



Hume and Wittgenstein: Criteria vs. Skepticism

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HUME AND WITTGENSTEIN: CRITERIA VS. SKEPTICISM

As far as philosophical admonitions go, there are probably few as famous as Wittgenstein's Blue Book warning:

We are up against one of the great sources of philosophical bewilderment: we try to find a substance for a substantive. (p. 1)

Wittgenstein, of course, could have added: This is something we should have learned long ago from Hume. He could have quoted the following passage from the Appendix to the Treatise:

Philosophers begin to be reconcil'd to the principle, that we have no idea of external substance, distinct from the ideas of particular qualities. This must pave the way for a like principle with regard to the mind, that we have no notion of it, distinct from the particular perceptions.

Neither causal necessitation, self, nor substances could be located by Hume no matter how hard he tried to analyse his experience of the world. For Hume, there were no experiential 'facts-of-the-matter' in virtue of which one could acknowledge, with epistemic justification, causal connectivity or necessity, the temporal extension of one's own mind, or the elusive particularity of that in which qualities are sometimes said to inhere. We know that for Hume, since he tells us, his skepticism is engendered by his inability to surrender either of the two principles, the conjunction of which he takes to be impossible. He is unable to deny that whatever is distinguishable is separable, and, as well, that there are de re connections between what is distinguishable. (T 636) What this means for Hume is that the world 'as it really is' could well be utter-

ly chaotic, or, at least, structured by relations and connections which bear no resemblance to the relations and connections imposed upon our perceptions and subsequently projected onto the world.

Hume, of course, is neither the disputatious sort of ersatz skeptic at whom he sneers in the opening paragraphs of An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals; nor is he a fainthearted skeptic, who will, in the end, return to us everything he had only seemed to take away. We know just how unrelenting he is in his attempt to show that "the understanding never observes any real connexion among objects, and that even the union of cause and effect, when strictly examin'd, resolves itself into a customary association of ideas." (T 259-260)

Although Book I of the Treatise is called "Of the Understanding," misunderstanding is not a topic that exercises Hume. Of course, it is not all that difficult to understand why this is so. 'Misunderstanding' is, on its semantic face, inseparably concerned with language; and a concern for and about language is not something that attracts very much of Hume's explicit attention. Indeed, I am inclined to think that Hume's most important explicit comment about language is to be found in Book II, where he notes:

...the sense of interest has become common to all our fellows, and gives us a confidence of the future regularity of their conduct: And 'tis only on the expectation of this, that our moderation and abstinence are founded. In like manner are languages gradually establish'd by human conventions without any promise. (T 490)

In Wittgensteinian terms, I think that Hume is saying, in effect, that the conventions that determine what is just with respect to property in a society are, as it were, definitive of a form of social life; that is, not agreements, contracts, or compacts -- promises, as Hume refers to these -- since such compacts are themselves embedded in something deeper, namely, in the human conventions that ground such compacts and contracts. Although I am going beyond what Hume says here, there is no reason to believe that we cannot identify the analogical linguistic counterparts of promises and conventions. The linguistic conventions provide the foundational matrix for the applicability of the justifying truth-making procedures. In essence, sense precedes, and determines, truth conditions.

What I will argue for here is the view that it is impossible for Wittgenstein to have been a skeptic of a Humean variety; since such skepticism presupposes realism; and, whatever else Wittgenstein is, or isn't, he is not a realist of the requisite variety. So, I owe a characterisation of how I understand realism; and, as well, why I think it is a necessary condition for skepticism.

Realism is the view that there is, as a realist says, an 'objective and external world' determinate with respect to its properties and relations, existing 'out there' (i.e., independently of our most well-founded scientific and commonsensical beliefs), our conceptual schemes (whatever they might be), and the presuppositions, if any, and commitments, if any, that reside within our common languages. That a piece of this mind-and-language-independent world is how one of us believes or says that it is, is necessary for that one of us to have the truth about the world. 'Truth' is a

relation describing a word-world fit. Consequently, realism and the idea of there being truths about how the world actually is have been and still are inseparable.

At least two issues, much canvassed in recent literature, are of no interest to me here. These are: (i) The claim that realism is the metaphysical perspective of 'commonsense'; and (ii) The claim that an unproblematic version of a correspondence theory of truth is a necessary condition for the coherence of the realist position. With respect to the first, I find it scarcely intelligible. With respect to the second, I have no view.

My guess is that nobody will find my characterisation of realism either objectionable or innovative; and, consequently I anticipate no disagreement there. It does seem to me, however, that 'skepticism' is one of those deeply-entrenched terms of philosophical art, the meaning of which is just taken for granted. In fact, and fortunately, I don't think that inattention to the concept of 'skepticism' has been particularly damaging; but, nevertheless, there is apt to be argument when one attempts to say something about it.

