

In this file I plan to transcribe by voice a number of handwritten notes on the topics of philosophy's predicament, the difficulty of communicability in philosophy, and the difficulty in philosophy caused by the unity-in-distinction-of things and objects. (I discuss the difficulty in philosophy caused by parageneric abstraction in another file "parageneric abstraction.wpd".)

xxx self evidence and fallibility, February 23, 79

Explaining philosophical fallibility is not just a problem for my theory of self-evident philosophical truth. It is a problem for all theories of philosophical method, even those that deny the validity of philosophy as a distinct discipline. For none of the remedies based on their explanations of philosophical fallibility has succeeded in eliminating disagreement and Paradox from philosophy.

May 30, 2005

Empirical evidence alone should tell us that disagreement is a permanent condition for philosophy, no matter what cure we propose. For all past cures generate as much disagreement as they were trying to eliminate. My explanation will suffer from the same disease. But at least, while suffering itself from the disease, it will not claim to be a cure for the disease. And all past attempts to remove disagreement from philosophy do just that

March 3, 79

The problem of explaining confusion and controversy in philosophy is one that must be faced by all philosophers, whether they except my views on philosophical method, on the nature of philosophical knowledge, or not. It is not my theory that creates the problem; it is the facts of the

history of philosophy and in particular the facts of the history of previous attempts to explain, respond to, and account for the facts of the history of philosophy.

May 12, 84

Criteria for a sound explanation of philosophy's perennial disagreement and paradox: First, it must predict Paradox and disagreement, that is, give a causal explanation that predicts it. Second, it must not make philosophy an intrinsically invalid enterprise. If it did, it would be self referentially inconsistent. Third, it must not make philosophy an extension of the method of some other disciplines. Fourth, it must not claim to itself eliminate paradox in disagreement. Fifth, it must not be invented just for the purpose of explaining Paradox in disagreement in philosophy. That is, it must be based on facts independently recognizable about philosophy, recognizable about philosophy independently of this purpose.

June 13, 82

Conclusions to be drawn from historical facts about the U-turn: philosophical problems have their own identity. What is the nature of that identity? The correct answer will meet several requirements. First, it will explain the ultimacy of philosophical questions. Second, it will explain disagreement and Paradox in philosophy. Third, it will not itself end disagreement and Paradox in philosophy or claim to end them.

Let us make no U-turns. But more basically let us put the axe to the root of the U-turn. Less have no projects that claim to find philosophical truth while eliminating disagreement and Paradox from philosophy.

August 30, 82

In chapter two of "causal realism" I show Hanson and other philosophers making crude and elemental errors. After 2000 years of philosophy, respected philosophers, educated at the most sophisticated and supposedly skeptical and iconoclastic departments, make errors of that kind over and over again. That should tell us something about the continuing human capacity, when philosophizing, to substitute wishful thinking, enthusiasm, and desire to get preconceived results for evidence, even among the most professedly skeptical and empirical and anti-speculative of philosophers. Why should it be any different tomorrow?

Jan. 24, 2000

For the introduction to a re-introduction to philosophy, or (much better) for the epilogue: at this point in history of philosophy every word has been used in so many different senses, and these senses are related in so many subtle and complex ways, that it takes almost a superhuman effort of concentration not to fall into error when trying to do philosophy. (As time goes on, it gets more difficult, not less, to know philosophical truth, i.e., to learn philosophical truth [educability; teachability].)

The Fregean might respond that it is precisely this problem that motivates him to look to post-Fregean methods for a way out. Of course, the history of using post-Fregean methods has not only failed to provide a way out but it just added to the number and complexity of the meanings. But also the kind of concentration and awareness I am talking about is different from the kind necessary to do logic correctly. In fact that very word "different" in the last sentence illustrates precisely the kind of difficulty that the incredibly many meanings now create for doing philosophy.

When you say one thing is "different" from another, the reader who has been conditioned by Quine is liable to incorrectly think that you are invoking some sort of untenable dualism between these two things. He will want to say, with Quine, everything is together on the same continuum. But by using the word "different" I was not implying that things were not on the same continuum; points on the continuum are different from another aren't they? In saying that one thing is different from another, all I am saying is that I am able to point to characteristics assertable of one of them that are not assertable of the other and that those characteristics have consequences that are true of one and not true of the other and that these characteristics are important from a point of view which happens to be the point of view from which I am speaking at the moment, not necessarily all possible points of view.

