Kristóf Nyíri

Pictorial Truth

Essays on Wittgenstein, Realism, and Conservatism

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Dunabogdány 2017

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Preface

The great advantage of self-publishing an online book is that one does not have to endure publishers, editors, and printers. The disadvantage, they say, is that your work is not peer-reviewed. Having published quite a number of peer-reviewed papers and volumes over the past fifty years or so, I think I can live with that disadvantage. It is the privilege of old age that one does not have to worry about one's list of publications. Also, I believe the past-publication judgement of the online community is, generally speaking, not less valuable than would have been the pre-publication views of some selected professionals.

Incidentally, most of what is included in the present volume has indeed undergone a blind peer-review process. Chapter I emerges from my papers "Wittgenstein and Common-Sense Philosophy", in András Benedek and Kristóf Nyíri, eds., *Beyond Words: Pictures, Parables, Paradoxes*, Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang Edition, 2015, and "Wittgenstein as a Common-Sense Realist", *Conceptus*, vol. 42, issue 101–102 (Jan. 2017). Chapter II was published in András Benedek and Ágnes Veszelszki, eds.,

In the Beginning was the Image, Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang Edition, 2016. Chapter III is a partly re-written version of my October 2016 *The Monist* paper "Conservatism and Common-Sense Realism". Finally, chapter IV is the expanded text of a talk that will appear in András Benedek and Ágnes Veszelszki, eds., *Virtual Reality – Real Visuality*, Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang Edition, 2017.

I have added an index. I believe that even when readers are free to search in a digital volume, a detailed index can be helpful. I think a thoughtfully built up index might best express the intended spirit of the given book.

Dunabogdány, August 2017

I. Wittgenstein and Common-Sense Philosophy

1. Introduction

Wittgenstein is known to have been a visual thinker. But he was also, as I will briefly indicate below, a thinker who in his later years in fact came close to developing a philosophy of visual thinking. The position he was groping for corresponds, one might say, to the common-sense view: we think in images no less than in words, and both mental and physical images signify by resembling. More broadly, too, it can be maintained that the later Wittgenstein tended to be a philosopher of common sense, indeed a common-sense realist, while being very much aware of the intricacies of the notion of common-sense philosophy. The notes published as *On Certainty*, notes he wrote during the last one and a half years of his life, are an extended critical discussion of G. E. Moore's "defence of common sense"; but already in the *Blue Book*, dictated to his class in Cambridge in 1933–34, we find some revealing passages not just on how the typical common-sense philosopher's approach differs (to his detriment) from that of "the common-sense man", but indeed on how a suit-

ably conceived common-sense, and realist, philosophy should proceed. Fittingly, the first set of these passages is separated by a mere few pages from some important *Blue Book* passages on mental images, pictorial meaning, and visual similarity as constitutive of pictures. – Still, as this chapter will point out, there are writings by Wittgenstein where his grasp of the proper mission of philosophy serving common sense, and hence realism, does not seem to be entirely firm. Such is the typescript no. 227, completed by 1946, posthumously published as Part I of the *Philosophical Investigations.* Here one cannot but sense a contradiction between Wittgenstein's excessive claim as to the primordial literalness (non-metaphorical nature) of everyday language, and his stress on the felicitous multiplicity and flexibility of language-games.

2. Wittgenstein as a Visual Thinker

It is the so-called linguistic turn in philosophy Wittgenstein's name is generally, and not without reason, associated with. He was, however, also a precursor of the iconic turn beginning in the late-twentieth century. He definitely had a visual mind. Recall his picture theory of meaning in the *Tractatus*, summed up by the dictum, "The proposition

is a picture of reality", with a telling addition, "In order to understand the essence of the proposition, consider hieroglyphic writing, which pictures the facts it describes".[1] Or recall the innumerable drawings accompanying his manuscripts. These drawings were, for Wittgenstein, spontaneous vehicles of his thinking, but often also served as illustrations to help him explain what thinking with images amounts to – to help him come closer to a possible philosophy of pictures.

In a number of earlier papers I have attempted to show in detail that Wittgenstein's later work clearly contains the seeds of a theory of pictures as natural carriers of meaning.[2] At this stage I

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[1] *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 4.01 and 4.016, Ogden transl.

[2] Kristóf Nyíri, "The Picture Theory of Reason" (2000), in *Rationality and Irrationality*, edited by Berit Brogaard and Barry Smith (Wien: öbv-hpt, 2001), pp. 242–266; Kristóf Nyíri, "Pictures as Instruments in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein" (2001), in *Wittgenstein and the Future of Philosophy: A Reassessment after 50 Years*, edited by Rudolf Haller and Klaus Puhl (Wien: öbv&hpt, 2002), pp. 328–336; Kristóf Nyíri, "Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Pictures" (2001), in *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, edited by Alois Pichler and Simo Säätelä (Working Papers from the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen, no. 17, 2005), pp. 281–312 (reprinted: Frankfurt/M.: ontos verlag 2006, pp. 322–353); Kristóf Nyíri, "Image and Metaphor in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein" (2010),

will give just two references. First, a reference to the *Blue Book*, where Wittgenstein speaks of "pictures of which we should say that we understand them immediately, without any further interpretation".[3] Secondly, a reference to a crucial passage in the *Brown Book*, where Wittgenstein, touching on the issue of facial expressions, asks us to "contemplate the expression of a face primitively drawn in this way" (see Figure 1)[4]. One has an experience here, Wittgenstein implies, which cannot be

Figure 1: A particular facial expression

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in R. Heinrich et al., eds., *Image and Imaging in Philosophy, Science and the Arts* (Proceedings of the 33rd International Ludwig Wittgenstein Symposium, vol. 1, Heusenstamm bei Frankfurt: ontos verlag, 2011, pp. 109–129), repr. in Kristóf Nyíri, *Meaning and Motoricity: Essays on Image and Time*, Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 2014, pp. 73–91.

[3] *Preliminary Studies for the "Philosophical Investigations". Generally Known as the Blue and Brown Books*. By Ludwig Wittgenstein. Preface by Rush Rhees. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958, repr. 1964, p. 36.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 162.

conveyed by *words*; although it *can* be conveyed by pointing to a drawing. It appears our system of communication is incomplete unless *pictures* play a part in it.

I will come back to Wittgenstein's philosophy of pictures in section 10 below.

3. Some Remarks on the Wittgenstein Corpus

Although the typescript listed as TS 227 in the von Wright catalogue – the typescript that was eventually printed as "Part I" of the *Philosophical Investigations*[5] – is definitely a major compilation of notes by the later Wittgenstein, it is not a piece he in this form would have published.[6] By contrast, his lectures and dictations he tended to re-

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[5] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), 2nd ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958, transl. by G. E. M. Anscombe.

[6] Compare the masterly essay by Joachim Schulte, "What Is a Work by Wittgenstein?", in *Wittgenstein: The Philosopher and his Works*, edited by Alois Pichler and Simo Säätelä (Working Papers from the Wittgenstein Archives at the University of Bergen, no. 17, 2005), pp. 356–363, see esp. pp. 362 f. Schulte does apparently not share the bias I seem to have both for *The Blue Book* and especially for MS 144.

gard as actually a form of publication.[7] The *Blue Book*, as also the *Brown Book* he dictated during 1934–35, should be seen as endeavours in their own right, rather than as intermediary steps leading to a supposedly ultimate, accomplished work. The title *Preliminary Studies for the "Philosophical Investigations",* devised by the editor Rush Rhees, is entirely misguided and misleading.

Also, the manuscript listed as MS 144, published as "Part II" of the *Philosophical Investigations*, was never intended by Wittgenstein to form a sequel to TS 227.[8] The designation "Part II" has been in fact dropped in the Schulte–Hacker edition.[9] This of course does not make the text

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[7] Cf. Norman Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, London: Oxford University Press, 1958, p. 56. See also the "Introduction" to *Wittgenstein: Lectures, Cambridge 1930–1933 – From the Notes of G. E. Moore*, edited by David G. Stern, Brian Rogers and Gabriel Citron, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016; the main author of the "Introduction" is David Stern.

[8] While clearly there are innumerable obvious continuities, also from the point of view of our present topic, connecting the various phases and branches of Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*.

[9] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. The German text, with an English translation by G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte. Revised 4th edition by P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. In this edition, MS 144 is

any less important. Already in its appearance, MS 144, written in 1949, is quite special (cf. Figure 2), a "fair manuscript copy", as von Wright puts it.[10]
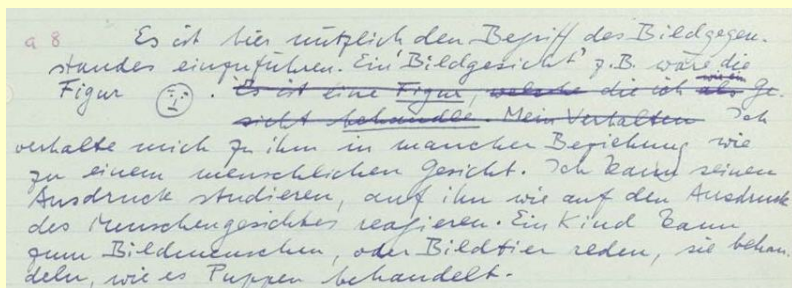

Figure 2: "Es ist hier nützlich, den Begriff des Bildgegenstandes einzuführen" ("Here it is useful to introduce the idea of a picture-object", Philosophical Investigations*, 1958 edition, p. 194e)*

A fair manuscript indeed – just compare it to any other manuscript in Wittgenstein's *Nachlaß* (see e.g. Figure 3, showing a page from MS 174, writ-

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published under the title "Philosophy of Psychology – A Fragment". I take the opportunity to thank Joachim Schulte for his unfailing support, over many decades, in helping me to gain better access to Wittgenstein's work.

[10] Georg Henrik von Wright, "The Wittgenstein Papers" (1969), rev. repr. in G. H. von Wright, *Wittgenstein*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982, p. 45. On MS 144 (and the typescript based on it) see also G. H. von Wright, "The Troubled History of Part II of the *Investigations*", *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, vol. 42 (1992), pp. 181–192.

ten in 1950). Consisting of "carefully selected excerpts"[11] from other notebooks of Wittgenstein, MS 144 seems to have been composed for a par-
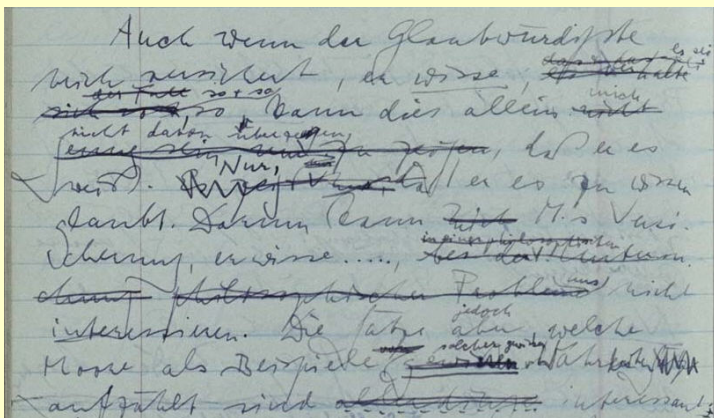
Figure 3: "Auch wenn der Glaubwürdigste mir versichert, er wisse, es sei so und so, so kann dies allein mich nicht davon überzeugen, daß er es weiß" ("Even if the most trustworthy of men assures me that he knows things are thus and so, this by itself cannot satisfy me that he does know", Ludwig Wittgenstein, On Certainty, § 137, cf. note 21 below)

ticular purpose. In 1949 Wittgenstein visited his friend and former student Norman Malcolm at Cornell University (Ithaca, NY). The material gathered in MS 144 was apparently meant to serve as readings for Malcolm and his students. It is essen-

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[11] David G. Stern, *Wittgenstein's* Philosophical Investigations: *An Introduction*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 167.

tial not to interpret MS 144 from the perspective of the *Philosophical Investigations*, "Part I", but to regard it, on the contrary, as an independent essay in which Wittgenstein, returning to ideas he had put forward in the *Blue Book* and the *Brown Book*, so to speak once more made public his strategy aiming at the elaboration of a common-sense philosophy of pictures. I will come back to MS 144 in section 9 of the present chapter.

4. What *Is* Common-Sense Philosophy?

The term "common sense" has a rich and varied philosophical pre-history, beginning with Aristotle, continuing with the Romans, then taken up by Descartes and others in early-modern Europe. In the overlapping senses allotted to this term in the 18th century by Thomas Reid – certainly the central figure in the history of common-sense philosophy – it means both the healthy judgment of the common man, and the views commonly shared by all mankind. Wittgenstein uses the expression "gesunder Menschenverstand" (healthy human understanding) as the German equivalent to the English term "common sense".[12] Wittgenstein does not seem to have read Reid, but when one thinks of

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[12] David G. Stern, *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 28.

his decades-long working relationship with G. E. Moore[13] it is difficult to imagine that he was entirely unfamiliar with Reid's ideas. Be that as it may, the later Wittgenstein's formulations and arguments often display striking, and enlightening, parallels with those of Reid. Indeed some years ago Wolterstorff could go as far as suggesting that on the topic of common sense "it was impossible to understand what Reid was trying to say until *On Certainty* was published".[14]

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[13] Importantly from our present point of view, Moore attended Wittgenstein's Cambridge lectures between 1930 and 1933. For a full account, see *Wittgenstein: Lectures, Cambridge 1930–1933* (cf. note 7 above).

[14] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Thomas Reid and the Story of Epistemology*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 232. – Wittgenstein is taken to be a common-sense realist "in some relevant aspects of [his] thinking" by Mario De Caro, cf. his "Realism, Common Sense, and Science", *The Monist*, vol. 98, no. 2 (April 2015), p. 200. More hesitant was William Child, in his "Wittgenstein and Common-Sense Realism", *Facta Philosophica* 2, 2000, pp. 179–202. "Is Wittgenstein … a common-sense realist? There is", Child wrote, "a real tension in his position. The common-sense realist interpretation fits with much of what he says. But some of his writings clearly express a much less common-sense view." And there clearly are, Child stresses, difficult questions that "have to be addressed if common-sense realism is, ultimately, to be a satisfactory position and a satisfactory reading of Wittgenstein". The

Reid as well as Moore tended to hold that common-sense truths were so to speak timeless, not open to revision by science.[15] Wittgenstein, it can be argued, had a rather more differentiated view.[16] And there is a crucial issue where according to the generally accepted view the position of the later Wittgenstein is definitely different from that of Reid and Moore: the issue of realism. Reid and Moore were common-sense realists, as common-sense philosophers can obviously expected to be. The later Wittgenstein however is almost universally interpreted as a relativist, in recent years

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present chapter is a partial attempt to answer some of those difficult questions.

[15] See John King-Farlow, "'Common Sense' and 'Certainty': Earlier Moore, Later Moore, and Later Wittgenstein", *Philosophical Investigations*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1980), p. 80; Avrum Stroll, *Moore and Wittgenstein on Certainty*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 15; and John Coates, *The Claims of Common Sense: Moore, Wittgenstein, Keynes and the Social Sciences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 53.

[16] See e.g. Annalisa Coliva, *Moore and Wittgenstein: Scepticism, Certainty, and Common Sense*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 190 ff. That Wittgenstein might have thought common sense to be revisable by *philosophy* is the challenging thesis of Renia Gasparatou, in her "Moore and Wittgenstein on Common Sense", *Philosophical Inquiry*, vol. 31, nos. 3–4 (2009), pp. 65–75.

indeed as a social constructivist. I suggest that is a false interpretation.

5. Wittgenstein a Social Constructivist?

In his book *Fear of Knowledge: Against Relativism and Constructivism*, Paul Boghossian contests the postmodern relativist doctrine of "equal validity", that is the thesis that "[t]here are many radically different, yet 'equally valid' ways of knowing the world, with science being just one of them"[17]. In the background of this thesis Boghossian detects the "social dependence conception of knowledge", the most influential version of which today is the idea of "social construction". As Boghossian puts it: "All knowledge, it is said, is socially dependent because all knowledge is socially constructed." Also, as Boghossian later adds: "The social construction theorist ... wants to emphasize the contingency of the facts we have constructed, to show that they needn't have obtained had we chosen otherwise."[18]

Boghossian notes that social constructivist ideas have received support even from analytic

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[17] Paul A. Boghossian, *Fear of Knowledge: Against Relativism and Constructivism*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006, p. 2.
[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 6 f. and 18.

philosophers: "one could cite a sizeable propor-
tion of that tradition's most prominent philoso-
phers in their defense – Ludwig Wittgenstein,
Rudolf Carnap, Richard Rorty, Thomas Kuhn,
Hilary Putnam and Nelson Goodman, just for ex-
ample".[19] Here I disagree. As I will attempt to
show in this chapter, Wittgenstein does not be-
lieve that it is in our power to choose what facts
should there obtain in the world.

