. This does not only concern a step beyond a history of education concentrated on institutional settings and curricula towards a psychohistory of education, but it also points to the need of systematically connecting ontogenesis and history.

When we take Meinong's account of the network of aspects connected with dispositions, we can follow the lead of his conceptual distinctions to uncover the historical conditions of forming specific capacities and orientations. Each system of education (in the broadest sense) brought about certain dispositions which are not restricted to the contents of learning. These dispositions can be analysed considering their context, their social and societal functions as well as their role in an "evolution of knowledge" (Renn 2020). Dispositions formed in Medieval scholastic universities may differ fundamentally from those in Humboldt's reform universities (or they may not). With the theory of disposition at hand we can begin to ask further about the actual practice of education and the epistemic values and "epistemic virtues" (Daston, Galison 2007) 'trained' or 'suggested'.

Meinong's concept of disposition and its distinctions may easily be connected with concepts already known in the field of historical epistemology. This is most obvious in the account of scientific training that Ludwik Fleck provided (1979). What Fleck calls the initiation into the "thought style" of a scientific "thought collective" pertaining also to basic perceptual levels may be understood as the formation of a disposition for the ability to have the relevant experiences in relation with certain research questions. Again, it is not only text-

book knowledge and not mere mimetic know-how, but the ability to explore in relevant directions, which is crucial.

Thomas S. Kuhn provides another possible connection and example as to the relevance of dispositions. In his famous account of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Kuhn 1996), where he partly builds upon Fleck's conception, he points out that certain models or 'paradigms' provide the foundation for a scientific community to be in agreement about the basic problems under investigation, as well as about the directions and methods of the discipline. This includes the education of future researchers, study programs and textbooks. However, the paradigms of the scientific communities are always in relation to expectations of future outcome. The basis of science thus includes a "futurology" (Omodeo 2019, 5-6).

Paradigm debates are not really about relative problem-solving ability, though for good reasons they are usually couched in those terms. Instead, the issue is which paradigm should in the future guide research on problems many of which neither competitor can yet claim to resolve completely. A decision between alternative ways of practicing science is called for, and in the circumstances that decision must be based less on past achievement than on future promise. (Kuhn 1996, 157-8)

Michel Foucault stresses this strategic aspect of forming dispositions and thus shaping further development in his concept of *dispositif* (2001, 300). With the term *dispositif* Foucault denotes a system of power relations constituted by heterogeneous elements of 'discourse', institutions and knowledge structures. A *dispositif* as a complex network and historically changing system of knowledge may 'train', 'suggest' or even force subjects to adapt certain dispositions, 'default settings' and orientations, thus shaping individual and socio-political development. What Meinong describes in terms of an idealistic view of education, Foucault tries to uncover as based on more or less hidden constraints and structural regulations. Although an emancipative attitude is common to both, but it can be said that Foucault describes a situation where the ideal of *Bildung* has become doubtful.¹³ Since the term *dispositif* remains a rather vague notion in Foucault, forming more of a question, it could be specified as a network of depending elements in further description amending the structural view with a more agents based perspective.

Apart from these connections there is another important point of contact with historical epistemology, namely in terms of a long-term

13 In this sense Foucault continues a Nietzschean critique of the actual praxis of education as a kind of drill.

history of systems of knowledge (Damerow, Lefèvre 1994), which connects cognition and history, micro- and macrostructures. The actual process of learning in a concrete situation always proceeds with the help of tools, symbolic representations and the guiding advice of teachers and peers. When reflecting on the means and epistemic structure of learning, new applications are made possible. In this way it becomes obvious that what is learned is not just mere convention of using epistemic tools, but the cognitive structures implicit in the possible actions with them. If a symbol represents possible actions (or manipulations), it is therefore not just a static entity, but something to be explored in its further possibilities. A disposition for learning thus may be defined as the relatively autonomous exploration of the implication of symbol systems and knowledge structures. In this way it becomes effective in bringing about change, realising “what could as well be otherwise” (Musil 1996, 11).

In philosophy this is a well-known attitude, since philosophy itself, as Alfred North Whitehead stated, can be seen as “a survey of possibilities and their comparison with actualities” (Whitehead 1967, 98). In 1927 Scott Buchanan, a former student of Whitehead, wrote about the increase of the degree of possibility in modern life worlds, creating “a scene of many possible worlds with all degrees and kinds of value claiming our consideration” (Buchanan 1927, 3). The answer to this challenge for Buchanan was to consider possibility in a philosophical contemplation, not unlike Musil and his protagonist. Kant, in his role as university teacher, famously claimed that he actually never taught philosophy, but always tried to teach only *to philosophise*. Meinong would probably have added that this does not pertain to a technical vocabulary and a particular know-how, but basically concerns the forming of a disposition for philosophical experiences in order to explore possibilities even under unfavourable conditions.