Certainly there are points of view from which philosophical language can be viewed as on a continuum with formal languages. Perhaps there are no points of view from which they cannot be seen as on a continuum. Still, more than a century of philosophy has proven that skill in using formal languages does not diminish the number, the subtlety, the complexity, and sometimes the profundity, of the multiple meanings words can have in philosophy nor does it increase our ability to escape the kind of paradox and disagreement those multiple meanings have always produced, and produce geometrically more frequently as time goes on.

C and D, formal systems, U-turns, paralogues, predicament April 22, 1997, EXAMPLE

But of course, the fallacies of Rescher and friend are a good example of the futility of trying to answer traditional questions this way, of the irrelevance of this method to the traditional

questions. The response might be that I prefer doing this kind of philosophy to the old, because this kind of philosophy gives me the feeling that I am in control of what I am doing, the feeling that I am doing something under control, something I unambiguously know how to handle.

There is nothing wrong with preferring that as long as you don't tell anyone else that their way of doing things is wrong, that is, as long as you don't turn your preference into an objective absolute. But the response might be that there is more to it than that. Not only does my way have admirable features because of which I prefer to do it, but you have to point out the features of your way that deserve any admiration at all.

The answer is, yes, I have to do that. But I do that by stating my rules for justifying my metaphysical assertions and providing justifications that indeed satisfy those rules. Then you can either attack my rules, attack my examples as not satisfying those rules, or both.

One way to "attack" the rules would be: I prefer not to play by those rules; there is nothing intrinsically wrong with them, but there would be too much risk of error involved in trying to follow them correctly. So I want to play a different game.

But that is exactly my point about the communicability of philosophy. I can provide rules of justification that are entirely valid and knowably so (knowably so by means to the very same rules). These rules are not impossible to implement but they are of a nature that there is a great degree of risk of error (and of not knowing one is in error) in attempting to use them. So you may choose not to play this game, but this game happens to be one we cannot entirely avoid.

There is no more hope of agreement here than there is in politics. But just as in politics, we cannot avoid playing the game. And the fact that we cannot hope for agreement in politics does not mean that there is no answer to questions such as "Is it better to pursue course of action X or not pursue it?" Not only do such questions have answers, they can be knowable answers. That

is, some people may have actual knowledge of answers to specific questions (though not the same people having knowledge of correct answers to all the questions: Joe knows the answer to question A but is mistaken about B). But the fact that Joe has achieved intersubjective verification about question A does not imply that the actual conditions of intersubjective communication in politics are such that Joe will succeed in communicating that verification to other “experts” academically, that is, sociologically, defined..

xxx Communicability and difficulty, November 15, 90

How about calling philosophy's predicament the problem of the liquidity of philosophical knowledge? Or, acquiring knowledge of philosophical truth and communicating it once acquired (once discovered) is like receiving a faint radio message in an environment that produces a lot of static, and receiving it on an unamplified crystal set. There is such a thing as publicly knowable philosophical truth (the radio message was sent). We have the ability to recognize it (there is nothing wrong with the receiver). But many, even most, philosophers will not understand it; they will receive it distorted; they will not be able to distinguish the message from the static, etc.

Maybe communications theory has terms I can use. Maybe "signal" and "noise" are good terms. Does communication theory have other terms explaining why sometimes overcomes the signal? Maybe the idea of "jamming" the transmission might be a useful concept. And remember how FM signals used to drift; maybe drifting out of tune would be a useful concept.

May 30, 2005

Sociologically, philosophy is like a man who can tread water but not swim. It is not impossible

for him to keep his head above water, but it is impossible to make smooth progress like the sciences do. Or philosophy is like the Israelites in the desert or like a nomadic tribe. It survives but cannot make progress and establish institutions for cumulative sociological progress like other cultures can.

June 20, 85

Metaphysical concepts are very, very tricky. That does not make them invalid. In fact, we cannot do without them, no matter how tricky they are to deal with, how difficult to deal with, how hard to handle.

Predicament, September 21 86

The psychological inventory quoted in Veatch's "2 logic's" uses the word "communability" and "sociability."