6. Common-Sense Realism
   in *The Blue Book*

Any analysis of Wittgenstein's discussion of Moore
in the notes posthumously published as *On Cer-
tainty* must remain incomplete if not conducted
before the background of the *Blue Book* passages
on common-sense philosophy.[20] Wittgenstein's ex-
tended and ramified argument there begins on p.
43, with the reminder: "The scrutiny of the gram-
mar of a word weakens the position of certain
fixed standards of our expression which had pre-
vented us from seeing facts with unbiassed eyes.
Our investigation tried to remove this bias, which
forces us to think that the facts *must* conform to

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[19] *Ibid.*, p. 7.
[20] Coliva (cf. note 16 above) manages not even to mention
the *Blue Book*.

certain pictures embedded in our language."[21] On pp. 44–45 Wittgenstein adds that there are "a host of philosophical difficulties which threaten to break up all our commonsense notions about what we should commonly call the objects of our experience. ... We are tempted to think that in order to clear up such matters philosophically our ordinary language is too coarse, that we need a more subtle one." The adjective "philosophical" here refers to the traditional way of doing philosophy, a way of thinking misled by the surface grammar of ordinary language. On the other hand, philosophy – the right kind of philosophy, the philosophical therapy Wittgenstein wishes to pursue – aims to dissolve the puzzles philosophers were hitherto confused by. Note that while Wittgenstein apparently wants to vindicate our "commonsense notions", he sees the very language in which those notions are at home, namely ordinary language, to be a source of philosophical puzzlement: our language is, again and again, tempting us to draw some misleading analogies (cf. p. 48).

On p. 45 Wittgenstein arrives at a crucial point in his argument. He provides "a kind of parable illustrating the difficulty we are in, and also

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[21] Page number references in the main text of the present section are to the 1958 edition of *The Blue and Brown Books* (cf. note 3 above).

showing the way out of this sort of difficulty: We have been told by popular scientists that the floor on which we stand is not solid, as it appears to common sense, as it has been discovered that the wood consists of particles filling space so thinly that it can almost be called empty. This is liable to perplex us", but it should not, since "[t]o say ... that the floor is not solid is to misuse language". Wittgenstein returns to this point on p. 48, explaining that just as the popular scientist tends to misuse language, so does, say, the philosophical idealist or solipsist as well. But so does, too, ultimately, the *common-sense philosopher* – we can assume it was Moore Wittgenstein had in mind here. The "common-sense man", continues Wittgenstein, "is as far from realism as from idealism". By contrast, the common-sense philosopher is a realist, but "the trouble with the realist is always that he does not solve but skip the difficulties which his adversaries see, though they too don't succeed in solving them". The common-sense realist philosopher, too, is misled by the surface grammar of ordinary language. And so this is how Wittgenstein will, on pp. 58–59, sum up his argument: "There is no common sense answer to a philosophical problem. One can defend common sense against the attacks of philosophers only by solving their puzzles, i.e., by curing them of the temptation to attack common sense; not by restat-

ing the views of common sense. A philosopher is
not a man out of his senses, a man who doesn't
see what everybody sees; nor on the other hand is
his disagreement with common sense that of the
scientist disagreeing with the coarse views of the
man in the street."

7. Common-Sense Realism in *On Certainty*

The only place the term "common sense" (and
the corresponding German "gesunder Menschen-
verstand") occurs in *On Certainty*, is in the edi-
tors' "Preface".[22] Wittgenstein in his notes uses the
expressions "vernünftiger Mensch" ("reasonable
man", "reasonable person") and – just once – "ge-
wöhnlicher Mensch" ("ordinary man", rendered
by the translators as "normal person"). As the
"Preface" puts it, Malcolm, in 1949, in Ithaca,
"acted as a goad to [Wittgenstein's] interest in
Moore's 'defence of common sense', that is to say
his claim to know a number of propositions for
sure, such as 'Here is one hand, and here is an-

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[22] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Über Gewißheit / On Certainty*,
edited by G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright,
Engl. transl. by Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe, Ox-
ford: Basil Blackwell, 1969. – It has to be stressed that nei-
ther the edited notes *On Certainty*, nor the parallel *Re-
marks on Colour* can be regarded as publications by Witt-
genstein in any straightforward sense.

other', and 'The earth existed for a long time before my birth', and 'I have never been far from the earth's surface'. The first of these comes in Moore's 'Proof of the External World'. The two others are in his 'Defence of Common Sense'; Wittgenstein had long been interested in these and had said to Moore that this was his best article. Moore had agreed." Personally, I find the 1939 "Proof of an External World" essay more sophisticated than the 1925 "A Defence of Common Sense" one, with this crucial passage particularly penetrating from a visual point of view: "I can prove now, for instance, that two human hands exist. How? By holding up my two hands, and saying, as I make a certain gesture with the right hand, 'Here is one hand', and adding, as I make a certain gesture with the left, 'and here is another'. ... the proof which I gave was a perfectly rigorous one... ... the premiss ... I expressed by showing you my hands, making certain gestures, and saying the words 'here is one hand, and here is another'."[23]

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[23] G. E. Moore, "Proof of an External World" (1939), repr. in G. E. Moore, *Philosophical Papers*, New York: Collier Books, 1962, pp. 144 f.

7.1. Wittgenstein on Moore

Towards the end of his life, Wittgenstein jotted down: "Haven't I gone wrong and isn't Moore perfectly right? Haven't I made the elementary mistake of confusing one's thoughts with one's knowledge? Of course I do not think to myself 'The earth already existed for some time before my birth', but do I *know* it any the less? Don't I show that I know it by always drawing its consequences?"[24] The doubts here voiced by Wittgenstein refer to one of the main points he raises in criticising Moore: the latter misuses language when he says he "knows" certain basic facts. Another main line of criticism formulated by Wittgenstein is that Moore is wrong to single out particular propositions when looking for the foundations of our knowledge. It is, stresses Wittgenstein, a *system* of propositions we adhere to, though some of these propositions do play a central role (are the hinges on which the system turns: "The *truth* of certain empirical propositions belongs to our frame of reference", *On Certainty*, § 83); the system is rooted in our *practice*, our form of life.

Still, even if using arguments very different from those of Moore, Wittgenstein arrived at sim-

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[24] *On Certainty*, § 397, entered on March 18, 1951.

ilar conclusions. He agreed with Moore that doubt must have its limits: "Doubting and non-doubting behaviour. There is the first only if there is the second" (§ 354). And: "absence of doubt belongs to the essence of the language-game" (§ 370). Also: "If you are not certain of any fact, you cannot be certain of the meaning of your words either" (§ 114). There are statements of doubt which one just cannot make significantly (cf. § 76).

7.2. Boghossian on *On Certainty*

In his *Fear of Knowledge*, Boghossian quotes Richard Rorty quoting Wittgenstein. Rorty, writes Boghossian, "echoes Wittgenstein who says in his *On Certainty*: '611. Where two principles really do meet which cannot be reconciled with one another, then each man declares the other a fool and a heretic.' He insists, however, that all this rhetorical heat simply covers up the fact that there is no system-independent fact in virtue of which one epistemic system could be said to be more correct than any other."[25] Rorty insists, that is, that relativism is the correct position to hold, and that Wittgenstein was a relativist. Boghossian, who then goes on to discuss *On Certainty*,[26] apparently

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[25] Boghossian, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 70, 78, 80.

agrees with this characterization of Wittgenstein; indeed, as we saw, he takes him to be a social constructivist. Now Wittgenstein might have had bouts of relativism, especially in some of the passages that have found their way into Part I of the *Philosophical Investigations*, but he was at no stage a constructivist. As Boghossian sees the matter, the social constructivist essentially maintains that the facts we have constructed "needn't have obtained had we chosen otherwise".[27] Let me say that this is not what Wittgenstein has basically maintained. His position is succinctly summed up in one of his last notes: "Certain events would put me into a position in which I could not go on with the old language-game any further. In which I was torn away from the sureness of the game. – Indeed, doesn't it seem obvious that the possibility of a language-game is conditioned by certain facts?"[28]

8. Common-Sense Philosophy in the *Philosophical Investigations*

Passages parallel to the one just quoted from *On Certainty* do occasionally occur in Part I of the *Philosophical Investigations*. For instance in § 142:

[27] Cf. note 17 above.
[28] *On Certainty*, § 617.

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"if things were quite different from what they actually are ...; if rule became exception, and exception rule ... our normal language-games would thereby lose their point"[29], see also the insertion here: "What we have to mention in order to explain the significance, I mean the importance, of a concept are often extremely general facts of nature: such facts as are hardly ever mentioned because of their great generality".[30] Surely a remark suggesting realism, rather than relativism. Or take the similar reference to "measuring" in § 242: "It is not only agreement in definitions, but also (odd as it may sound) agreement in judgements that is required for communication by means of language. This seems to abolish logic, but does not do so. – It is one thing to describe methods of measurement, and another to obtain and state results of measurement. But what we call 'measuring' is in part determined by a certain constancy in results of measurement".[31] However, there might

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[29] § 142 – source: TS 227a, 1944–45. Throughout in the present section I rely on the Hacker–Schulte edition.

[30] Proximate source: TS 228, 1945 or 46.

[31] Manuscript source: MS 129, p. 128, 1944. – Wittgenstein's reference to "agreement in judgements" might easily call to mind Thomas Reid: "Common sense is that degree of judgment which is common to men with whom we can converse and transact business. ... common sense should mean common judgment", *Essays on the Intellec-*

indeed be an inkling of relativism in the foregoing paragraph: " 'So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?' – What is true or false is what human beings *say*; and it is in their *language* that human beings agree. This is agreement not in opinions, but rather in form of life."[32] Two other, comparable, passages: "What people accept as a justification shows how they think and live."[33] And: "Justification by experience comes to an end."[34]

In the *Philosophical Investigations* it is direct and indirect references to "ordinary language" ("gewöhnliche Sprache") that take the role of references to common sense. I am here citing some of the most oft-quoted passages from the later Wittgenstein's most often quoted work: "philosophical problems arise when language *goes on holiday*" (§ 38 – manuscript source: MS 142, p. 33, Nov.–Dec. 1936) – "It was correct that our considerations must not be scientific ones. ... Philosophy is a struggle against the bewitchment of our understanding by the resources of our lan-

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tual Powers of Man* (1785), here quoted from the 2002 critical edition, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, pp. 424 and 427.

[32] *Philosophical Investigations*, § 241 – manuscript source: MS 129, p. 35, 1944.

[33] *Ibid.*, § 325 – manuscript source: MS 130, p. 9, 1946.

[34] *Ibid.*, § 485 – manuscript source: MS 115, p. 100, 1933.

guage" (§ 109 – manuscript source: MS 142, p. 102, Nov.–Dec. 1936). – "A simile that has been absorbed into the forms of our language produces a false appearance which disquiets us" (§ 112 – manuscript source: MS 142, p. 106, Nov.–Dec. 1936). – "[T]he language of every day. So is this language too coarse, too material, for what we want to say? *Well then, how is another one to be constructed*?" (§ 120 – final source: TS 227b, p. 86a, 1944–45) – "Philosophy must not interfere in any way with the actual use of language, so it can in the end only describe it" (§ 124 – manuscript source: MS 110, p. 188, 1931). – "The philosopher treats a question; like an illness" (§ 255 – manuscript source: MS 116, p. 323, 1945). – "What looks like an explanation here ... in truth just exchanges one way of talking for another which, while we are doing philosophy, seems to us the more apt" (§ 303 – manuscript source: MS 227a, p. 188, 1944–45). Throughout, Wittgenstein continues to use the word "philosophy" in two different, contrasting senses: in the sense of systematically confused thinking misled by the grammar of language; and in the sense of philosophical therapy redeeming us from our linguistic confusions – common-sense philosophy in a tenable sense of the word.

As I suggested above by way of introduction, and alluded to again in section 6, the later

Wittgenstein did not succeed in overcoming a manifest tension in his thought: on the one hand he clearly took it for granted that ordinary language is primordially literal, lacking metaphorical extensions; on the other hand he saw that our language indeed abounds in similes, images, expressions with transposed meanings. What Wittgenstein did not succeed coming to terms with in the context either of the *Blue Book* or of TS 227 was the problem of metaphor.[35] And the ultimate reason for his not being able to come to grips with the problem of metaphor was that in these contexts he did not succeed in making a proper connection between the visual – the image – and the verbal – the text. In a string of intriguing passages in the *Philosophical Investigations* (§§ 422–24), Wittgenstein discusses the "picture" – the simile – of the human soul: "What do I believe in when I believe that man has a soul? ... there is a picture in the foreground, but the sense lies far in the background; that is, the application of the picture is not easy to survey. ... The picture is there; and I do not dispute its *correctness.* But *what* is its application? Think of the picture of blindness as a darkness in the mind or in the head of a blind person." In one of the manuscript sources of the

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[35] See my essay "Image and Metaphor in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein", cf. note 2 above.

last passage here (MS 116, p. 325, May 1944) Wittgenstein actually adds a drawing to illustrate this picture (see Figure 4). A telling move, one however ultimately not influencing the results achieved – or rather not achieved – in TS 227.
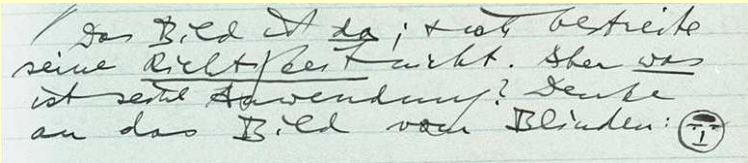

Figure 4: "*Das Bild ist* da; *ich bestreite seine* Richtigkeit *nicht. Aber* was *ist seine Anwendung? Denke an das Bild vom Blinden...*"

9. Common-Sense Realism in MS 144

A successful philosophical strategy for common-sense realism, the only realism worthy of the name, is not feasible without a commitment to the essential cognitive role of the visual, and I think that MS 144 offers useful pointers for such a strategy. Especially what has been for more than half a century referred to as "*Philosophical Investigations*, Part II, section xii",[36] offers a uniquely felicitous point of departure for the argument that the Wittgenstein of the late 1940s indeed tended

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[36] Cf. note 8 above.

to be a realist philosopher. In section xii – or, properly speaking, on that loose sheet of three paragraphs in manuscript MS 144 – Wittgenstein in the first paragraph begins by writing of "facts of nature", "very general facts of nature", facts that "mostly do not strike us because of their generality". Wittgenstein is definitely implying that there *are* facts of nature (significantly, in the second paragraph, in the phrase "such-and-such facts of nature", the expression "such-and-such" is an inserted addition by him), and in the third paragraph ends by comparing concepts to styles of painting (*Malweisen*), suggesting that our given "style of painting" is not arbitrary: "Can we choose one at pleasure? (The Egyptian, for instance.)"[37] Crying out to be seen side by side with sect. xii are two passages from sect. xi. The first one is where Wittgenstein says that it is singularly natural to us "to represent what we see three-dimensionally, whereas special practice and instruction are needed for two-dimensional representation, whether in

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[37] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), 2nd ed., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958, transl. by G. E. M. Anscombe, p. 230e, compare the Hacker–Schulte edition, §§ 365–367 (cf. note 9 above). I will from this point on in the present chapter refer to MS 144 as *PPF* (Philosophy of Psychology – A Fragment"), giving the page number of the 2nd edition of *Philosophical Investigations* and the paragraph number of the Hacker–Schulte edition.

drawing or in words. (The oddity of children's drawings.)"[38] The second one is preceded by Wittgenstein's observation (an observation he repeatedly makes in MS 144) that there are pictorial meanings we grasp without having to interpret them, pictures we react to *directly*. "Could I say", Wittgenstein then asks, "what a picture must be like to produce this effect? No. There are, for example, styles of painting which do not convey anything to me in this immediate way, but do to other people. I think custom and upbringing have a hand in this" (*PPF*, p. 201e / § 168). To this passage let me add a third one, a notebook entry composed some two years earlier. Hypothesizing about some possible ways a tribe imagined by him might think, Wittgenstein writes: "To this people certain gestures, certain images, & so also certain words, are natural. And some of this is tradition, some are / original / reactions which were not (or at least not directly) given rise to / caused / by the

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[38] Cf. *PPF*, p. 198e / § 148. Wittgenstein's "Es ist uns einzig natürlich" is correctly translated by Anscombe as "The only thing that is natural to us", the Hacker–Schulte version "It is altogether natural to us" appears to me as aiming to make Wittgenstein's at first sight quite baffling assertion less difficult to swallow. Further below I will argue that seen in context, the assertion is not at all baffling. Anscombe had "queerness" for "*Sonderbarkeit*", I think Hacker–Schulte's "oddity" is the better choice.

influencing of the child on the part of the adults".[39] Gestures and images are primary – natural – carriers of meaning, some of our core vocabulary derives from them, but handed-down conventions still do have a bearing on how we use those gestures and images.

10. Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Pictures

Wittgenstein was a visual thinker both in the sense that he had a visual mind, with a gift for similes as well as an aptitude for thinking in images and a talent for committing those images to paper, and in the sense that, especially in his later years, he strived to gain a philosophical understanding of visual thinking, of how words, images, and emotions intertwine, of pictorial meaning and pictorial communication. He did not succeed in giving a finished account of, or in any way rounding off, his philosophy of pictures, but it is in MS 144 he came closest to doing so. MS 144 takes up a train of thought Wittgenstein first embarked upon in *The Blue Book* and *The Brown Book*, and the three works, as I have indicated earlier in this chapter, should indeed be studied together. An important further piece we should take into ac-

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[39] The words "on the part of the adults" crossed out. MS 133, p. 41r, entered on Nov. 17, 1946. My translation.

count here is the edited text of Wittgenstein's 1939 lectures on the foundations of mathematics. In these lectures Wittgenstein again and again points out, as he of course does in the early parts of the *Philosophical Investigations*, too, that the meaning a given picture has for us is not independent of the way we are customarily *using* that picture. However, in the 1939 lectures Wittgenstein seems to lay greater stress than he does in the *Investigations* on the fact that human beings display an overwhelming uniformity in how they generally use and understand pictures.[40] The reason for this uniformity, Wittgenstein appears to imply here, as he did already in *The Brown Book,* is that pictures characteristically have an unmediated effect on us. This is the implication he then spells out in MS 144. Let me refer to just some of the most significant passages. Wittgenstein introduces the concepts "picture-object" and "picture-face", giving a drawing of the latter (Figure 5), and writing: "In some respects I stand towards it as I do towards a human face. I can study

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[40] *Wittgenstein's Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics – Cambridge, 1939,* ed. by Cora Diamond, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976, cf. e.g. pp. 81, 182, 194.

Figure 5: "picture-face"

its expression, can react to it as to the expression
of the human face. A child can talk to picture-
men or picture-animals, can treat them as it treats
dolls."[41] Some pages later Wittgenstein asks:
"When I see the picture of a galloping horse – do
I merely *know* that this is the kind of movement
meant? Is it superstition to think I *see* the horse
galloping in the picture?"[42] A related remark:
"When should I call it just knowing, not seeing? –
Perhaps when someone treats the picture as a
working drawing, *reads* it like a blueprint."[43] Blue-
prints are *interpreted,* as it were read, but when it
comes to paintings or photographs, we *view* them

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[41] *PPF,* p. 194e / § 119, Hacker–Schulte has "engage with
it" for "ich verhalte mich zu ihm".

[42] *PPF,* p. 202e / § 175, Hacker–Schulte is right in chang-
ing Anscombe's "merely" to "only", the German expres-
sion is "nur".

[43] *PPF,* p. 204e / § 192, Hacker–Schulte translation.

"as the object itself (the man, landscape, and so on) depicted there".[44]

A fundamental idea Wittgenstein strives to convey in MS 144 is that for pictures to have a direct effect on us we have to be as it were prompted by them to respond with immediate gestures and facial expressions. "If someone sees a smile and does not recognize it as a smile, does not understand it as such, does he see it differently from someone who understands it? – He mimics it differently, for instance."[45] The same point made in a more radical way, in the next remark: "Hold the drawing of a face upside down and you can't recognize the expression of the face. Perhaps you can see that it is smiling, but not exactly what *kind* of smile it is. You cannot imitate the smile or describe it more exactly. – And yet", Wittgenstein emphasizes, "the picture which you have turned round may be a most exact representation of a person's face" (*PPF*, p. 198e, § 150). These two remarks are preceded by a passage

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[44] *PPF*, p. 205e / § 197, Anscombe translation. Wittgenstein in the next paragraph adds that this "need not have been so. We could easily imagine people who did not have this attitude to such pictures. Who, for example, would be repelled by photographs, because a face without colour, and even perhaps a face reduced in scale, struck them as inhuman."

[45] *PPF*, p. 198e / § 149, Hacker–Schulte translation.

from which, in section 9 above, I have already quoted the concluding lines on the naturalness of three-dimensional representation. And this is the way the passage begins: "How does one tell that human beings *see* three-dimensionally? – I ask someone about the lie of the land (over there) of which he has a view. "Is it like *this*?" (I show him with my hand)" (*PPF*, 198e / § 148). The three-dimensional representation Wittgenstein here talks about is, then, a represention by gestures, and it is obviously true that our gestures – many of them spontaneous and natural, some conventional and acquired – occur in three-dimensional space. By contrast, drawing in two dimensions requires special practice.

Not all drawing happens in two dimensions. Early in MS 144 Wittgenstein touches on the problem of pictorial likeness, mental image, and imagination, and asks: "Suppose that while imagining, or instead of imagining, someone were to draw, even if only in the air with his finger. (This might be called 'motor imagery'.)"[46] Now let us recall that mental imagery, the "motor sense", and even the significance of drawing in the air, have

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[46] *PPF*, p. 177e / § 18, Hacker–Schulte translation.

been central topics for Francis Galton,[47] a half-cousin and early advocate of Darwin. Wittgenstein's writings and lectures contain references to Galton, to Darwin's theory of emotions and facial expressions, and he frequently refers to William James, who in his 1890 *The Principles of Psychology* of course discussed in detail Galton and the issue of the motor dimension. The themes of motor experience and motor activity were important ones for I. A. Richards, a significant figure in Wittgenstein's life. Wittgenstein refers to Richards several times in his manuscripts.[48] He also mentions him in a class he gave in 1938.[49] In the same class he said: "I remember walking in the street and saying: 'I am now walking exactly like Russell.' You might say it was a kinesthetic sensation.

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[47] Cf. Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development*, 1883, 2nd ed. 1907 (London: J. M. Dent & Co.).

[48] An entry from Dec. 23, 1947: "I. A. Richards spricht davon, daß beim Verstehen eines Satzes die Bewegungsempfindungen, keimender Bewegungen, ja vielleicht die Vorstellungen solcher Empfindungen eine Rolle spielen" (MS 136, p. 24b).

[49] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief,* edited by Cyril Barrett (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 37.

Very queer. – A person who imitates another's face doesn't do it before a mirror".[50]

11. Realism and Drawing

It is in acts of drawing that the pictorial and the motor most obviously meet. MS 144 has numerous references to drawing, several of them I have already quoted here. Let me list some others. Early in the manuscript Wittgenstein suggests that it is possible for one "to visualize a face, and even to draw it", without one's knowing whose face it is or where one has seen it[51] – the implication being that drawing is a particularly robust way of visual recall. Meditating on the use of the word "see", and on what it means to see a likeness in two faces, Wittgenstein writes that "one man might make an accurate drawing of the two faces", and another "notice in the drawing the likeness which the former did not see" (*PPF*, 193e / §§ 111 f.). An accurate drawing preserves objective similarities. Some pages later we are given the example of a case where someone might not be able to properly describe an "unfamiliar shape", yet still draw it (*PPF*, p. 197e / § 142). Drawings can come to grips with reality where words fail. On the other

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[50] *Ibid.*, p. 39.
[51] *PPF*, 177e / § 17, Hacker–Schulte translation.

hand there are drawings we need words, practice, and training to be able to interpret. Such are, for instance, drawings in descriptive geometry. These we do not see, at first, three-dimensionally. "What convinces us that someone is seeing the drawing three-dimensionally", Wittgenstein remarks, "is a certain kind of 'knowing one's way about': certain gestures, for instance, which indicate the three-dimensional relations – fine shades of behaviour."[52]

Clearly, we are back at the issue of styles of representation. Recall that Wittgenstein does indeed allow for, say, styles of painting which, as he puts it, do not directly convey meaning to him, although they do for people of different upbringing, or for members of other cultures. However, he does not at all regard these different styles as having an equal degree of practical usefulness. Let me here quote a remark written by Wittgenstein some four years earlier: "So drawing could help a man to correctly remember an event. Or the picture of a church, to remember the details of another church by helping us to see how it deviated from the picture. Or the picture of an event, to remember how it really happened; because he now sees how the real event differed from the pic-

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[52] *PPF*, 203e / § 180, Hacker–Schulte translation.

ture."[53] Neither the peculiar representational style of the Egyptians, nor those odd drawings by children, meet the realist demand Wittgenstein makes when it comes to pictures.

As a former elementary school teacher, Wittgenstein obviously had some experience with, and was in a position to form a judgement on, children's drawings, and his judgement seems to have been very much in accordance with the views generally held at the time.[54] Those views are still today influential, but not anymore dominant. Ru-

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[53] "So könnte Zeichnen einem Menschen helfen, sich richtig an eine Begebenheit zu erinnern. Oder das Bild einer Kirche, sich an die Einzelheiten einer andern Kirche zu erinnern, indem es uns hilft, zu sehen, wie sie von dem Bild abwich. Oder das Bild der Begebenheit dazu, sich zu erinnern, wie es sich wirklich zugetragen hatte; indem er nun sieht, wie sich die wirkliche Begebenheit von dem Bild unterschied." (MS 116, p. 338, remark entered in May 1945 or shortly after. Pages 116–147 of MS 116 contain a good many passages which occur towards the end of *Philosophical Investigations*, "Part I". The remark I here quote is not one of them, and is crossed out in the manuscript.)

[54] The literature on children's drawing is fascinating, and of course entirely vast. An excellent summary and analysis is Ellen Winner's chapter in the *Handbook of Child Psychology*, 6th edition, vol. 2, ed. by Deanna Kuhn and Robert Siegler, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2006, see pp. 859–881.

dolf Arnheim, in his seminal 1954 book *Art and Visual Perception*,[55] argued that both children's drawings and, notably, Egyptian art, are not failed attempts at realism but successful solutions to problems of depicting a three-dimensional world on a flat surface. Cubism is widely regarded as a similar attempt. Within the Wittgenstein community, Jaakko Hintikka, in a brilliant 1972 paper,[56] took up and broadened the interpretation of cubism as a quest for realism. In 1987, discussing the notions of language games and family resemblance, Baruch Blich wrote: "Unless we could ... apply words to pictures, one would not be able to grasp their relevance for reality, and this is true of simple pictures as well as of sophisticated pictures such as caricatures, impressionist paintings, cubist paintings etc."[57] In her 2004 book on *On Certain-*

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[55] Berkeley: University of California Press.

[56] Jaakko Hintikka, "Concept as Vision: On the Problem of Representation in Modern Art and in Modern Philosophy" (originally in Finnish, 1972), in Jaakko Hintikka, *The Intentions of Intentionality and other New Models for Modalities*, Dordrecht: Reidel, 1975. Hintikka quotes Gertrude Stein as quoting Picasso: "I do not paint things the way they look, but the way I know they are."

[57] Baruch Blich, "'Natural Kinds' As a Kind of 'Family Resemblance'", in *Philosophy of Law, Politics and Society*, edited by Ota Weinberger et al. (Proceedings of the 12th International Wittgenstein Symposium, 1987, Vienna:

ty, Danièle Moyal-Sharrock, suggesting a parallel between Wittgenstein's own style of composition on the one hand and cubism on the other, characterizes the latter as a "reordering of the object into a 'strange medley of images' which render more of the 'real' object than any single perspective or orderly representation could".[58]

Now realism in art, and realism in children's drawings, are of course entirely indifferent matters from the point of view of philosophical anti-realism. From the point of view of the philosophical anti-realist, realist art, of whatever variety, can never depict the world as it is, since even if a world in itself should exist, it would be impossible to have an idea of it. But Wittgenstein was not attempting to construct an argument against the anti-realists. He was content to indicate that they were talking nonsense, and to offer them remedy: "The philosopher treats a question; like an illness."[59] On the other hand, what Wittgenstein as a common-sense philosopher indeed had

Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1988), pp. 284–289, the quoted passage on p. 288.

[58] Danièle Moyal-Sharrock, *Understanding Wittgenstein's On Certainty*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 5. In a note here Moyal-Sharrock expresses her indebtedness to Gombrich.

[59] *Philosophical Investigations*, Part I, § 255, Hacker–Schulte translation. Source: MS 116, p. 323 (May 1945).

to show was, first, that common-sense realism did not involve internal contradictions, and secondly, that there are ways in which discoveries in the natural sciences can be made reconcilable with a common-sense view of the world. Here his efforts to demonstrate the feasibility of a realist approach to pictorial meaning were definitely successful.

12. Seeming and Being

In the *Philosophical Investigations* there do occur occasional remarks suggesting a tendency towards philosophical realism (earlier I mentioned §§ 142 and 242). Let us note however that these remarks were all written in, or after, 1944. That is, they are closer in time to the composition of MS 144 than to that of the early parts of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Take a look at §§ 569 f., referring on the one hand to the objective results of measurements, and on the other hand to the partly subjective, but partly also objective status of our concepts:

> Language is an instrument. Its concepts are instruments. Now perhaps one thinks that it can make no *great* difference *which* concepts we employ. As, after all, it is possible to do physics in feet and inches as well as in metres and centimetres; the difference is

merely one of convenience. But even this is not true if, for instance, calculations in some system of measurement demand more time and trouble than we can afford. – Concepts lead us to make investigations. They are the expression of our interest and direct our interest.[60]

Let us cast one more concluding glance at Part II of the *Philosophical Investigations*, that is at MS 144. Wittgenstein regards it as an obvious philosophical error when someone "tries to explain the concept of a physical object in terms of 'what is really seen' " (*PPF*, p. 200e / § 161). This is the error phenomenologists of course regularly make. Wittgenstein's common-sense realist point is that people learn, necessarily, to handle, and to refer to, physical objects first, and only later come to talk about visual impressions. One should then, Wittgenstein implies, not pretend that seeming is as it were prior to being. "Rather", Wittgenstein here continues, "the everyday language-game is to be *accepted*, and *false* accounts of it characterized *as* false. The primitive language-game which children are instructed in needs no justification; at-

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[60] Source: MS 116, p. 315, probably 1944, cf. Georg Henrik von Wright, "The Wittgenstein Papers" (1969), rev. repr. in G. H. von Wright, *Wittgenstein*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982, p. 51.

tempts at justification need to be rejected." *The everyday language-game is to be accepted* – in a different context this pronouncement might have suggested a relativist attitude. As it here stands, it is a plea for realism. At the same time, let me note, it expresses a kind of social conservatism, as does also, more markedly, the dictum: "What has to be accepted, the given, is – one might say – *forms of life.*"[61] As quite often in the history of ideas, in Wittgenstein's case, too, philosophical realism and social conservatism go together.[62]

Wittgenstein returns to the problem of seeming and being in the notes which have been published under the title *Remarks on Colour.*[63] These notes have been written during the last two years of Wittgenstein's life (together with the notes published as *On Certainty*). Coming to the end of the present chapter, let me quote from them four consecutive paragraphs:

> Because it seems so to me – or to every-
> body – it does not follow that it *is* so. –

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[61] *PPF*, p. 226e / § 345.

[62] This will be my main topic in chapter III of the present volume.

[63] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Colour*, ed. by G. E. M. Anscombe, translated by Linda L. McAlister and Margarete Schättle. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Therefore: From the fact that this table seems brown to everyone, it does not follow that it is brown. But just what does it mean to say, "This table isn't really brown after all"? – So *does* it then follow from its appearing brown to us, that it is brown? – Don't we just *call* brown the table which under certain circumstances appears brown to the normal-sighted? We could certainly conceive of someone to whom things seemed sometimes this colour and sometimes that, independently of the colour they are. – That it seems so to men is their criterion for its *being* so. – Being and seeming may, of course, be independent of one another in exceptional cases, but that doesn't make them logically independent; the language-game does not reside in the exception.[64]

When Wittgenstein here writes that men take *seeming* as the criterion for *being*, he does not at all suggest that people are as it were making a mistake. On the contrary, he assumes the stance of the common-sense realist: the world, generally, is what it seems, and if scientists tell us that it is

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[64] *Remarks on Colour*, Part III, §§ 96–99. Manuscript source: MS 173, pp. 22r–23r, entered on March 30, 1950, or shortly after.

different from what it seems, philosophy should explain in what way they, the scientists, deviate from ordinary linguistic use. Some paragraphs later Wittgenstein makes the remark: "But I have kept on saying that it's conceivable for our concepts to be different than they are. Was that all nonsense?"[65] Surely it was not all nonsense. But it was a view Wittgenstein often exaggerated. In MS 144, and in the notes he has subsequently written, he came close to recognizing the limits of that view.

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[65] *Remarks on Colour*, Part III, § 124.

II. Towards a Theory
   of Common-Sense Realism

1. The Visual Mind

My aim in this chapter is to outline a specific philosophical strategy for the defense of common-sense realism and the rejection of relativism. The strategy is specific in that it is based on the assumption that the human mind is a visual one – indeed, as I will stress, fundamentally a kinesthetic or motor one. The primary contact we make with reality is not verbally mediated; rather, it is direct, kinesthetic, perceptual, visual.