Bibliography

- Buchanan, S. (1927). *Possibility*. London: Kegan Paul. The International Library of Philosophy 2.
- Cassirer, E. (1910). *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff*. Berlin: Bruno Cassirer.
- Damerow, P. (1996). *Abstraction and Representation*. Dordrecht: Kluwer. BSPS 175.
- Damerow, P.; Lefèvre, W. (1994). *Wissenssysteme im geschichtlichen Wandel*. Berlin: MPIWG-Preprint 5.
- Daston, L.; Galison, P. (2007). *Objectivity*. New York: Zone Books.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. New York: Macmillan.
- Engler, O.F.; Renn, J. (2018). *Gespaltene Vernunft*. Berlin: Matthes und Seitz.
- Fleck, L. (1979). *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*. Transl. by F. Bradley and Th. J. Trenn. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Foucault, M. (2001). *Dits et écrits*. Vol. 3, 1976-1979. Paris: Gallimard.
- Höfler, A. (1897). *Psychologie*. Wien und Prag: Tempsky.
- Humboldt, W. von (2017). *Schriften zur Bildungstheorie*. Stuttgart: Reclam.
- Kistler, M.; Gnassounou, B. (eds) (2007). *Dispositions and Causal Powers*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Knobloch, C. (1986). "Eduard Martinak und die psychologische Bedeutungslehre". *Kodikas*, 9, 1-2 (= Semiotik im deutschsprachigen Raum im ersten Drittel des 20. Jahrhunderts), 183-96.
- Köhnke, K.Ch. (1991). *The Rise of Neokantianism. German Academic Philosophy between Idealism and Positivism*. Transl. by R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press.
- Kuhn, T.S. (1996). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 3rd ed. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Lukács, G. (1981). *The Destruction of Reason*. Transl. by P. Palmer. Atlantic Highlands (N.J.): Merlin Press.
- Marek, J. (2008-2019). "Alexius Meinong". *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/meinong>.
- Martinak, E. (1898). *Zur Psychologie des Sprachlebens. Mit einigen Anwendungen auf die Unterrichtspraxis*. Wien: Gerold's Sohn.
- Martinak, E. (1900). "Psychologische Untersuchungen über Prüfen und Klassifizieren". *Österreichische Mittelschule*, 14/2-3. 93-109.
- Martinak, E. (1901). *Psychologische Untersuchungen zur Bedeutungslehre*. Leipzig: Barth.
- McDowell, J. (1994). *Mind and World*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.
- Meinong, A. (1915). *Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit. Beiträge zur Gegenstandstheorie und Erkenntnistheorie*. Leipzig: Barth.
- Meinong, A. (1919). "Allgemeines zur Lehre von den Dispositionen". *Beiträge zur Pädagogik und Dispositionstheorie. Eduard Martinak zur Feier seines 60. Geburtstages*. Herausgegeben von A. Meinong. Prag; Wien; Leipzig: A. Haase, 33-54.
- Meinong, A. (1921). "Selbstdarstellung". Schmidt, R. (Hrsg.), *Die Deutsche Philosophie der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen*. Leipzig: Meiner, 91-148.
- Meinong, A. (1978). "Allgemeines zur Lehre von den Dispositionen". Haller, R.; Kindinger, R. (Hrsg.), *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. VII. Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 287-310.

- Mulligan, K. (2003). "Dispositions, Their Bases and Correlates—Meinong's Analysis". Hintikka, J. et al., *Philosophy and Logic in Search of the Polish Tradition*. Dordrecht: Springer, 193-21. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-0249-2_14.
- Musil, R. (1996). *The Man Without Qualities*, vol. 1. Transl. by S. Wilkins. New York: Vintage.
- Omodeo, P.D. (2019). *Political Epistemology*. Cham: Springer Nature.
- Poser, H. (1972). "Der Möglichkeitsbegriff Meinongs". Haller, R. (Hrsg.), *Jenseits von Sein und Nichtsein. Beiträge zur Meinong-Forschung*. Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 187-204.
- Reicher, M.E. (2001). "Die Grazer Schule der Gegenstandstheorie". Binder, Th. et al. (Hrsgg), *Bausteine zu einer Geschichte der Philosophie an der Universität Graz*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 173-207.
- Renn, J. (2020). *The Evolution of Knowledge*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ringer, F.K. (1969). *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890-1933*. Hanover; London: Wesleyan University Press.
- Russel, B. (1899). Review of "Ueber die Bedeutung des Weberschen Gesetzes. by A. Meinong". *Mind*, 8/30, 251-6.
- Russel, B. (1905a). "On Denoting". *Mind*, 14/56, 479-93.
- Russel, B. (1905b). Review of "Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie und Psychologie. Herausgegeben. by A. Meinong". *Mind*, 14/56, 530-8.
- Ryle, G. (1972). *Jenseits von Sein und Nichtsein. Beiträge zur Meinong-Forschung*. Herausgegeben von R. Haller. Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 7-14.
- Schnädelbach, H. (1984). *Philosophy in Germany 1831-1933*. Transl. by E. Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Smith, B. (1994). *Austrian Philosophy. The Legacy of Franz Brentano*. Chicago; LaSalle (Ill.): Open Court.
- Whitehead, A.N. [1933] (1967). *Adventures of Ideas*. New York: Free Press.

Semestral journal

Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage



Università
Ca' Foscari
Venezia