October 1, 85

"Transmitability" or "low index of transmitability." But since all knowledge should be transmittable, it may be better to focus on the receiver: "low index of receivability," "index of receptiveness." Also, obstacles to receptiveness.

Precarious, perilous, hazardous, delicate, insecure, vincible, vulnerable. "Insecure" does not mean doubtful or uncertain. It means valid but not invincible, not infallible, fallible. Transferability, negotiability, circulatable, distributable. Sharability, impartability, socialization.

May 31, 2005

A low index of communality between experts academically defined. A low index of consociation, of sociability. A low index of communion in knowledge among experts as academically defined.

September 2, 82

The lack of lasting agreement among experts in philosophy proves only that philosophical knowledge has a low index of sociability, communability. The cause of this failure is either this low index or the fact that something is wrong with philosophy intrinsically. Which hypothesis is correct? The facts of the history of philosophy do not support the intrinsically defective approach; for even theories of philosophy's intrinsic defects do not eliminate the lack of lasting agreement among experts.

And if a theory about intrinsic defects were correct, it would need a low index theory in addition. For it would need to explain why it itself does not succeed in establishing long-lasting consensus. Therefore a low index theory by itself has the virtue of being the simpler theory.

Causal metaphysics is an entirely valid, but extremely precarious, endeavor. Disagreement and paradox prove only that, in philosophy more than in other fields, causes that can produce knowledge coexist with causes that can produce error.

April 17, 79

Metaphysics is a valid but perilous undertaking. Like a cancer therapy, it may fail most of the time, but is still worth doing. It is the only alternative; a chance for life is better than sure death.



February 23, 79

Success in philosophy is like success in prospecting for gold or of achieving saintliness; it is rare in human experience. It does not follow, however, that philosophy is any more invalid than looking for gold or striving for saintliness. But by hypothesis, failure to achieve philosophical success (communicable knowledge) will \*rarely\* be recognized as such. By hypothesis, failure means the inability to recognize communicable philosophical truth, not merely the failure to be the first to discover it. That is the definition of success in philosophy here, recognizing communicably true philosophical statements. So philosophical truth will be denied by many philosophers, just as many prospectors fail to find gold and many people fail to achieve saintliness.

December 17, 90

In philosophy we are always starting over.

January 28, 86

We get trapped in the rut of looking at things from the point of view of just a few of such distinctions to the neglect of others. In the case of each such distinction the problems caused by paragenic abstraction and the thing-object distinction can operate. The confusion those causes create compounds geometrically as the number of necessary distinctions increases.

It is not logically necessary that epistemological problems be so complex, and we certainly should wish they were not. But for whatever reason, epistemological problems are that complex and to wish for that to change is to wish for the nature of philosophical cognition to change.

, EXAMPLE

The confusion, or at least the complexity, compounds geometrically by the sheer complexity of the different kinds of causal relations involved in understanding knowledge, different kinds of causal relations that need to be distinguished from one another: for example, explanation (for example, the explanation of metaphysics) versus justification (the justification of metaphysics), verification versus discovery, sensory knowledge versus intellectual knowledge, the concept in the psychological sense versus the concept in the objective sense, diverse modes of knowing distinguished by diverse methods of concept formation, of defining, reflexive versus direct awareness, intuitive awareness of versus abstractive, lexico-logical versus non-lexico-logical understanding of meaning, speculative versus practical, ontological versus empiriological, parageneric versus generic abstraction, etc.

June 14, 82, EXAMPLE

Philosophical fallacies work by getting you to look at something from the wrong point of view and think that it is the right, or only, point of view. ("What other point of view is there?" "What other possibility is there?" "What else could you want?") For example, Quine looks at necessary truth from the point of view of a criterion to cause the identification of a truth as necessary.

The wrong point of view may be one that considers only one causal relation or, if more than one, still leaves out the appropriate causal relations. The problems of the wrong point of view are compounded when causal relations associated with knowledge are under consideration. You then have (1) all the causal relations associated with the quod being known, (2) all the causal relations associated with the "knowledge" of the reality. And the latter causal relations can bear on 2 modes of existence. So you have all the causes explaining the an entitative existence of

knowledge or explaining knowledge Entitatively (for example, concepts in the psychological sense of the word) and causes explaining intentional existence or explaining knowledge intentionally (for example, the objective concept).