Now my impression is that the visual approach is still entirely foreign to mainstream philosophy. So let me here begin so to speak at an introductory level. Let me perform, in the reader's virtual presence, an experiment. The task is to count the number of ground-floor level windows in the house I live in. Normally, I could just walk around the house, and count the windows. But if I happen to be away, say giving a conference talk, I cannot do that. What I can do is to close my eyes, *imagine* going round the house, and *mentally* count the windows. Having concluded the experiment, I come up with the number ten. Perhaps I

have made a mistake. If I have, I can, once at home, correct myself by actually walking around and counting. Others are welcome to come to my place and repeat the counting. The result will, perhaps after some initial misunderstandings and explanations, turn out to be the same in every case, and in any conceptual framework. There will be nothing relative about it.

Would the reader be able to perform a similar experiment? Does everyone have vivid mental images? My understanding is that quite a few people claim not to experience such. And of course this is, famously, what Galton learnt in the 1880s, when sending out a questionnaire asking what kind of visual memories the addressee had of his or her breakfast table of that morning. Did they remember the layout of the items on the table? Did they remember colours? It was, mostly, well-educated adult males, having spent a life-time reading and writing, who replied that they had no visual recollections whatsoever, no visual mental images. Galton was baffled, and tried to find a solution to the problem: how do then these people manage to *think* at all? His solution:

> the missing faculty seems to be replaced so serviceably by other modes of conception, chiefly, I believe, connected with the incip-ient motor sense, not of the eyeballs only

but of the muscles generally, that men who declare themselves entirely deficient in the power of seeing mental pictures can nevertheless give life-like descriptions of what they have seen and can otherwise express themselves as if they were gifted with a vivid visual imagination.[1]

Not only in the case of memory images, but more generally, too, there is the motor dimension beneath the visual one. Facial expressions and gestures precede words both in the evolution of mankind and the development of the individual. This is an ancient insight, formulated by Plato already, insisted on also by Thomas Reid, the emblematic figure of common-sense philosophy. Reid was impressed by what he saw as "the natural signs of human thoughts, purposes, and desires...... the natural language of mankind. An infant", Reid wrote, "may be put into a fright by an angry countenance, and soothed again by smiles".[2] This became a great subject for Darwin, too. A topic he was particularly fascinated by was the expression of attitudes such as affirmation and negation. To

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[1] Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development* (1883), 2nd ed., London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1907, p. 61.
[2] Thomas Reid, *Inquiry into the Human Mind, On the Principles of Common Sense*, 1764, 3rd ed. 1769, p. 89.

quote just two brief passages: "[a] man ... who vehemently rejects a proposition, will almost certainly shut his eyes or turn away his face... ... in refusing food, especially if it be pressed on them, children frequently move their heads several times from side to side, as we do in shaking our heads in negation."[3] Some years later Mallery, in his "Sign Language Among North American Indians", described the gesture of "negation ... expressed by the right hand raised toward the shoulder, with the palm opposed to the person to whom response is made. This is the rejection of the idea presented".[4] And let me here add a one-sentence third quote, written a century later by the prominent scientific realist Wilfrid Sellars, in a late paper of his where he as it were stepped back from he linguistic bias so characteristic of his major works: "The concept of *rejection* is more basic than the concept of negation."[5]

Gestures do more than just express attitudes. The art theorist and Gestalt psychologist

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[3] Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, 1872, pp. 32 and 273.
[4] Garrick Mallery, "Sign Language Among North American Indians Compared with that Among Other Peoples and Deaf-Mutes", Washington: Government Printing Office, 1881, p. 290.
[5] Wilfrid Sellars, "Mental Events", *Philosophical Studies* 39 (1981), p. 343.

Rudolf Arnheim in his *Visual Thinking* speaks of "descriptive" gestures,

> those forerunners of line drawing. ... the perceptual qualities of shape and motion are present in the very acts of thinking depicted by the gestures and are in fact the medium in which the thinking itself takes place. These perceptual qualities are not necessarily visual or only visual. In gestures, the kinesthetic experiences of pushing, pulling, advancing, obstructing, are likely to play an important part.[6]

Arnheim's views on visual imagery and the motor have been strongly influenced by the prominent turn-of-the-century American psychologist Titchener. According to the latter, "[m]eaning is, originally, kinaesthesis; the organism faces the situation by some bodily attitude".[7] Words build on imagery, but imagery, Titchener stressed, builds on kinesthesis. Titchener's position was taken up and radicalized by Margaret Washburn. As she

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[6] Rudolf Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969, pp. 117 f.
[7] Edward Bradford Titchener, *Lectures on the Experimental Psychology of the Thought-Processes*, New York: Macmillan, 1909, p. 176.

put it: "the whole of the inner life is correlated with and dependent upon bodily movement".[8]

To round out and sum up: Verbal language emerges from the natural language of facial expressions and gestures, which are movement and image at the same time. Our core vocabulary gains meaning from the visual and motor images it is based on (our extended vocabulary consists of metaphors, but to understand a live metaphor[9] it is necessary to grasp the images it evokes). The human mind is primarily visual and motor. It is not through the mediation of words we make contact with reality, but through direct perception, with visual perception playing the definitive role.

2. Realism vs. Relativism

The sentence I concluded the previous section with amounts to a partial – rudimentary – description of, and argument for, my position: common-sense realism. Now realism – as also anti-realism,

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[8] Margaret Floy Washburn, *Movement and Mental Imagery: Outlines of a Motor Theory of the Complexer Mental Processes*, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916, p. xiii.

[9] On image and metaphor see my volume *Meaning and Motoricity: Essays on Image and Time*, Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 2014, pp. 30, 89, 93 f., 99 f., see also ch. IV, sect. 5 below.

thus also relativism – seems to come in innumerable varieties. Let me here print an oft-visited dia-

gram from the internet,[10] and let me make some comments. First, common-sense realism is mistakenly said to be "naive"; it is a sophisticated philosophical position; the views of the common man in the street do not yet amount to a philosophy of common sense. Secondly, I claim – repeating what I said on p. 25 above – that common-sense realism is the only realism worthy of the name, all oth-
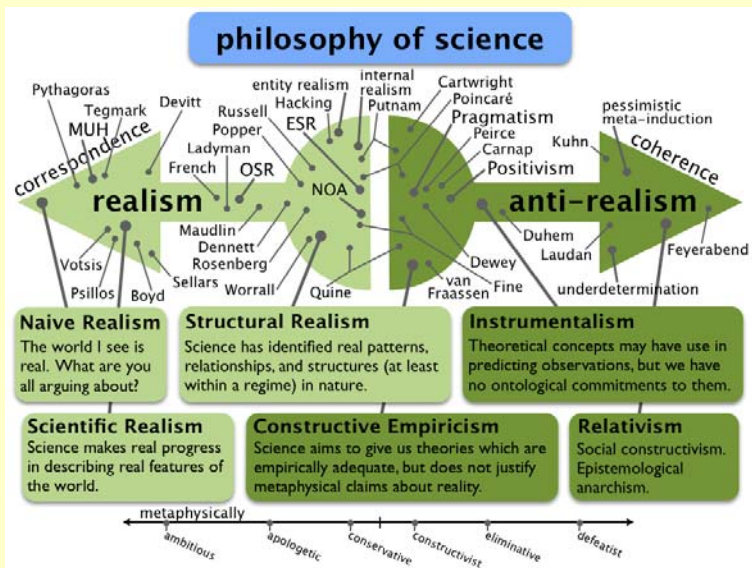
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[10] Find it at: http://philosophy-in-figures.tumblr.com/post/9 2196098591/scientific-realism-vs-anti-realism.

er "realisms" are phoney compromises.[11] Thirdly, I have to point out that non-relativists of course have a hard time understanding the fine distinctions relativists make between varieties of their creed; they find it difficult not to see relativism and social constructivism as belonging to the same continuum; and they believe any relativism, if it goes beyond the obvious, is false.

A relativism clearly going beyond the obvious is "epistemic replacement relativism". In a recent defence of this approach, taking issue with Paul Boghossian, Martin Kusch wrote:

> ... Galileo recognized that facts about motion are relative facts. ... Galileo showed that ... utterances of the form "x moves" are untrue – they are either false or incomplete. Moreover, Galileo also pointed out that the closest truths in the vicinity of these untruths are relational truths of the form *x moves relative to frame of refer-*

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[11] I feel it is particularly important to maintain this when it comes to today's so fashionable "structural realism", see my argument in the chapter "Visualization and the Horizons of Scientific Realism", in my *Meaning and Motoricity* (cf. note 9 above), see esp. p. 33. In the diagram above, ESR stands for "epistemic structural realism", OSR for "ontological structural realism" (and NOA for "natural ontological attitude").

> *ence F.* This makes it natural to suggest that Galileo was asking us to change the way we speak: *replace* the nonrelativized sentences with relativized ones, and assert only the relational propositions. ... Galileo's relativism is the paradigm instance of the template of "replacement relativism".[12]

In his analysis, Kusch suggests the formula: "our epistemic system ... is one of many equally valid epistemic systems". And he makes it clear that this is a formula that actually expresses his own position.

We have here a clear example of what one might call the *linguistic bias in philosophy* – note that people basically do not *speak* about movement, they *see* it and *experience* it. And when – rarely – they *do* experience relative movement (e.g. the railway station seems to be moving in the opposite direction as their train begins to move), they as a rule, sooner or later, discover that they were suffering from an illusion. Enlightened common sense today understands that the Earth's im-

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[12] Martin Kusch, "Epistemic Replacement Relativism Defended" (2006), in Mauricio Suárez, Mauro Dorato and Miklós Rédei, eds., *EPSA Epistemology and Methodology of Science: Launch of the European Philosophy of Science Association*, Dordrecht: Springer, 2010, this passage on p. 165.

mobility is such an illusion. But I wonder if one should convince enlightened common sense to accept relativism. In fact I am sure one should not, because mankind's survival chances would thereby probably diminish. This is an age-old argument, but let me refer here to three more or less recent, important works once again formulating it.

First, to *The Rediscovery of Common Sense Philosophy* by Boulter, stressing that "natural selection favours those organisms whose perceptual systems generate visual perceptions which happen to correspond structurally more closely to that of the environment itself".[13] Secondly, to Lynd Forguson's *Common Sense*, putting forward the "guiding idea" that "the individual members of our species would not get along as successfully as they do on this earth if their common-sense beliefs about the world ... were not for the most part true".[14] And thirdly, there is the devastating paper by Susan Haack, "Reflections on Relativism", beginning with the observation: "'Relativism' refers, not to a single thesis, but to a whole family. Each resembles the others in claiming that something is rela-

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[13] Stephen Boulter, *The Rediscovery of Common Sense Philosophy*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 114.
[14] Lynd Forguson, *Common Sense*, London, Routledge, 1989, p. iv.

tive to something else; each differs from the others in what it claims is relative to what."[15] Haack takes the side of common-sense realism, with a subtle version of her own she calls "innocent realism", holding that "[p]erception is interpretative; but it is also direct".[16]

3. Scientific vs. Common-Sense Realism

What relations do obtain between common sense, common-sense realism, and scientific realism? The world of common sense is that of everyday time and space, of persons, objects, of *observable* entities, perhaps also of God, but on this latter point views begin to differ: William James believed the idea of God to be part of the common-sense world-view, G. E. Moore did not. Also, Moore held that common-sense truths were timeless, not open to revision by the progress of science.[17] Moore's friend Wittgenstein, by contrast, tended to suggest that the task of philosophy was actually to enable common sense to integrate the ever-

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[15] Susan Haack, "Reflections on Relativism: From Momentous Tautology to Seductive Contradiction" (1996), in Haack's *Manifesto of a Passionate Moderate: Unfashionable Essays*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 149.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 161.
[17] Cf. above, ch. I, p. 10.

evolving discoveries of the natural sciences. I understand Wittgenstein as striving to make the seemingly contradictory views of the scientist compatible with "the coarse views of the man in the street".[18]

While the common-sense world is that of observable objects, modern science is positing *unobservable* entities in order to explain the observable world. Scientific realism holds that the unobservable entities posited by science are real. By implication, some or all of the entities of the common-sense world might turn out to be mere appearances. In an encompassing and profound analysis Sellars comes very close to conclude that the scientific image of the world will ultimately supplant the common-sense (the "manifest") one.[19] By contrast, Michael Devitt in his brilliant book *Realism and Truth* argues that "scientific realism does not undermine common-sense realism".[20] He believes that common-sense realism does not need to defend itself by having recourse to opera-

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[18] Cf. above ch. I, p. 15.

[19] Wilfrid Sellars, "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man" (1960), repr. in Wilfrid Sellars, *Science, Perception and Reality*, London: Routledge, 1963, cf. esp. pp. 19, 27, 31 f., 36–39.

[20] Michael Devitt, *Realism and Truth* (1984), 2nd ed. with a new afterword, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 5, cf. pp. 81 f.

tionalism or instrumentalism – to positions maintaining that "unobservables are simply 'useful fictions'". These positions, in Devitt's view, require *observability* to have "an epistemic significance which it cannot have".[21] Now I can agree neither with the main drift of the argument Sellars puts forward, nor with the particular point Devitt makes about instrumentalism. Enlightened common sense should not, and cannot, give up its primacy over science. And I suggest that we are indeed justified in taking some scientific theories to be purely instrumental; however, here our guiding criterion should be *not* observability, but rather *imaginability*. We cannot imagine what we cannot *visualize*. We cannot visualize say quantum theory,[22] or time as the fourth dimension of space. The limits of scientific realism should be drawn at

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[21] *Ibid.*, p. 127.

[22] Devitt concedes that quantum theory is perhaps "not to be trusted at this stage as a guide to reality" (*ibid.*, p. 132), but he does not formulate a general framework within which such a prudent view would naturally emerge. More encompassing and more radical is Haack, whose position I entirely share: "the lay public, philosophers included, should not be too uncritically deferential to scientists' sometimes unwarrantedly confident claims about what they have discovered" (Haack, "Knowledge and Propaganda: Reflections of an Old Feminist" [1993], in her *Manifesto of a Passionate Moderate*, [cf. note 15 above], p. 128).

the point where the possibility of visualization ends.[23]

4. Seeing Is Knowing: Realism Defended

Both "seeing" and "knowing" are words with a wide variety of meanings – the above subtitle is not meant as a well-defined proposition, it is just meant to convey the idea that by looking at the world we are gaining real knowledge of it.[24]

4.1. The Visible World

Our mind is attuned to seeing, because there is a world with visible properties. This common-sense assumption has been analyzed, and corroborated, by an extensive and ramified body of literature. Here I have to restrict myself to just four – carefully chosen – references. The first one is to psy-

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[23] This is the position I argue for in my "Visualization and the Horizons of Scientific Realism" (cf. note 11 above), see esp. pp. 21, 23 f. and 30–33.

[24] A fascinating discussion of the topic "seeing" vs. "knowing" is given by Ernst H. Gombrich in his *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, London: Phaidon Press, 1960, cf. esp. pp. 12–14, 247 and 277 f., on p. 277 (and on p. 357 in the corresponding note) with reference also to Bernard Berenson's notorious book *Seeing and Knowing* (1953).

chologist J. J. Gibson, who in a number of in-
fluential papers and books, from the 1950s on,
formulated a new – he termed it "ecological" –
theory of vision. In his essay "New Reasons for
Realism" he explains that "[t]he structure of an ar-
ray of ambient light from the earth" displays "in-
variants ... specific to the substances of which ob-
jects are composed, to the edges of objects, and to
the layout of their surfaces", adding some pages
later: "The doctrine of secondary qualities comes
from a misunderstanding."[25] My second reference
is to Arnheim once more, in particular to his
formula "The mind cannot give shape to the
shapeless"[26], conveying a basic Gestalt message.
Thirdly, I refer to the important 1995 paper on
common sense by Barry Smith. Elaborating on
Gibson's theory, Smith offers a sustained argu-
ment in favour of the idea that the colours, tones,
shapes, etc. that determine our perceptions and
actions are to be "conceived as qualities of exter-
nal things".[27] And lastly, I come back to Boulter,
whose "transcendental argument for common
sense in the domain of sense perception" again

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[25] J. J. Gibson, "New Reasons for Realism", *Synthese*, vol.
17, no. 2 (1967), pp. 164 and 170.
[26] *Visual Thinking*, p. 90.
[27] Barry Smith, "Formal Ontology, Common Sense and
Cognitive Science", *Int. J. Human–Computer Studies* 43
(1995), pp. 641–667, the quoted passage on p. 647.

builds on Gibson. As Boulter concludes: "An external, *pre-structured* world is the source of the structure found in optic arrays. ... Without a pre-structured world there is no visual perception."[28] Let us draw the threads together. We are justified to regard edges, surfaces, shapes and colours to be objective visible properties of an external world.