May 8, 86, EXAMPLE

Kripke in his postscript on other minds: "sensation" refers to pains and other interior feelings. But seeing colors, shapes, motion, etc.? (See the last few pages of Kripke's PostScript on other minds.)

September 9, 85

Causes that can produce philosophical knowledge coexist with causes of error. What is the cause of philosophical knowledge? The public character of the meanings of our words, their intersubjective character. What is the cause of error? Another feature of the same meanings, their paragenetic character.

August 2, 80

Given all these sources of difficulty in philosophy, it may take a genius to do philosophy correctly and show the rest of us how to do it. But it also takes genius to screwup philosophy. It doesn't take a genius to see that to be is not to be perceived. It takes genius to fail to see it. But once a genius has concocted a screwed up theory, he is capable of misleading many and, at least, putting the rest of us on the defensive and even in retreat.

It may take a genius to correct that situation but that genius has even more difficulties to overcome than before. He has all the built-in difficulties of philosophy to overcome plus

overcoming the difficulties created by the screwed up genius.

May 30, 2005, EXAMPLE

Philosophical education multiplies instances of ignorance of the question. For example, it tells us that if there were accidents, substance would be a featureless entity; that the existence of potencies would violate the principle of the excluded middle, etc.. Our philosophical education teaches us that such claims as those for the existence of accidents and potencies carry with them more than is really claimed.

March 9, 91

No matter how hard you work to express your point clearly and unambiguously, someone will interpret in another way. Often this will only be evidenced in the arguments they bring against your point. That is, those arguments would tell against another point but not against yours. So you respond to the argument with further clarifications. But each new sentence adds another potential point of misunderstanding.

May 30, 2005, EXAMPLE

The linguistic ontologists I referred to in chapter two of "causal realism" think language commits us to an ontology that should be classed with the ontology's produced by past metaphysicians. But the issues are not the same.

October 9, 86, EXAMPLE

Example of a traditional philosophical word redefined by analytic philosophy, "essence."

Graduate students now learned that a means what is necessarily true of a thing. And they now learned that "necessarily" means what is true in all possible worlds.

May 30, 2005

Solving philosophical problems requires relating multiple ideas (even dozens and scores of them) in the proper way. Each of these ideas is abstract and so is a language expressing their relations. That language cannot be unambiguous as can the language of mathematics for two reasons. The first is pargeneric abstraction.

Secondly, both mathematical and philosophical terms come from ordinary language. These terms all carry multiple connotations and associations. In mathematics these associations are not pertinent to the technical use of these terms. In philosophy they are. They enter into causal relations, as terms of the relations or as relations themselves, to whatever it is for which I am using the term in philosophy. Or they enter into causal relations to my knowledge of that for which I use the term in philosophy.

May 12, 84

Causal conditions for knowledge exist, but not for the kind of communicability other disciplines enjoy. These conditions are partly but not completely identical.

March 2, 91, EXAMPLE

To answer any one epistemological question, we have to concentrate on one word function, focus on it, keep it before the mind. But the resolution of that issue will depend on the relation of some epistemological fact to other issues, other causal connections that are (1) proximately related to

our fact in a causal sense and (2) are expressed in language that is paragenerically similar or must use similar thing-object constructions. As a result, we shift from one focus to another imperceptibly and almost inexorably.

For example, how difficult it is to express the fact that the real issue is verification and that this issue differs from psychological and other questions. "How do we know that p is true?" That statement can have many different meanings.

For example, how many times in writing "causal realism" did I fall into the trap of thinking that I needed criteria for identification concerning some particular issue or the use of some word?

October 7, 80

Communicability becomes more difficult as time goes on. Philosophical error tends to multiply itself, because in addition to the other obstacles to grasping truths using paragenera, you now have the obstacles of bad philosophical education based on previous errors. Bad philosophical education tends to make us misinterpret the parageneric term. This creates the need for more theories with their own re-definitions of terms, and so on.

September 17, 86, EXAMPLE

The opposite of the truth often seems not just true, it seems the self-evidently true. For example Hume says that appetite, not reason, prescribes. The truth is that prescription is an act of the intellect. Why the error? Prescription is an act of the intellect under the influence of the will.

Faith is also an act of the intellect under the influence of the will. But the prescription of

behavior is more likely than faith to be confused with an act of the will for an additional reason. Prescription of behavior is an act of the intellect concerning some further end than the mere possession of truth, whereas faith has for its object the possession of truth.

xxx predicament, August 28, 85

If the predicament is a permanent state of philosophy, what good is it to require that students take philosophy? Requiring philosophy is necessary because of the predicament. The predicament shows that although philosophy is a very dangerous activity, it is a necessary activity; it can't be eliminated.

So we must teach our students (1) not to accept arguments of the form "most philosophers today say this" or "most psychologists today say this" the way we accept arguments from other kinds of intellectual authority.

September 8, 85

See the back of the note titled "rorty" for September 2, 85.

Can we avoid falling into positions that are false dichotomies? Yes but only if we scrupulously and rigorously trace our conclusions back to self-evidently necessary propositions. And that process is excruciatingly difficult to do to begin with an excruciatingly difficult to follow once someone else does it. Writing "causal realism" proved that to me.

January 17, 79, EXAMPLE

The fogs philosophers constantly get into can have multiple psychological and sociological causes. For example, we ask the wrong question, either a question formulated incorrectly or one we think is relevant but isn't. But the prevailing style of philosophy can convince us that it is relevant or is properly stated. For example, we think that a criterion for identifying cases of necessary truth is required. This is like asking if you still beat your wife. We assume a criterion is required and so are stuck with an unanswerable question.

May 30, 2005

Value commitments, cognitive and non-cognitive are not just individual phenomena; they are social. And the plausibility structure resulting from social value commitments, especially academic value commitments, can lock us into the kind of errors I am trying to describe.

Philosophers can even raise the method of textual analysis to that level, as so many of the so-called "Thomists" have done. You may say this is a bad example, because those Thomists are operating on faith. But my point is that our commitment to other methods, pictures, and or ways of defining questions and looking at things, is no less an act of faith than is the Thomist's. We may not operate on faith in the sense of taking another person at his word, but our commitment has no more rational basis. And perhaps it has less of a rational basis, since they know they are operating on faith, while other philosophers do not.

xxx Communicability and Difficulty in philosophy, philosophy's predicament,

Answering philosophical questions requires sorting out many strands and putting them in the right place. But we start with a very tangled web. And every step is perilous; every step



is one where you can go off the deep end. To sort it all out you have to concentrate.

New topic:

The meaning of Kant much is clearer than it was before. He was taking a good idea to an illogical extreme. What he should have said is that we are much, much less prone to error in using causal necessary truths as regulative principles for empirical knowledge than we are when using them philosophically, that is, when studying causal necessity ontologically. In other words, we are much much more prone to error when doing philosophy. We should all recognize that our being much more prone to error in philosophy is a very well established empirical fact. But error in philosophy, for example, the generation of contradictions, are not necessary, as Kant thought they were.

New topic:

In philosophy we are always replying to objections, to real or imaginary opponents. In mathematics and computational logic we rarely have to. That is the condition of philosophy; the state of philosophy.

C and D, Short Book, July 11, 1993

Burton Dreben says "Watch out for the places where a philosopher says that such and such must be the case." I say "Watch out when a philosopher says (A) that an opponent's move invokes a notion, e.g., simplicity or double effect, that is fraught with difficulties, that is a quagmire." As opposed to what other philosophical notions that are not fraught with difficulties? The opponent replies (B) that, on the contrary, some notions are almost

universally accepted among today's philosophers. I say watch out when a philosopher says (B). The next generation of philosophers will distinguish themselves from us precisely by overthrowing some of the very notions today's philosopher says are not quagmires, and tomorrow's philosopher will accomplish his overthrow by showing them to be fraught with difficulties. Nor is there anyway to predict which or how many of today's assumptions will be overthrown.

C and D, 7/24/94

Title: Philosophy Under Control

042788, EPILOGUE

Title of Epilogue: Profundity and Precision, or Profundity and Rigor, as opposed to the possible title of the Preface: Profundity and Clarity. Sadly rigor and precision in philosophy do not coincide with clarity, due to the paragenic nature of philosophical concepts. (not typed on date of entry).