4.2. The Visual Road to Realism

A royal road to acquire a grasp of the essential argument for visual realism and against visual relativism is to follow the journey of Gombrich from the first edition of *Art and Illusion* (1960) to his final and devastating critique of Goodman's irrealism, in a talk he gave in 1981.[29] I have provided an overview of that journey in an earlier essay of mine, writing:

> 1972 saw Gombrich's first direct attack on Goodman, the former's main contentions here being that "Goodman appears to

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[28] Stephen Boulter, *The Rediscovery of Common Sense Philosophy* (cf. note 13 above), pp. 107 and 111.
[29] Ernst H. Gombrich, "Image and Code: Scope and Limits of Conventionalism in Pictorial Representation", delivered at a symposium in 1978, published in Wendy Steiner (ed.), *Image and Code*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981.

think that the eye must be strictly station-
ary" whereas "no stationary view can give us
complete information", and also that the
pictorial technique of *perspectival repre-
sentation* reflects something essentially nat-
ural and objective – it does not need to be
learned to be decoded. The second, devas-
tating, attack came six years later, with
Gombrich's paper "Image and Code:
Scope and Limits of Conventionalism in
Pictorial Representation", vindicating the
common-sense idea of pictures as natural
signs, and explicating the controversial con-
cept of *resemblance* by that of *equivalence
of response.* As Gombrich here momen-
tously puts it: "the images of Nature, at any
rate, are not conventional signs, like the
words of human language, but show a real
visual resemblance, not only to our eyes or
our culture but also birds or beasts".[30]

A longer journey is the one beginning with
the first generation of Gestalt psychologists. I will
just quote Wertheimer and Koffka. In 1923
Wertheimer wrote: "Our nervous system develop-
ed under the conditions of the biological environ-
ment; the Gestalt tendencies which were formed

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[30] Kristóf Nyíri, "'Gombrich on Image and Time" (2009),
reprinted as a chapter in my *Meaning and Motoricity* (cf.
note 9 above), pp. 55 f.

in that process do not by a miracle correspond to the regular conditions of the environment..."[31] A related observation by Koffka: "in reality our world is ... not ... a burlesque nightmare; as a rule, things are what they look like, or otherwise expressed, their looks tell us what to do with them, although as ... optical illusion[s] ... show..., perception may be deceptive".[32]

Of the second generation, Arnheim was a leading member. He adhered to the Gestalt school's founding view that experiencing images necessarily involves experiencing the patterns of forces they embody and convey. This applies to the images provided by our physical environment, but also to mental images, as well as to artificial images such as drawings, paintings, photographs and of course films and videos. Discussing memory images, Arnheim called attention to the "[f]orces inherent in the shape itself"; analyzing

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[31] My translation. The original German runs: "Das Nervensystem hat sich unter den Bedingungen der biologischen Umwelt ausgebildet; die Gestalttendenzen, die sich dabei ausgebildet haben, sind nicht wunderbarerweise den regulären Bedingungen der Umgebung entsprechend..." (Max Wertheimer, "Untersuchungen zur Lehre von der Gestalt", Part II, *Psychologische Forschung*, vol. 4, 1923, pp. 336 f.)

[32] Kurt Koffka, *Principles of Gestalt Psychology* (1935), London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955, p. 76.

children's and adult amateurs' drawings, he wrote of the "configurations of forces discerned in the draftsman's world and interpreted in his pictures" and the "constellation of forces that underlies the theme of the picture".[33]

5. Conclusion

In the wake of Arnheim, let me here make two comments which will bring me to the end of this chapter. First, if the images provided by the world around us act like physical forces, then clearly they provide us with direct contact to reality. Secondly, reality can be depicted in various styles (Arnheim very much emphasizes the realism of children's non-naturalistic drawings), contemporary enlightened common sense however does indeed set priorities between those styles, according to the practical task at hand. Children might depict reality in peculiar ways, but we have no reason to suppose that the visual world seems different to them from the way it seems to us. To quote Devitt: "Why does the world seem the way it does? The obvious answer is that the world seems that way because it *is* that way", a correspondence easily explicable "along Darwinian

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[33] *Visual Thinking*, pp. 81, 259 and 262.

lines".[34] To some animal species the world of course might even seem different. However, as Boulter points out: "The fact that an organism's perceptual systems do not pick up or respond to *all* of reality does not imply that what they do pick up are not objective features of an extralinguistic reality."[35]

To sum up: By integrating new scientific results, common sense is historically evolving. Still, contemporary enlightened common sense, guided by the philosophy of common-sense realism, has a conservative view of scientific discoveries: it does not accept the view that scientific change implies radical changes in ontology. Hence contemporary common sense does not have room, just as common sense never had room, for relativism. Common sense believes that it relies on the best available sources of knowledge. It understands that it might hold erroneous views, but trusts that progress will correct them. Epistemic systems different from its own it cannot but consider simply wrong.

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[34] Michael Devitt, *Realism and Truth* (cf. note 20 above), pp. 74 and 78.
[35] Boulter, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

III. Conservatism: Old and New

1. Introduction

Paul Engelmann, the Austrian architect who became a friend of Ludwig Wittgenstein's during World War I, writes that although the notion of "a God in the sense of the Bible, the image of God as the creator of the world, hardly ever engaged Wittgenstein's attention", the idea of a last judgement "was of profound concern to him. 'When we meet again at the last judgement' was a recurrent phrase with him", Engelmann explains, "which he used in many a conversation at a particularly momentous point. He would pronounce the words with an indescribably inward-gazing look in his eyes, his head bowed". Wittgenstein "saw life as a task", looking upon "all the features of life as it is, that is to say upon all facts, as an essential part of the conditions of that task". Wittgenstein, Engelmann continues, consistently held that if there was a discrepancy between himself and the world, "the reason for the discrepancy lies in himself alone", thus rejecting "the belief that

changes in the external facts may be necessary and called for".[1]

The stance here described by Engelmann is one of *humbleness*, a stance I take to be characteristic of the conservative mentality – and there is no doubt that Wittgenstein held conservative views. In what follows I will refer to some further aspects of the conservative mentality, and attempt to explicate the notoriously elusive notion of conservatism, before returning to the issue of what Wittgenstein's conservatism involves. I will then argue that the alternative, left-wing/liberal, mentality clearly tends to lead to the epistemological and ontological positions of relativism and constructivism. The conservative stance, by contrast, should lead to realism, and ultimately to common-sense realism.

The author whose work first alerted me to the connection between conservatism and realism is the Gestalt psychologist and art theorist Rudolf Arnheim. In his essay "Wertheimer and Gestalt Psychology" written in 1969 Arnheim noted a contrast between, on the one hand, British empiricist philosophy "proudly asserting the dominion of the individual's views and judgments over the

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[1] Paul Engelmann, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein: With a Memoir*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967, pp. 77 and 79.

environment", and, on the other hand, the world-view of the Gestalt psychologists, who showed "respect for the structure of the physical world as it impinges upon the nervous system", affirming that it is "man's task to find his own humble place in the world and to take the cues for his conduct and comprehension from the order of that world." In the social realm, Arnheim went on, Gestalt theory "demanded of the citizen that he derive his rights and duties from the objectively ascertained functions and needs of society".[2]

I will come back to Arnheim's conservative views below. For the moment I want merely to point out that Arnheim was a central figure heralding the "iconic turn" – the turn to visual thinking – today gradually gaining ground in the humanities,[3] even perhaps in philosophy. Arnheim stressed the primordial and continuing significance of visual thinking, of autonomous pictorial meaning ultimately founded on so-called descrip-

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[2] Rudolf Arnheim, "Wertheimer and Gestalt Psychology" (1969), in Arnheim, *New Essays on the Psychology of Art*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, p. 34.

[3] Two programmatic volumes, both published in 1994, were W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), and Gottfried Boehm, ed., *Was ist ein Bild?* (München: Fink). Mitchell introduced the term "pictorial turn", Boehm the term "ikonische Wendung".

tive gestures, and of the motor dimension inevitably involved in the understanding of images. Now if Arnheim was on the right track in all of this, as I believe he was, then the lesson for philosophy is that ontology cannot remain satisfied with being based merely and entirely on intuitions suggested by the structure of verbal language, and epistemology cannot go on ignoring the fact that our knowledge of the world out there is founded more on immediate visual images than on the mediating capacity of words.

I will argue that not only Arnheim but also Wittgenstein followed the path from conservatism to realism. Wittgenstein in his later philosophy gradually worked out the elements of a novel, sophisticated, common-sense approach to both ontology and epistemology, one of these elements being a rudimentary theory of pictorial meaning.[4] Because the mainstream view associates him with relativism rather than with realism, Wittgenstein might seem an unlikely candidate for a conservative exponent of a realist philosophy. Another unlikely candidate, though unlikely from a different perspective, is the emblematic figure of common-sense realism, Thomas Reid. I suggest that Read,

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[4] See esp. my paper (with extensive references to the secondary literature of the topic) "Image and Metaphor in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein", cf. ch. I, note 2 above.

too, can be referred to as a "conservative", even though the term was not yet in use in the eighteenth century. Conservatism, in the view I will be propounding, is a timeless human attitude. Significantly, while Reid obviously played a role in the Scottish Enlightenment, at the same time he insisted upon the perennial function of *authority*.[5] In the twentieth century, I similarly take F. A. Hayek to be a conservative[6] holding a realist, even if

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[5] See e.g. Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785), critical edition, ed. by Derek R. Brookes (Pennsylvania: The State University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), pp. 487 f.: "Before we are capable of reasoning about testimony or authority, there are many things which it concerns us to know, for which we can have no other evidence. ... If children were so framed, as to pay no regard to testimony or to authority, they must, in the literal sense, perish for lack of knowledge. ... But when our faculties ripen, we find reason to check that propensity to yield to testimony and to authority... We learn to reason about the regard due to them, and see it to be a childish weakness to lay more stress upon them than reason justifies. Yet, I believe, to the end of life, most men are more apt to go into this extreme than into the contrary; and the natural propensity still retains some force."

[6] If in doubt as to the adequacy of this label, just cast a glance on Hayek's "Individualism: True and False" (1945), in F. A. Hayek, *Individualism and Economic Order*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949, see esp. pp. 8 (here Hayek calls for "an attitude of humility" as against an "exaggerated belief in the powers of individual rea-

not an epistemologically direct realist, position.[7]
And one can of course point to some more
recent, very unequivocally conservative-and-realist
figures: both David M. Armstrong and his
colleague David Stove were blatantly conservative,
and also blatantly realist.

2. Paradoxes of Conservatism

In November 1930 Wittgenstein composed a
foreword to the typescript that came to be pub-
lished posthumously as *Philosophical Remarks*. "I
would like to say", he wrote, that "'This book is
written to the glory of God', but nowadays that

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son"), 15 ("men are in fact unequal"), p. 23 ("true individ-
ualism affirms the value of the family and ... believes in
local autonomy"), p. 26 ("It must remain an open question
whether a free or individualistic society can be worked
successfully if people are too 'individualistic' in the false
sense, if they are too unwilling voluntarily to conform to
traditions and conventions"), and p. 32 ("the fundamental
attitude of true individualism is one of humility toward the
processes by which mankind has achieved things which
have not been designed or understood by any individual").
[7] See esp. F. A. Hayek, *The Sensory Order: An Inquiry
into the Foundations of Theoretical Psychology*, Chicago:
The University of Chicago Press, 1952, p. 108: "the micro-
cosm in the brain progressively approximates to a repro-
duction of the macrocosm of the external world".

would ... not be rightly understood."[8] More than a decade later he made the following remark in a conversation to his student and friend M. O'C. Drury: "I am not a religious man but I cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view."[9] This formula appears to me to be a perfect expression of the vague, diffuse, religiosity which the conservative stance characteristically involves. Such religiosity was certainly not foreign to Arnheim. Recall his reference to man's "humble place in the world". Or note this passage from his *The Dynamics of Architectural Form*:

> the very nature of religion and its tasks are now so open to question that their external expression is no longer governed by reliable standards. ... all the more rewarding [are] those examples of church architecture that succeed in translating dignity and

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[8] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks*, transl. from the German by R. Hargreaves and R. White, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975, p. 7.

[9] M. O'C. Drury, "Some Notes on Conversations with Wittgenstein" (1976), in Rush Rhees, ed., *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981, p. 94. For a detailed discussion of this remark see Norman Malcolm, *Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?*, London: Routledge, 1993, and more recently William Child, *Wittgenstein*, London: Routledge, 2011, ch. 8: "Religion and Anthropology".

spiritual devotion into twentieth-century idioms.[10]

Now although Arnheim displayed an acute sense for modern art, he was nonetheless a conservative. His conservatism had two quite different dimensions, a creative, forward-looking, ontological-epistemological one to which I have already alluded and to which I will return; and the old-fashioned backward-looking one, as when he complained of contemporary "social conditions that atomize the human community into a mere aggregate of individuals or small groups", "the chaos of our present way of life", our "individualistic civilization".[11]

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[10] Arnheim, *The Dynamics of Architectural Form* (1977), Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009, p. 206.

[11] *The Dynamics of Architectural Form*, pp. 17 and 67. The passage on p. 17 begins with Arnheim deploring "the visual, functional, and social chaos of modern life"; on p. 206 he refers, again, to "the prevailing individualism of our civilization". The term "civilization" to Arnheim's German ears clearly suggested something of the opposite of "culture", just as it did, say, to Thomas Mann, Oswald Spengler, or Ludwig Wittgenstein. In English of course the two terms are more often than not used as synonyms, cf. e.g. Franz Rauhut, "Die Herkunft der Worte und Begriffe 'Kultur', 'Civilisation' und 'Bildung'" (1951), *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 34 (1953), pp. 81–91, and especially Wolfgang Schmidt-Hidding et al., *Kultur und Zivilisation* (*Europäische Schlüsselwörter*, vol. III), München:

It is this backward-looking type of conservatism which the Austrian novelist and essayist Robert Musil distanced himself from when writing in 1923:

> Having freed himself from all the old bonds, man is recommended to subject himself to them anew: faith, ... austerity, ... sense of national community, a concept of civic duty, and abandonment of capitalist individualism and all its attitudes. ... – The belief is that a decay has to be cured. – ... I can think of hardly any account which conceives of our present condition as a problem, a new sort of problem, and not as a solution that has miscarried.[12]

What Musil here describes is a fundamental paradox of perhaps the most common variety of conservatism. The suggestion that we should *give up our current patterns of life and return to those of some earlier age* is a revolutionary one, in

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Max Hueber, 1967, see in particular pp. v–vi, 180 ff., 196 and 313 f.

[12] Robert Musil, "Der deutsche Mensch als Symptom" (1923), in Robert Musil, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. by Adolf Frisé, vol. 8, Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1978, p. 1382, here quoted from the English translation in Kristóf [J. C.] Nyíri, ed., *Austrian Philosophy: Studies and Texts*, München: Philosophia Verlag, 1981, p. 185.

need of argument. If on the other hand conservatism is taken to mean that we should maintain whatever social conditions we happen to live under, we are once more faced with a paradoxical doctrine which would imply acquiescing to different values according to different times and places. Now yet another cluster of paradoxes emerges when conservatism is equated, as it almost invariably is, with *traditionalism*. Twentieth-century scholarship has shown beyond any possible doubt that traditions in the rigorous sense of the term are *instruments for preserving knowledge in pre-literal cultures* – that is, instruments for preserving practices, techniques, and knowledge in the form of oral lore. Of course the term "tradition" is quite often used also in a broader, looser sense.[13] But it is a blunder to speak of traditionalism where conditions of alphabetic literacy obtain. Hence it is blatantly misleading, too, when Karl Mannheim defines conservatism as "primarily nothing more

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[13] A notorious example in philosophy is Thomas Kuhn's drawing a parallel between paradigmatic and traditional practices, most conspicuously in his paper "The Essential Tension: Tradition and Innovation in Scientific Research" (1959). For a detailed discussion see my "Introduction: Notes towards a Theory of Traditions", in Kristóf [J. C.] Nyíri, ed., *Tradition*, Wien: IFK, 1995, pp. 7–32.

than traditionalism become conscious".[14] Mannheim is not willing to regard conservatism as "a phenomenon universal to all mankind".[15] When searching for an expression to designate the "general psychological attitude" underlying modern conservatism, he chooses Max Weber's term "traditionalism" as opposed to Lord Hugh Cecil's formula "natural conservatism".[16]

Here by contrast I will defend an interpretation of conservatism as a timeless, perennial attitude and world-view. As a first step, let me quote from a recent paper by political scientists Hatemi and McDermott:

> Political attitudes in modern human society encompass fundamentally the same issues of reproduction and survival that confronted group life in ancient humans because they involve the same interpersonal traits. ... The labels and meanings of issues, groups, and policies might change across time and cultures, but the underlying con-

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[14] *From Karl Mannheim*, ed. by K. H. Wolff, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993, p. 288. The quoted passage is from Mannheim's "Conservative Thought", an English translation based on his 1925 Heidelberg dissertation.