Xxx Epilogue? Communicability and Difficulties/ and Logic/entailment, 7-30-90, EPILOGUE

After talking to Deely about paradoxes associated with conditionals. To avoid paradoxes, we need an Archimedian solution. That is, we need a place to stand; we need a foothold. For example, to talk about "entailment" or "Logically following from," we can't start by offering a definition that supposedly covers all cases. That only gets us into paradoxes.

Rather we can say: the following \*sometimes\* occurs, namely, that logical relations

between  $p$  and  $q$  make it impossible for  $p$  to be true and  $q$  not to be true. That occurrence is what we have the phrase "logically follows from" in our language for. And such occurrences are what we study in logic. We use another definition of "if...then" as an aid to studying entailment, but entailment is what we are interested in.

Likewise, it sometimes happens that "if  $P$  then  $Q$ " is used to assert a necessary connection between  $P$  and  $Q$ , even if each of  $p$  and  $q$  is false. We don't need to say there is one use for counterfactuals, some Platonic essence of them.

These are examples of places to stand, footholds. The problem is that to find a foothold enabling you to avoid a paradox, you have to dig through 2500 years of manure (paradoxes). And once you find the foothold, you have to stand in the manure (i.e., you have to do the de jure unnecessary work of showing how the paradoxes, which de jure should not exist, can be avoided.)

In other words, you have to find the right place to take a stand, the right place to fight, and not waste time fighting the wrong battles. Once you have a foothold, the trick is to go out from it only as far as you are justified in going \*and\* that you need to go. The opponent will try to say that to do what you want to do or say what you want to say, you need to go farther out from the foothold than you are justified in going. The problem is that we can accept the opponent's statement of the problem and try to show that we are justified in going further than we really need to go. Thus, we might try to come up with a criterion for recognizing entailment in all possible cases, or with laws that entailment follows, etc., because we think we need to do this to answer the opponent. The reality is the opposite. The reason for the paradoxes in the eyes of the opponent is precisely that she thinks we need to go out further from the foothold than we really need to go.

xxx communicability and difficulty, June 12, 90

Why can't you break a problem into parts in philosophy? One reason: in addition to the parts that belong to the problem in itself and de jure, you have the parts connected with the problem in people's minds, the minds you need to communicate with. And those intrinsically unnecessary connections are potentially infinite, crisscrossing, and circular.

xxx communicability and difficulty, February 18, 84

If there is such a thing as philosophical truth, it must be, in general, more difficult to acquire than the truths belonging to other disciplines. And once acquired, it must be more difficult to communicate among academically certified "experts" in the field. This fact is established by the historical and contemporary experience that philosophy is less able to achieve long lasting consensus than other disciplines. But that is all that is established by these facts of experience. It does not follow that philosophy is necessarily invalid, based on a mistake, a corruption of human reasoning, etc.. Nor does it follow that all we lack is the magic method as Descartes and so many others have thought. Quote Richard Rorty as saying that philosophy is not more difficult, and that the view that it is is a foolish view.

It turns out that the analysis of philosophy as ontological shows why it generates confusion, but shows this without making philosophy invalid. In other words, it explains the only conclusion experience warrants but without self referential inconsistency. Nor does it explain it in a way that promises to be itself free from those problems -- something no attempt at remaking philosophy has ever succeeded in doing.

Proving of the validity of metaphysics does not refute the validity of the empiricist and Kantian description of it as a generator of obfuscation and confusion. But this description is appropriate to philosophy in general, not just to metaphysics in the pejorative sense of the word. Metaphysics does generate paradox in disagreement, and so has every other attempt at philosophy, including those attempts whose purpose was precisely to rid us of the paradox in disagreement of metaphysics. This is especially true of those attempts that promise to rid us of philosophical problems by the means of using the method of some other disciplines. It is even true of those responses to metaphysics that claimed not to be doing philosophy but something else. The experience of attempts to deny independent validity to philosophy shows that we cannot suppress philosophical questions.

Philosophers after Descartes do not suppress his desire to end disagreement and unclarity in philosophy but in addition think that the way to do it is not to extend another method, as Descartes did, but to limit them, that is, to find the limits of a valid method.

xxx Communicability and Difficulty in philosophy, philosophy's predicament, Contemporary culture has demonstrated that value commitments can blind even educated people to scientific truth. For example, consider feminism, global warming, homosexuality, overpopulation, environmental issues, etc. If value commitments can do this relative to scientific truth, they can do it much more so in the area of the paragenetic and of the problems caused by thing/object identity.

We need an approach that will not reduce philosophy to being an extension of another method, nor will claim philosophy is invalid on the basis of a claim about the sufficiency of some other method.

A letter to the first post-modern Philosopher, 5-30-93

Speculative philosophy: It should start from the following recognition that has been empirically verified by the history of philosophy. There is something about philosophic concepts that makes the following two things true. (1) It does no good to deny (a) that there is philosophical truth, i.e., answers to philosophical questions and (b) that we are capable of knowing some philosophical truth, where "knowing" means certitude caused by awareness of sufficient evidence to exclude the opposite from truth, and "evidence" refers to objects of awareness that are public, capable of being shared by more than one person. And (2) it is highly unlikely that such knowledge, if and when it is achieved, will ever be shared by the majority of philosophers over a long period of time, more, say, than one generation.

As a result of the failure to achieve the opposite of (2), linguistic philosophers are denying (1). But the failure to achieve the opposite of (2) simply means that, after a century, the linguistic turn has had no successes, where success is measured by the original goal of the linguistic turn and of modern philosophy in general, namely, to achieve the opposite of (2).

The conclusion to be drawn is the conclusion Aristotle drew: there is something different about philosophical concepts, not that there is no philosophical truth. But any theory of what it is that makes philosophical concepts different will, like Aristotle's theory,

be subject to both (1) and (2). And all of this is empirically verified by the history of philosophy.

Notice that this does not mean that those lucky enough to discover and share knowledge of philosophical truth are more intelligent than other philosophers. It means the opposite. There is something different about philosophical concepts. And intelligence measures our ability to deal with "ordinary" concepts, concepts that lack whatever it is that makes philosophical concepts so different.

If post-Fregean philosophy has no successes as measured by solving pre-Fregean questions (as opposed to solutions to post-Fregean questions like agreeing that quantification has only one meaning), then pre-Fregean philosophy must be a really strange bird. Exactly. That is the only reasonable conclusion to come to. But that reasonable conclusion is not the same as the unreasonable conclusion that would make pre-Fregean philosophy invalid and/or unnecessary. Nothing could be more necessary. Perhaps we could define philosophy as that which contains the answers to all those puzzles we cannot seem to answer. If so, the reason we have not answered them is that philosophy is very, very difficult.

Again, the opponent says, but we can only do the best we can. We are doing philosophy the best way possible (given the state of its development) at this time. But the truth of that statement presupposes the point I am questioning. For if philosophical truths are intrinsically less socializable, less communicable even though they are public, than other kinds of truth, we may well have overlooked a better way of doing philosophy in the past or present.

Instead of philosophy's "predicament", how about philosophy's "condition" or "the condition of philosophy"?

, INTRO

Our philosophical experience indicates, inductively, two things. The first is that we cannot avoid philosophical questions. All attempts to show philosophical questions invalid or intrinsically fallacious fail by winding up committing the very fallacies they condemn in others.

The second is that the conditions of philosophical communication are such that it may be possible for a philosopher to have intersubjectively verifiable knowledge on a particular point and yet not be able to communicate that knowledge to more than a few of his colleagues, and not even to the same colleagues on different points. By the rule of simplicity, this is the most that our experience allows us to conclude. It does not allow us to conclude that philosophical inquiries are intrinsically invalid.

Now we can ask why it should be the case that the conditions of intersubjective communication in philosophy are such. That is an interesting and valid question. But before even attempting to answer that question, we can know certain things, or we can rationally believe that certain statements are justified. Namely, we can know that if true, a theory explaining why conditions make intersubjective communication so difficult in philosophy will itself be subject to those conditions so that the intersubjective communication of the evidence for its truth (other than the experiential



evidence?), i.e., the communication of the evidence for the causal conditions it hypothesizes (other than the experiential evidence from which we start, evidence about the effect, not the cause), that communication will itself be subject to the same difficulty.

Everyone embarking on a career in philosophy should know these things or should at least be made to confront this analysis of the history of philosophy.