[15] *From Karl Mannheim*, p. 280.

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 280 f.

nection between the core issues that are important to humans, including survival, reproduction, and defense, will remain. Indeed, genetic influences on attitude differences may be a remnant of ancient behavioral adaptation pre-dating modern human society.[17]

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[17] Peter K. Hatemi and Rose McDermott, "The Genetics of Politics: Discovery, Challenges, and Progress", *Trends in Genetics*, vol. 28, no. 10 (Oct. 2012), pp. 525–533, the quoted passage on p. 528. From the wealth of literature in political science and psychology discussing the issue in a similar spirit, let me here single out John T. Jost, "The End of the End of Ideology", *American Psychologist*, vol. 61, no. 7 (Oct. 2006), pp. 651–670; James H. Fowler and Darren Schreiber, "Biology, Politics, and the Emerging Science of Human Nature", *Science*, vol. 322, 7 Nov. 2008, pp. 912–914; and J. R. Hibbing et al., „Differences in Negativity Bias Underlie Variations in Political Ideology", *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 37 (2014), 297–350. – A last reference, to a paper Nicholas Rescher published in 2015: "the difference between liberalism and conservatism is not so much one of political – let alone economic – ideology. Rather, it reflects a difference in temperament, a difference in attitude regarding the possibilities of the future" ("The Case for Cautious Conservatism", *The Independent Review*, vol. 19, no. 3, p. 442). Rescher's paper only very recently came to my attention, I am indebted to Leslie Marsh for having alerted me to it.

The fundamental political attitudes Hatemi and McDermott discuss are conservatism and liberalism in a broad sense of these terms. And what their paper suggests is that in this broad sense not only conservatism, but also liberalism – the striving for ever more freedom, if you like – is a perennial attitude. As a second step, let us take a look again at the passage I quoted from Arnheim on humility and on the epistemological stance of the Gestalt school of which he is a representative. What this passage implies is that one can identify a constant task that conservatism has to face at all times, namely to understand the world as given, and to gain objective knowledge. Drawing together the Hatemi–McDermott and the Arnheim threads, I suggest that what conservatism in any historical age primarily strives to conserve is in fact *knowledge*, specifically the knowledge required to preserve the survival chances of future generations. This formula I am putting forward as an explication, which means: a reasoned re-definition, of the concept of conservatism. I will henceforth refer to conservatism explicated in this way as "knowledge-conservatism".

Now the knowledge required to preserve the survival chances of future generations varies greatly depending on the dominant information and communication technology of the age. Knowledge-conservatism will thus appear in a variety of

guises in the course of cultural history. In pre-verbal cultures, we can assume that images – think of cave paintings and the like – served not just ritual purposes; they came into being as an answer to the felt need of storing and communicating knowledge.[18] In cultures that have developed a verbal language[19] but are still preliterate, knowledge is carried predominantly by words. However, because in a preliterate culture words cannot be written down, knowledge is memorized through repetition of formulas the truth of which is accepted as unquestionable due the fiction that they are handed down unchanged from generation to generation all the way back to some ultimately divine source. This is the age of traditions. The adherence to traditions characterizes the whole of premodernity. Premodern conservatism strives to

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[18] Discussing the tool-making revolution of the Upper Palaeolithic, John Pfeiffer refers to the enormous increase in complexity of the social world, and the ensuing information overload. See John E. Pfeiffer, *The Creative Explosion: An Inquiry into the Origins of Art and Religion*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982, cf. esp. pp. 121 ff. and 185 ff.

[19] I side with the view that the primordial human language is a visual one, a language of facial expressions and gestures. See my study "Time and Image in the Theory of Gestures", in Kristóf Nyíri, *Meaning and Motoricity* (cf. ch. I, note 2 above).

preserve the life of generations to come by seeking to ensure the survival of the mores and beliefs of former generations. Modern conservatism by contrast, that is conservatism in the age of the printed word, is forced to recognize that change is inevitable. It attempts to slow down change in order to reduce the destruction that it causes. It defends the idea of evolutionary social growth and thus attempts to halt the devastating influence of speculative theories. Beginning with Burke, modern conservatism emphasizes that genuine knowledge is embedded in the institutions and practices of society. And now in the age of online networked communication, postmodern – that is, *posttypographic*, post-mid-twentieth-century – conservatism has to cope with the very phenomenon of incessant change, indeed with change that is rapid and bringing mostly unforeseeable consequences. Bedevilled by the paradox of having to prepare for a future that it cannot predict, postmodern conservatism – knowledge-conservatism coming of age – faces the daunting task of preserving and keeping in readiness as it were the entirety of human knowledge. To that end, it has to have a solid philosophy of the nature of knowledge. And it is precisely an adequate view of knowledge that, seen from the conservative perspective I propose, left-wing liberalism is lacking.

3. Radicalism: Liberated from Reality

In his book *The Social Construction of What?* Ian Hacking complains that the "traditional right//left spectrum of politics and alliances has run into problems".[20] Hacking confesses to having difficulties in taking a stand on how constructivism – today's dominant form of relativism – hangs together with leftism. Now radical leftism in fact tends to embrace anti-realism in the form of relativism, but before coming back to Hacking I want to point out that the right/left spectrum is not one on which it is invariably possible to find a place for conservatism.[21] Conservatism is not necessarily right-wing, and especially contemporary conservatism, though opposed to the anti-realism of the left, should definitely not be seen as belonging to the political right. World-views do not fit into any simple one-dimensional space.[22]

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[20] Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 95.

[21] That is, I agree entirely with what Kieron O'Hara says on this in his *Conservatism*, London: Reaktion Books, 2011, pp. 207 and 210.

[22] I have distinguished between eight subspaces in a three-dimensional space of possible political views (defined along the dimensions of *equality*, *freedom*, and *social change*) in my paper "The Pitfalls of Left-Wing Epistemol-

Hacking finds that "[s]ocial construction has in many contexts been a truly liberating idea", and that even though the most influential decades of the trend have passed, it "can still be liberating suddenly to realize that something is constructed and is not part of the nature of things, of people, or human society". However, Hacking senses a dilemma. "In terms of the unmasking of established order", he writes, "constructionists are properly put on the left. Their political attitude is nevertheless very much not in harmony with those scientists who see themselves as allies of the oppressed, but also feel like the special guardians of the most important truths about the world, the true bastions of objectivity."[23] In section 6.2 below I will adopt the position that there are indeed scientific theories that have a merely instrumental function – that is, they are not actually true descriptions of the world. But not even such merely instrumental theories are constructions in the sense social constructivists attach to this term. For the theories in question are not arbitrary, they can be refuted by empirical data, they aim at having a hold on some objective reality.

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ogy: Anarchy vs. Scientific Method", *Doxa* 10, 1987 (Budapest), pp.17–25.
[23] Hacking, *op. cit.*, pp. vii, 35 and 95.

Anti-realism is not necessarily left-wing, but radical leftism – say in the sense given to this term by Lenin – is necessarily anti-realist. Two interesting early examples instantiating this connection are the Russian revolutionary Alexander Bogdanov and the young Georg Lukács. In the 1962 foreword to his *Theory of the Novel* (1916) the aging Lukács – having long ceased to be a radical leftist – chided himself for having combined his youthful left-wing ethics with a right-wing epistemology. His position now was that the combination had been a theoretically unsound one. When we compare this position with the 1967 foreword to his seminal *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), it emerges that what had been missing in his early work, according to Lukács in retrospect, was *realism*. It is obviously the case that the young Lukács did not hold a realist epistemology. By contrast, Lenin – a communist dictator – was realist through and through, and he criticized Bogdanov for not being one. Bogdanov, Lenin wrote, was left-wing, and his epistemology was a Machian anarchism. Similarly, I suggest, the young Lukács's notion in *History and Class Consciousness* of the proletariat as the "identical subject–object" – as the *subject* which, by coming to know itself in the course of its revolutionary practice, comes al-

so to know its *object*, namely society – is an anarchist, left-wing idea.[24]

A more recent example of such anarchism is that of Feyerabend. Feyerabend's attempts to differentiate between his "epistemological anarchism" and anarchisms of the more familiar "political" kind have however been generally found unconvincing. Only when "universal ideas" such as "truth" and "reason" are rejected, will man, according to Feyerabend, "cease to be a slave and gain a dignity that is more than an exercise in cautious conformism".[25] Feyerabend's ideas should of course be seen in the context of the history of social constructivism. Think of Mannheim and Ludvik Fleck in the 1920s and 1930s.[26] Or think of the Putnam of the 1970s and 1980s.[27] Think of

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[24] For the references to Lenin and Lukács here see my "The Pitfalls of Left-Wing Epistemology", cf. note 22 above.

[25] Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge* (1975), London: Verso, 1982, pp. 187ff. and 191.

[26] Cf. esp. Dick Pels, "Karl Mannheim and the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge: Toward a New Agenda", *Sociological Theory*, vol. 14, no. 1 (March 1996), p. 37.

[27] See here esp. Susan Haack, "Reflections on Relativism: From Momentous Tautology to Seductive Contradiction" (cf. chapter II, note 15 above), p. 153.

Rorty. Think of feminism.[28] Constructivism holds that there is no objective knowledge. Conservatism – most conspicuously in its form of knowledge-conservatism – has no choice but to come to grips with reality. It necessarily maintains that objective knowledge is attainable.

4. The Conservative View of Knowledge

4.1 Back to Hayek?

It was Burke's late-eighteenth-century description of knowledge as embedded in the institutions and practices of society that Hayek took up and elaborated in the 20th century. What Hayek appears to have shown is that the knowledge needed by society in order to uphold its economy emerges from, and fundamentally consists in, the practical experience society's individual members acquire in local conditions. Whether in a premodern small-scale or in a modern large-scale economy, such knowledge is distributed among individual

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[28] The unsurpassable analysis here is Haack's "Reflections of an Old Feminist" (cf. chapter II, note 22 above), see esp. pp. 127 f. – Of the innumerable hilarious formulations emerging from the social constructivist camp some particularly delightful ones are quoted by Devitt in his *Realism and Truth* (cf. ch. II, note 20 above), pp. 256 f.

market actors and is mediated by the dynamics of prices. It is, as Hayek again and again stressed, impossible to centralize. But now what is true of knowledge in the world of production and commerce, seems to be true of knowledge in general, too. John Gray famously referred to Hayek's insight that

> all our theoretical, propositional or explicit knowledge presupposes a vast background of tacit, practical and inarticulate knowledge. Hayek's insight here parallels those of Oakeshott, Ryle, Heidegger, and Polanyi; like them he perceives that the kind of knowledge that can be embodied in theories is not only distinct from, but also at every point dependent upon, another sort of knowledge, embodied in habits and dispositions to act. Some of this practical knowledge is found in rules of action and perception imprinted in the nervous system and transmitted by genetic inheritance. But much of the significant part of the practical knowledge expressed in our dealings with each other is passed on mimetically, in the cultural transmission of traditions or practices...[29]

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[29] John Gray, "Hayek as a Conservative", first published in *Salisbury Review* in 1983, reprinted in John Gray, *Post-*

Let me note, first, that in the list of names Gray here provides, Wittgenstein should certainly have been included. The idea of *practical knowledge* has a central place in Wittgenstein's later philosophy.[30] Secondly, it is clear that when Gray uses the word "mimetic" he does not thereby allude to *visual* imitation. The issue of visuality did not play a role in the history of conservative thought from Burke to Hayek. By contrast Wittgenstein, as I have again and again indicated, indeed attempted to elaborate a theory of visual images. This is important in a number of ways from the point of view of the argument I am striving to construct in the present chapter. First, though, I want to call attention to the way in which Hayek's emphasis on knowledge as being *merely* local threatens to lead to yet another paradox of conservatism. For knowledge that is merely local is *relative* knowledge – and, from a broader social perspective, *fragmented* knowledge. In order to meet the challenges of the modern and postmodern ages, we need also to grasp the possibility of some kind of *unified* knowledge. Here visuality

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liberalism: Studies in Political Thought, London: Routledge, 1993, the quoted passage on p. 34.

[30] Cf. my "Tradition and Practical Knowledge", in Kristóf [J. C.] Nyíri and Barry Smith (eds.), *Practical Knowledge: Outines of a Theory of Traditions and Skills*, London: Croom Helm, 1988, pp. 18 f.

comes into play because pictures are not only radically better at conveying practical knowledge than texts, but they can also much more efficiently mediate across disciplinary borders.[31]

4.2. Conservatism and the Visual Image

Images can, it is true, be radically subversive. But they have been much more often used throughout history as instruments for preserving the status quo. In his book *Augustus and the Power of Images* Paul Zanker provides a fascinating description of the way the penetration of Roman society by Greek art, from the 2nd century BC onward, played a part in dissolving traditional conditions; but he shows also how the new visual world that emerged at the time of Octavian's rule contributed to the permanent peace of the empire.[32]

Second, images are conservative also in another way, in that they preserve in unchanging form pictorial knowledge. And with the advent of the mechanical image – the photograph, the film

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[31] I have discussed this issue in some detail in my paper "From Texts to Pictures: The New Unity of Science", in Kristóf Nyíri, ed., *Mobile Learning: Essays on Philosophy, Psychology and Education*, Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2003, pp. 45–67.

[32] Paul Zanker, *Augustus und die Macht der Bilder*, München: Beck, 1987.

– innumerable details become stored the record-
ing of which had not even been purposely intend-
ed. Third, as I suggested above, when citing Arn-
heim's "Wertheimer and Gestalt Psychology" es-
say, the pictorial is conservative in the sense that it
tends to represent the invariant, given, structured
elements in the world around us.

5. Wittgenstein

The idea that Wittgenstein was a conservative
thinker was first proposed by Ernest Gellner in
his *Words and Things* (1959), whose suggestion
was then taken up by Herbert Marcuse in his
One-Dimensional Man (1964). Gellner saw § 124
of the *Philosophical Investigations* ("Philosophy
may in no way interfere with the actual use of
language... It leaves everything as it is") as exuding
a conservative spirit, a spirit Gellner was unhappy
with.[33]

I myself have published from 1976 onwards
a series of papers arguing, first, that one way to

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[33] See Ernest Gellner, *Words and Things: A Critical Ac-
count of Linguistic Philosophy and a Study in Ideology*,
London: 1959, esp. pp. 100 ff., 196ff. and 214f., and Her-
bert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ide-
ology of Advanced Industrial Society*, London: Routledge
& Kegan Paul, 1964, p. 177.

understand Wittgenstein's later philosophy is to see it in the context of German conservative social-political thinking as it blossomed in the 1920s and 30s; and secondly, that Wittgenstein actually worked out philosophical arguments that were suited to underpin the conservative case.[34] These papers have elicited many negative, but also some positive, comments. Let me here just refer to the recent discussions (offering also summaries of some of the earlier polemical papers) in the volumes *The New Wittgenstein,* and *The Grammar of Politics: Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy.*[35] The commentators have correctly pointed out that I had exploited a "relativist" (a term, I must remark, I did not actually use) interpretation of the later Wittgenstein in order to give his arguments a conservative flavour. Today I believe that

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[34] See in particular my "Wittgenstein's New Traditionalism", *Acta Philosophica Fennica,* vol. 28, nos. 1–3, (1976) pp. 503–509; "Wittgenstein's Later Work in relation to Conservatism", in B. McGuinness, ed., *Wittgenstein and his Times,* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982, pp. 44–68; and "Wittgenstein 1929–31: The Turning Back", in S. Shanker, ed., *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Critical Assessments,* London, Croom Helm, 1986, pp. 29–69.

[35] Alice Crary and Rupert Read, eds., *The New Wittgenstein,* London: Routledge, 2000; Cressida J. Heyes, ed., *The Grammar of Politics: Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.

towards the end of his life Wittgenstein became
critical of relativism; and that it is actually his crit-
icism of relativism that should be seen as a natural
and logical implication of his conservatism. How-
ever, in the present section all I want to point out
is that, on any description, Wittgenstein indeed
had a conservative mentality and held conserva-
tive social views.

Think of the oft-quoted passage in the fore-
word to his *Philosophical Remarks*[36] where he
wrote that the spirit of his book "is different from
the one which informs the vast stream of Euro-
pean and American civilization in which all of us
stand". Or recall what Fania Pascal, who taught
Wittgenstein Russian at Cambridge in the mid-
1930s, wrote about him: "At a time when intellec-
tual Cambridge was turning Left, [Wittgenstein]
was still an old-time conservative of the late
Austro-Hungarian Empire."[37] Or consider this re-
mark, written by Wittgenstein in 1948:

> I think the way people are educated nowa-
> days tends to diminish their capacity for
> suffering. At present a school is reckoned

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[36] Cf. note 8 above.

[37] Fania Pascal, "Wittgenstein: A Personal Memoir", *En-
counter* (August, 1973), repr. in Rush Rhees, ed., *Ludwig
Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections* (cf. note 9 above),
pp. 26–62, this quote from p. 31.

good if the children have a good time. And that used *not* to be the criterion. Parents moreover want their children to grow up like themselves (only more so), but nevertheless subject them to an education *quite* different from their own. – Endurance of suffering isn't rated highly because there is supposed not to be any suffering – really it's out of date.[38]

And a second remark, written some months later: "Tradition is not something a man can learn; not a thread he can pick up when he feels like it; any more than a man can choose his ancestors. – Someone lacking a tradition who would like to have one is like a man unhappily in love."[39]

   Wittgenstein was a common-sense realist, and his realism is a unique combination of, first, his emphasis on traditions in the sense of established use; secondly, a stress on ordinary language, the deviations from which are taken as the source

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[38] MS 168, p. 2, entry dated 30.5.48, here quoted from Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, transl. by Peter Winch (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p. 71e. The expressions "if the children have a good time" and "only more so" are in English in the German original; the quotation marks around "if the children have a good time" have been inserted by the editors of *Culture and Value.*
[39] MS 137, p. 113, remark entered on Nov. 29, 1948. Here quoted from *Culture and Value*, p. 76e.

of (bad) philosophy; thirdly, his awareness of the significance of the motor and the visual.

6. Visual Thinking

In a work I have repeatedly referred to in the present volume, the book *Visual Thinking*, Rudolf Arnheim wrote: "What makes language so valuable for thinking ... cannot be thinking in words. It must be the help that words lend to thinking while it operates in a more appropriate medium, such as visual imagery." The visual medium, Arnheim adds, "is so enormously superior because it offers structural equivalents to all characteristics of objects, events, relations."[40] Some pages earlier Arnheim had related mental images to *descriptive gestures*, suggesting that what a descriptive gesture pictures, is primarily the motor experience underlying a corresponding mental image.[41] What Arnheim here says is, I believe, of great significance, since it implies not only that our verbal constructs – direct designations, idioms, metaphors – are meaningful because they convey mental images, but also that it is our bodily, physical experiences, our physical contact with reality, that gives rise to

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[40] Rudolf Arnheim, *Visual Thinking* (cf. ch. II, note 6 above), pp. 231 f.

[41] See *ibid.*, pp. 117 f.

these images. Arnheim adhered to the Gestalt school's founding view that one cannot experience images without experiencing the patterns of forces they embody and convey. He was aware of the pioneering role of the German philosopher-psychologist Theodor Lipps here;[42] while on the broader topic of visual thinking he essentially drew on the work of Galton, Ribot, Binet, and Titchener.[43]

Neither the view that thinking is primarily a matter of images rather than words, nor Arnheim's position on descriptive gestures, are feasible without a broader gestural theory of the origins of language.[44] This theory has had a continuous history ever since Plato's *Cratylus*, with Reid giving a good summary of the main argument in his *Inquiry into the Human Mind*. As he put it,

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[42] As Arnheim wrote: "Lipps anticipated the Gestalt principle of isomorphism for the relationship between the physical forces in the observed object and the psychical dynamics in the observer" ("The Gestalt Theory of Expression", in Rudolf Arnheim, *Toward a Psychology of Art: Collected Essays*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966, p. 58).

[43] For a more detailed description of this story, see my volume *Meaning and Motoricity* (cf. note 19 above), pp. 26 f. and 105–119.

[44] Cf. note 19 above.

if mankind had not a natural language, they could never have invented an artificial one... For all artificial language supposes some compact or agreement to affix a certain meaning to certain signs ... but there can be no compact or agreement without signs, nor without language; and therefore there must be a natural language before any artificial language can be invented.

The elements of the "natural language of mankind", Reid continued, are "modulations of the voice, gestures, and features", adding: "Where speech is natural, it will be an exercise, not of the voice and lungs only, but of all the muscles of the body; like that of dumb people and savages".[45] In *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* Reid recalls the art of pantomime in ancient Rome, noting that "it required neither study nor practice in the spectators to understand [pantomimes]. It was a natural language, and therefore understood by all men, whether Romans, Greeks, or Barbarians, by the learned and the unlearned."[46]

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[45] Thomas Reid, *Inquiry into the Human Mind: On the Principles of Common Sense* (1764), 3rd ed., London: Cadell–Longman, 1769, pp. 73–75.
[46] Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, critical edition (cf. note 5 above), p. 487.

In his book *What Is This Thing Called Science?* Alan Chalmers programmatically accepts and presupposes that "a single, unique, physical world exists independently of observers".[47] However, he depicts it as a mistake to believe that our knowledge of the external world is based on what our senses, in particular our eyes, tell us. He refers to ambiguous drawings and to children's puzzles, stressing that as we look at them what we see will, in a few moments' time, change, while the corresponding retinal images remain the same.[48] Neurophysiologists and cognitive scientists usually make an even stronger case, pointing out that what we see is always and entirely underdetermined by retinal images. Donald Hoffman, towards the end of his influential book with the telling title *Visual Intelligence: How We Create What We See*, draws the consequence: the hope of "scientific realism", he writes, is "as yet unrealized", and "cannot be proved true".[49]

These arguments however are spurious. Our eyes mostly do not err; and we do mostly agree with each other on what we see. The world

[47] A. E. Chalmers, *What Is This Thing Called Science?* 3rd ed., Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1999, p. 9.

[48] *Ibid.*, pp. 4 ff.

[49] Donald D. Hoffman, *Visual Intelligence: How We Create What We See*, New York: Norton, 1998, p. 199.

our eyes and brains build up tends to be the very world in fact surrounding us. Recall the arguments offered by Devitt on the one hand and Boulter on the other, arguments I referred to in the concluding section of chapter II above. Even if scientists tell us that some animal species see the world differently from the way we see it, this does not pose a challenge to common-sense realism.

Now common-sense realism assumes not only that the world we see is, in its visual aspects, identical with the world as it actually is, but also that we can draw and paint veridical pictures of bits of the world, make photographs of them, film them. Here we must admit that pictures can be ambiguous, fuzzy, and distorting. But distortion can be a mode of emphasis, fuzziness a way of representing the generic, and disambiguation is achieved both by captions and by creating a sequence of images, as obviously happens when making movies. Of course the contrary views of Nelson Goodman still cast a long shadow. His extreme constructivism and his conviction that pictures have no autonomous meaning go happily together. However, I find Goodman entirely unconvincing. I see no reason to attenuate what – drawing on an extensive body of literature critical of him – I wrote some fifteen years ago: "It lies in the nature of Goodman's arguments that they typ-

ically invite, not careful refutation, but polite rejection."[50]

7. Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that if conservatism wants to come to grips with the contemporary world, it must overcome the paradoxes it faces as a backward-looking or status-quo-preserving ideology. I have introduced the notion of knowledge-conservatism to capture what I believe is the essence of conservatism unobscured. Conservatism should reinvent itself as a program that is not so much political as ontological and epistemological – a program of common-sense realism, aiming at real knowledge and the preservation of real knowledge with the aim of enhancing the survival chances of future generations.

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[50] See my paper "The Picture Theory of Reason", in Berit Brogaard and Barry Smith, eds., *Rationality and Irrationality*, Wien: öbv-hpt, 2001, pp. 242–266. On Goodman see sect. 3 of the paper.

IV. Pictorial Truth

1. Introduction

The concept of pictorial truth refers, first of all, to truth in the sense of seeing the world as it really is. We speak of pictures – sights, views – opening up before us. In the spirit of common-sense realism I will argue, in the first section of this chapter, that those pictures very much tend to be veridical. In the second section I will assume that we can also speak of pictorial truth in the sense of correct depiction, invariably involving resemblance. Of course pictures – drawings, paintings, photographs – resemble the objects they depict in a limited manner only; however, as in particular Arnheim and Gombrich have shown, resemblance in the sense of structural equivalence, and equivalence in the form of possible response, can certainly obtain: Goodman's extreme conventionalism and relativism are misguided. Bringing up the problem of correct depiction I will touch on children's drawings on the one hand, and the issue of linear perspective on the other. – Now while I take the notion of pictorial truth to be covering veracity also in the sense that images can correctly state *facts*, in the third section I will argue that *static* im-

ages – *single* static images – can only achieve this if they are complemented by captions. Statements can be made with a sequence of images (in this case captions need not be necessarily relied on), or indeed with moving images. One should however note that the term "statement" is here used in a transposed mode of speech,[1] as it were metaphorically. Metaphor is the topic of the fourth section of the paper: I side with the view that the metaphors used in everyday thinking and in science express essential aspects of reality –

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[1] As when e.g. Ivins writes: "At the very beginning of human history men discovered in their ability to make pictures a method for symbolization of their visual awarenesses which differs in important respects from any other symbolic method that is known. As distinguished from purely conventional symbols, pictorial symbols can be used to make precise and accurate statements" (William M. Ivins, Jr., *The Rationalization of Sight*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1938, p. 8). Compare also Ivins' phrase "exactly repeatable pictorial statements" (William M. Ivins, Jr., *Prints and Visual Communication*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953, p. 2 and *passim*), referring to woodcuts, etchings, engravings, and photography. – That "drawn or painted images" should not be analyzed "on the basis of models transplanted from the realm of linguistic studies" – that we should "*liberate the image from semiotics*" – is a point emphatically made by Paul Crowther in his recent book *What Drawing and Painting* Really *Mean: The Phenomenology of Image and Gesture* (London: Routledge, 2017, pp. 4 ff.).

they are literally true. However, I stress that understanding a metaphor essentially involves experiencing mental images. In the fifth section I conclude by emphasizing that not only is it possible to convey truths via images, but also that in a fundamental sense it is *only* via images that truths can be conveyed at all.

2. The World Viewed

The above section title is borrowed from Cavell.[2] In his epilogue to the enlarged edition Cavell writes of "a more or less vague and pervasive intellectual fashion, apparently sanctioned by the history of epistemology and the rise of modern science, according to which we never really, and never really can, see reality as it is", of "a general dismissal of reality" that "depends upon theories (of knowledge, of science, of art, of reality, of realism) whose power to convince is hardly greater than reality's own", and mentions Heidegger and Wittgenstein as philosophers influencing his resistance to anti-realist skepticism.[3] When referring to the former, Cavell has the work *Being and*

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[2] Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, enlarged edition, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 165.

Time[4] in mind. I myself would add here a reference to Heidegger's *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*,[5] a book that provides, in the span of a few pages, some brilliant answers to the fundamental questions of pictorial representation.[6] Heidegger discusses the image in the sense of likeness ("copy", in particular the photograph), but above all he wants to take the expression "image" in its "most original sense", "according to which we say that the landscape presents a beautiful 'image' (look)".[7] As to Wittgenstein, a focused text by him on the issue of realism and visual perception is the so-called Part II of his *Philosophische Untersu-*

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[4] Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, first published as vol. VIII of *Jahrbuch für Phänomenologie und phänomenologische Forschung*, Halle a. S.: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1927. English translation: *Being and Time*, transl. by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962.

[5] Martin Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, Bonn: Friedrich Cohen, 1929. English translation: *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, transl. by Richard Taft, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.

[6] I touch on this briefly in my volume *Meaning and Motoricity: Essays on Image and Time*, Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang Edition, 2014, pp. 18 f.

[7] Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 64.

chungen[8] (for details see chapter I, sect. 9 of the present volume). Very unequivocal is a remark he jotted down in 1950, I have quoted it earlier already, but let me repeat it: "Being and seeming may, of course, be independent of one another in exceptional cases, but that doesn't make them logically independent; the language-game does not reside in the exception."[9]

Mainstream philosophical and psychological theories on visual perception today do not lean towards realism. We are being told that what is mirrored on the retina at any given moment is very different from what one, as it were, sees; what one actually sees, today's mainstream theory concludes, is a mental construct rather than an aspect of some unique objective reality. I believe this conclusion is wrong. I side with, say, Rudolf Arnheim and the realist Gestalt tradition he represents; and with Ernst Gombrich and his relentless opposition to relativism. As Arnheim puts it in a memorable passage: human cognition reflects "the objective structure of physical reality as conveyed to the mind through the senses. To this objective structure art, science, and the common sense of

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[8] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), transl. by G. E. M. Anscombe, 2nd edition, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958.
[9] See chapter I, p. 42 above.

practical life strive to do justice. In emphasizing the objective conditions of reality, I try to counteract the destructive effects of philosophical relativism."[10] Or as Gombrich wrote in a seldom-quoted paper: "there is a limit to perceptual relativism. What looks like a leaf to modern European must also have looked like a leaf in fairly distant geological epochs."[11]

3. Correct Depiction

Modern common-sense thinking is fundamentally realist. However, contemporary common sense faces a major problem – I have repeatedly touched on this in the present volume – when it comes to the specific issue of children's drawings. In drawings, common sense today expects the rules of naturalism and linear perspective to obtain. Children's drawings of course do not conform to those rules. Hence common sense, as also most of the earlier literature on children's drawings, regards these attempts at representation as deficient. By

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[10] Rudolf Arnheim, *New Essays on the Psychology of Art*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986, p. xi.

[11] E. H. Gombrich, "Illusion and Art", in R. L. Gregory – E. H. Gombrich (eds.), *Illusion in Nature and Art*, London: Duckworth, 1973, pp. 193–243, this passage on p. 200.

contrast, more recent literature, mainly under the influence of Rudolf Arnheim, emphasizes the creativity of children's drawings,[12] claiming, too, that realism has many varieties, and that children's drawings, just like modern art and non-Western art, can display a degree of realism which drawings observing the rules of linear perspective often cannot. Still, it is possible to maintain that naturalism and linear perspective should be regarded as essential cognitive and cultural achievements. Here Arnheim and Gombrich have differing views, but their divergence seems to be merely a matter of emphasis; certainly they are both epistemological realists. Let me quote two passages from Arnheim's essay "Inverted Perspective and the Axiom of Realism" (1972), passages especially striking since their larger context is precisely an opposition to the view that only central linear perspective conforms to the standards of realism. He wants to make sure, Arnheim writes, that his position

> is not misunderstood to coincide with the relativistic contention that the choice of methods of representation is due entirely

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[12] Cf. esp. Claire Golomb, *The Child's Creation of a Pictorial World*, 2nd ed., Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004.

to the accidents of tradition. In the most extreme version of the relativistic approach, pictorial representation is said to have nothing intrinsically in common with the subjects it represents and therefore to rely on nothing better than an arbitrary agreement of the parties concerned.

Arnheim here inserts a reference to Goodman's *Languages of Art*,[13] and then continues:

This trivially shocking challenge to beliefs taken as givens by the rest of the population is the direct opposite of what I meant to demonstrate. – ... although we must realize that our continued commitment to a particular tradition of realistic picture-making has induced us to misinterpret other ways of portraying space, we are not left with the nihilistic conclusion that nothing but subjective preference ties representation to its models in nature.[14]

Also, let me cite a longer passage by Claire Golomb on how she sees relativism on the one

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[13] The reference is to p. 15 of the Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968 first edition of Goodman's book.
[14] *New Essays on the Psychology of Art*, pp. 183 f.

hand, and Gombrich's relation to Goodman on the other:

> the notion of extreme relativism and of drawing as learning a language composed of arbitrary signs is not tenable. Authors frequently refer to E. H. Gombrich's view of art as a form of illusion practiced by artists who study the graphic conventions of other artists rather than learning their trade by observing nature... This, however, is only a partial reading of Gombrich's position. He rejects Nelson Goodman's notion of graphic symbols as arbitrary conventions and insists that there are limits to perceptual relativism. ... The search for meaning and the ability to perceive meaningful relations is part of our biological inheritance. The visual environment, according to Gombrich, is not neutral; our survival is dependent on the recognition of meaningful features that elicit approach responses or impel us to withdraw. Unlike words, the images of nature are not conventional signs; they are a natural language designed to apprehend meanings. Representations are meaningful statements because they stand in a systematic relationship to the objects

of reality for which they create a graphic equivalent...[15]

Discussing central linear perspective, Gombrich coins a formula he calls the "eye-witness principle". According to this principle, "perspective enables us to eliminate from our representation anything which could not be seen from one particular vantage point.[16] So "if you want to follow the programme of the eye-witness principle of not including in your picture anything that is not visible from a given point, you can and indeed you must stick to the method of central perspective which the camera has taken over from the painter". Perspectival drawings/paintings enhance visual credibility, they are experienced as visual truths, creating a "feeling of participation". Gombrich acknowledges and indeed stresses that "perspective cannot and need not claim to represent the world 'as we see it' ";[17] the crucial point he makes is that perspectival representation, and in particular the photograph, provide objective infor-

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[15] Golomb, *The Child's Creation of a Pictorial World*, pp. 358 f., cf. also chapter II, pp. 60 f. in the present volume.
[16] E. H. Gombrich, "Standards of Truth: The Arrested Image and the Moving Eye", in W. J. T. Mitchell (ed.), *The Language of Images*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980, pp. 181–217, this passage on p. 193.
[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 197, 202, 209.

mation in a way a non-perspectival hand-made image definitely does not.[18]

4. The Moving Image

As I indicated above by way of introduction, single static images can plausibly conjure up a scene, or correctly depict a given view, but they trivially cannot convey what the state of affairs is they show; they cannot convey statements. In Wittgenstein's famous formulation: "Imagine a picture representing a boxer in a particular stance. Now, this picture can be used to tell someone how he should stand, should hold himself; or how he should not hold himself; or how a particular man did stand in such-and-such a place; and so on."[19] The picture of course becomes unequivocal once it is complemented by a caption. But it can be disambiguated also by making it into an item in a series of pictures – a series can tell the story a single image cannot. Comics typically combine picture sequence with bits of text – speech bubbles. Other conventional graphic elements – for instance speed lines – are also added. And note how easily even very young children understand these conventions. It can be shown how such con-

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[18] Cf. *ibid.*, p. 211.
[19] *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 11e.

ventions actually emerge from real visual phenomena.[20]

Animated picture sequences are especially well suited to convey unambiguous narratives. And film and video – all possibilities of technical manipulation notwithstanding – are the ultimate carriers of mediated pictorial truth. Let me just come back to Cavell. Asking the question "What is film?", he begins to formulate an answer by quoting two theorists he finds particularly important: "Erwin Panofsky puts it this way: 'The medium of the movies is physical reality as such.' Andre Bazin emphasizes essentially this same idea many times and in many ways: at one point he says, 'Cinema is committed to communicate only by way of what is real.' "[21]

5. Image and Metaphor

In his classic 1964 essay "The Rhetoric of the Image" Roland Barthes comes close to suggesting, and here some Husserlian overtones can hardly

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[20] On how e.g. speed lines arise, see John M. Kennedy, "Metaphor in Pictures", *Perception* 11 (1982), pp. 589–605, on this particular issue cf. pp. 591–593.
[21] Cavell, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

be overheard,[22] that one never encounters "a literal image in a pure state"[23] – in other words, pictorial meaning is, basically, metaphorical. It was under Barthes' influence, but within the framework of the Lakoff–Johnson paradigm,[24] that Forceville began to elaborate his theory of pictorial metaphors, that is of pictures which while showing something that is "literally untrue", thereby easily invite metaphorical interpretations.[25] Written some years later, Noël Carroll's essay "Visual Metaphor"[26] similarly relied on the Lakoff–Johnson paradigm, as does also, notably, the more recent study "Metaphor, Gesture, and Thought" by Cien-

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[22] See the references to Husserl on pictorial meaning in my "Images in Natural Theology", in Russell Re Manning (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 581–594, the Husserl references on p. 587.

[23] "The Rhetoric of the Image", in *Image Music Text*, essays selected and transl. by Stephen Heath, London: Fontana, 1977, p. 42.

[24] Cf. George Lakoff – Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980.

[25] Charles Forceville, "The Case for Pictorial Metaphor: René Magritte and Other Surrealists", *Vestnik* (Ljubljana), vol. 9, no. 1 (1988), pp. 150–160.

[26] In Jaakko Hintikka (ed.), *Aspects of Metaphor*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994, pp. 189–218.

ki and Müller.[27] By contrast, Kennedy's 1982 paper "Metaphor in Pictures" adheres, rather, to the classical rhetorical tradition: "Pictures can be literal or metaphoric. Metaphoric pictures involve intended violations of standard modes of depiction that are universally recognizable. The types of metaphoric pictures correspond to major groups of verbal metaphors."[28] Canons of depiction, as Kennedy puts it, introducing his first display of metaphoric images (cf. Figure 1), "can be followed in a picture in an anomalous way, and the anomaly may be taken to be an error, or it may be taken to make a point. Where the anomaly is considered to be appropriate to make a point, without revising the standard canon…, the picture is taken to be using anomaly deliberately in a metaphoric manner."[29]

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[27] Alan Cienki – Cornelia Müller, "Metaphor, Gesture, and Thought", in Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr. (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 483–501. The study contains an important reference to Wilhelm Wundt as being the "first scholar to recognize that gestures may be used metaphorically" (*ibid.*, p. 485, the reference is to Wundt's turn-of-the-century work *Völkerpsychologie*).

[28] John M. Kennedy, "Metaphor in Pictures" (cf. note 20 above), this first summary passage on p. 589.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 590.
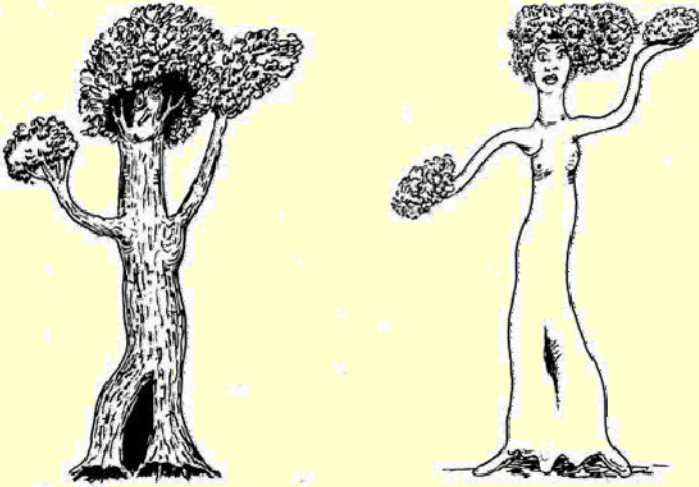
Figure 1: "Where a drawing of a tree has a few features of a person added it may be termed 'a tree drawn as a person'. Conversely where a person is drawn with a few features of a tree added the drawing may be considered as 'a person drawn as a tree'".[30]

Kennedy in this paper is also strongly influenced by Arnheim and by Gombrich. He refers to Gombrich's early essay "Visual Metaphors of Value in Art". A fundamental visual metaphor Gombrich here discusses is the colour *gold*. "The love of light", he writes, "reaches deep into our biological nature, and so does the attraction of glitter. What wonder that this elementary reaction

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[30] *Ibid.*

provided mankind with its basic symbol of value? For what else is gold but the glittering, sunlike metal that never ages or fades?"[31] Now before embarking on this discussion, Gombrich opens up a momentous general perspective. As he puts it: "The possibility of metaphor springs from the infinite elasticity of the human mind; it testifies to its capacity to perceive and assimilate new experiences as modifications of earlier ones, of finding equivalences in the most disparate phenomena and of substituting one for another."[32] Metaphor, then, is not just a matter of language; it is an all-encompassing cognitive capacity.

This capacity manifests itself at every level of experiencing and communicating. In his introduction to a collection of classic papers on metaphor theory, the volume's editor quotes the following passage from the famous essay "On Truth and Falsity in Their Ultramoral Sense" by Friedrich Nietzsche: "A nerve stimulus, first transformed in a percept! First metaphor! The percept again copied into a sound! Second metaphor!"[33]

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[31] Ernst H. Gombrich, "Visual Metaphors of Value in Art" (1952), in Gombrich, *Meditations on a Hobby Horse*, London: Phaidon Press, 1963, p. 15.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[33] Mark Johnson, "Introduction: Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition", in Mark Johnson (ed.), *Philosophical*

In the original German it is the word "Bild" – picture, image – that stands for "percept". Transposed meaning, Nietzsche suggests, is not a primarily linguistic phenomenon. A bodily feeling might give rise to an inner visual image, which in turn might become translated into a verbal formula. The – mental or physical – visual image might serve as a metaphor for something perceptually even more primordial; while verbal expressions emerge as metaphors for visual images. Here, then, we arrive at metaphor in its classic – verbal – sense, with an awareness however of its perceptual, in particular visual, foundations. Nietzsche's essay was published posthumously in the early 1900s; I believe to detect a faint echo of it in Titchener's hypothesis that words are grounded in kinaesthetic images.[34] And Titchener of course strongly influenced Arnheim.[35] Significantly, there is an early study by the latter – a study referred to by Kennedy in his 1982 paper – in which Arnheim writes: "we speak without hesitation of a 'soft tune', thus applying a quality of touch to sounds, or of a 'cold color', thus relating tem-

Perspectives on Metaphor, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981, pp. 3–47, this quote on p. 15.

[34] Edward Bradford Titchener, *Lectures on the Experimental Psychology of the Thought-Processes*, New York: Macmillan, 1909, see esp. pp. 176 f.

[35] Cf. chapter II, p. 49 above.

perature to an optical phenomenon. ... words like 'cold', 'sharp', 'high', 'dark' have partially lost their specific perceptual connotation for us... this linguistic phenomenon itself bears witness to the fact that it is natural for man to rely on qualities that different senses have in common. These similarities ... provide the bases of metaphoric speech in poetry."[36]

In Arnheim's study there are, also, some important references to John Murry[37] and to Stephen Brown.[38] "Metaphor", Murry wrote, "is as ultimate as speech itself, and speech as ultimate as thought." Quoting a familiar metaphor by way of example, Murry stressed that that metaphor was *necessary*, "because we find that there is no way of saying what we want to say ... save by this metaphor or one of its variations", there is an "absence of genuine alternatives", indeed the quality here

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[36] Rudolf Arnheim, "Abstract Language and the Metaphor" (1948), in Arnheim, *Toward a Psychology of Art: Collected Essays*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966, pp. 266–282, this passage on p. 275.

[37] John Middletown Murry, "Metaphor" (1927), in Murry, *Countries of the Mind: Essays in Literary Criticism*, second series, London: Humphrey Milford / Oxford University Press, 1931, pp. 1–16.

[38] Stephen J. Brown, S.J., *The World of Imagery: Metaphor and Kindred Imagery*, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1927.

conveyed "could not have been perceived without the metaphor". Thus "metaphor appears as the instinctive and necessary act of the mind exploring reality and ordering experience. It is the means by which the less familiar is assimilated to the more familiar, the unknown to the known". To "attempt a fundamental examination of metaphor would be nothing less than an investigation of the genesis of thought itself". Through an apt new metaphor, we discern "resemblances between the unknown and the known".[39] What Murry next wants to argue for is that there is merely "a formal difference between metaphor and simile and image", "metaphor is compressed simile". However, he points out, not every image is a "visual image"; we should reject "the suggestion that the image is solely or even predominantly visual". "The image may be visual, may be auditory, may refer back to any primary physical experience" – Murry here specifically mentions those "metaphors which describe the process of thought itself as a grasping or apprehension".[40] Partly under the influence of Murry – at places actually echoing him – but assembling a great many other sources, too, Brown by contrast definitely focuses on the role of the visual/pictorial. "Metaphor", he writes, "is in its

[39] Murry, *Countries of the Mind*, pp. 1 f.
[40] *Ibid.*, pp. 3 f.

origin an attempt to express in terms of experience thoughts lying beyond experience, to express the abstract in terms of the concrete, to picture forth the unfamiliar by means of the familiar, to express insensuous thought by sensuous terms."[41] And as he then expounds: metaphor amounts to an "imported image coming vividly before our mental vision, while the notion which is the real subject of the discourse momentarily fades into the background, and is seen only through the image".[42] To recall Nietzsche: specific mental images can be construed as visual metaphors, with those images standing for physical/ /motor responses to physical stimuli. Verbal metaphors on their part essentially rely on mental images. It is this latter insight Brown is clearly a proponent of.

6. Word and Image

Another passage by Brown takes me to the end of this concluding chapter. "The use of metaphor ... involves no sacrifice of truth. But I think we may go further and say that it may express a portion, or at least an aspect, of the truth which would not

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[41] Brown, *The World of Imagery,* p. 33.
[42] *Ibid.,* p. 50.

otherwise find expression."[43] I believe metaphor, when functioning as metaphor, functions because it conjures up images. Metaphoric language cannot be reduced to non-metaphoric language because the visual foundations of thinking actually cannot be eliminated. Sacrificing images would amount to sacrifice truth. As I have suggested by way of introduction, it is the image that serves as the fundamental vehicle of truth. Recall that language is originally a sequence of visual images – gestures and facial expressions, first based on resemblance and mimicking, and then gradually becoming conventionalized.[44] But even after ver-

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[43] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

[44] An outstanding recent book on the evolutionary priority of visual language is Michael C. Corballis, *From Hand to Mouth: The Origins of Language*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002. Pointing in particular to a continuity between animal and human communication, Corballis writes (p. 52): "transformation from iconic to abstract may be termed *conventionalization*. ... communicative gestures emerge from actions on the physical world and are then adapted and conventionalized. ... – The progression from direct action to conventionalized gesture is actually a fairly general property of animal communication. ... ... the process of conventionalization also occurs in the signed languages of the deaf." – From the vast literature on the topic let me here further pick out Ivani Fusellier-Souza's paper "Emergence and Development of Signed Languages: From a Semiogenetic Point of View". Fusellier-

bal language has emerged, gestures play an essential role. This is the big theme of David McNeill. As he puts it: "language is inseparable from imagery. The imagery in question is embodied in the gestures that universally and automatically occur with speech. Such gestures are a necessary component of speaking and thinking."[45]

Language is inseparable from imagery also in the sense that it is images which constitute the content of verbal expressions. A remark by Wittgenstein that should be baffling to his mainstream interpreters: "The important point is to see that the meaning of a word can be represented in two

Souza distinguishes between "'productive' signs (non-conventionalized) and 'lexicalized' signs (conventionalized). The former are characterized roughly by the use of highly iconic elements via an illustrative intent; the latter by the deactivation of illustrative intent..." (*Sign Language Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, Fall 2006, pp. 30-56, the quoted passage on p. 38).

[45] David McNeill, *Gesture and Thought*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005, p. 15. This book is a sequel to McNeill's *Hand and Mind: What Gestures Reveal about Thought*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992. A fascinating study building on the ideas of McNeill, Arnheim, Lakoff–Johnson and others is Jean-Rémi Lapaire, "Visuo-Kinetic Explorations on Grammar", in András Benedek – Kristóf Nyíri (eds.), *Images in Language: Metaphors and Metamorphoses*, Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 2011, pp. 42–55.

different ways: (1) by an image or picture, or something which corresponds to the word, (2) by the use of the word – which also comes to the use of the picture."[46] Earlier in the present volume I have quoted Arnheim as saying that what makes "language so valuable for thinking ... cannot be thinking in words. It must be the help that words lend to thinking while it operates in a more appropriate medium, such as visual imagery."[47] And there is a very recent empirical study by Amit et al.,[48] once more confirming that thinking is predominantly visual, and only secondarily verbal.

Finally, there is the phenomenon so much stressed by Ivins, and taken up more recently in a brilliant book by Ferguson,[49] that certain states of affairs simply cannot be communicated verbally, they can only be communicated by pictures – drawings, photographs, animations, videos. It seems, to sum up, no exaggeration to say that con-

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[46] *Wittgenstein's Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics – Cambridge, 1939* (cf. chapter I, note 40 above), p. 190.

[47] Cf. chapter III, p. 91 above.

[48] Elinor Amit et al., "An Asymmetrical Relationship between Verbal and Visual Thinking: Converging Evidence from Behavior and fMRI", *NeuroImage* 152 (2017), pp. 619–627.

[49] Eugene S. Ferguson, *Engineering and the Mind's Eye*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992.

veying truths always relies, directly or indirectly, on images – gestures, mental images, physical images. But it is not merely the case that, ultimately, only images can convey truths; I would go further and say that in a sense images *always* convey truths – they cannot be but veridical. Of course there are fictitious paintings, and of course there are manipulated photographs (and films and videos, as I have noted in sect. 3 above). But even these are made up of visual segments that reflect elements of reality. As to photography, this is how Moholy-Nagy puts it in his seminal work *Malerei Photographie Film*: "in the photographic camera we have the most reliable aid to a beginning of objective vision. Everyone will be compelled to see that which is optically true, is explicable in its own terms, is objective".[50] Moholy-Nagy is echoed by Susan Sontag in her *On Photography* (1973), but the most dramatic formulations here are probably those by Roland Barthes.[51] The photograph, writes Barthes, attests that "what I see has indeed existed", photography "offers an immediate presence to the world". "No writing", Barthes

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[50] Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, *Painting Photography Film* (2nd German ed. 1927), Engl. transl. London: Lund Humphries, 1969, p. 28.

[51] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, transl. by Richard Howard, New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1981.

goes on, "can give me this certainty. It is the misfortune ... of language not to be able to authenticate itself." Barthes sides with the "realists", of whom, he writes, he is one and of whom he was already one when he asserted that the photograph was "an image without code".[52] An image without code – is that not a felicitous formula for the idea of pictorial truth?

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[52] *Ibid.*, pp. 82, 84, 85, 88.

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