Anything beyond the most papery-tigerish variety of skepticism is compelled to deny that even our most well-justified beliefs are (or could be) instances of knowledge. The genuine skeptic insists that the world 'out there' may be quite unlike the ways we take it to be, despite the fact that our epistemic and doxastic institutions compel us to take it in the ways we take it, and even if, so as not to leave out Kant's challenge to skepticism, some of the ways we take it to be are, in some sense, necessitated. In more fashionable terms: truth and (totally) warranted (or even necessitated) assertability are

distinct. The connection, then, between skepticism and realism is obvious. Unless it was true that the world could be other than the way we take it to be, it just isn't possible to be mistaken about how it 'really' is.

I want to forestall a possible objection; namely, the observation that although it may well be the case that this characterisation of skepticism does apply to quite a few philosophers, it does not apply to Hume. The substance of the objection is that Hume is not necessarily committed to realism, since his skeptical point of departure is his questioning of the forms of 'reasoning' standardly used to reach and defend our beliefs about the world. It might then be argued that although Hume is a kind of realist about reasoning; i.e., that there is, in principle, a form of reasoning more reliable than the inductive base upon which our reasoning about the world putatively rests, he need not be a realist about the mind-independent nature of the world.

This will not do. If our form or forms of reasoning are inadequate, then their being inadequate can only mean that their deployment, even in the best circumstances, is unable to guarantee truth. If so, then there must be a truth that transcends even the best deployments of our best forms of reasoning.

Hume does not claim that we know that the objective world contains no temporally enduring substances, no distinct selves in which our sensations inhere, and no surprising conjunctions and separate existences. If he were, then he would have gone substantially beyond the delivery of his senses; and, consequently, Kant would have been unable to have learned from Hume what he did, indeed, learn. Hume, in Kant's terms, certainly is not a philosopher susceptible to the seductive charms of

'transcendental illusion.' Hume, however, entertains no doubts on this score. In the Treatise he writes: "'Tis impossible ... that from the existence of any of the qualities of [perceptions], we can ever form any conclusion concerning the existence of [objects], or ever satisfy our reason in this particular." (T 212). This seems to me to be an indubitably clear and distinct announcement by Hume of both his realism and his skepticism. The world as it really is, for Hume, just could be a world of enduring substances (both physical and mental).

It may seem strange that one would now suggest something like an 'argument' in defense of the idea that Hume was a skeptic.² I think, however, that the philosophical stir produced by Kripke's discussion of Wittgenstein on rules and private language, and most particularly, Kripke's main claim that Wittgenstein is a rather thoroughgoing Humean skeptic, does justify a reconsideration of a case we had, most likely, believed to be permanently closed.³

I think that Kripke's case rests almost entirely on his correct observation that for Wittgenstein there is no 'superlative fact' about one's mind that constitutes one's meaning by 'w' now what one meant by 'w' in the past; and that for Hume, there is no matter-of-experiential-fact (i.e., neither impression nor idea analysable into antecedent impressions) the obtaining of which justifies one's belief in substances, self, or causal connectivity.⁴ This, however, is really no more than the point I made at the outset; namely the observation that for both Hume and Wittgenstein it was philosophical folly to believe that the 'meaningfulness' of an expression, or of a component of our thought, depended upon its designating a discriminable item of experience. In neither the

case of Wittgenstein nor Hume -- nor anyone else for that matter -- would that be taken to be a sufficient condition for skepticism. What is sufficient for Humean skepticism is that:

- (i) All and only that which could be known lies within experience
- (ii) There is a determinate world independent of sense experience, and
- (iii) Sense experience can never be justifiably engaged in reaching beyond itself to the independent world; i.e., to the world as it really is independently of any of the ways we may even be necessitated to perceive it as being.

I now move, as it were, indirectly, towards Wittgenstein by borrowing and adapting, from a penetrating paper by Crispin Wright.⁵ Suppose that we have long believed that a falling barometer was a reliable basis for the prediction of imminent rain. Of course, we could well have a scientific account of why it is the case that when a barometer falls, it is almost always the case that rain is soon to follow. Not only is it the case that a falling barometer provides us with an inductive variety of evidential justification for a belief, but, as well, we are in a position to give an acceptable account of why there is this sort of relation between rain and falling barometers. Despite all of this, we can and do acknowledge the possibility of empirically discovering that there is really no genuine connection between rain and falling barometers; but rather, that there is a heretofore unsuspected, and quite complex reason for why it turns out that rain usually follows a falling barometer. We can, consequently, imagine a world in which although barometers do fall from time to time, and rain does occur, there is no reliable

epistemic connection between them. Barometric pressure gauges were developed in that world to predict the likelihood of bouts of asthma, and not rain.

The point I want to make here is that insofar as 'S' is understood to stand evidentially to p, we can always imagine the possibility of it being empirically discovered that 'S', contrary to our current beliefs and theories, is not good evidence for p, without it being the case that one changes the meaning of the semantically constituent parts of p. 'Rain' and 'barometric pressure' mean the same in the languages of both of the above worlds. To put it fashionably: when something is evidentially connected to something else, no matter how 'good' the evidence is, there is a possible world in which the obtaining of the former is not good evidence for the latter. This contention, of course, accords with the standard intuition that an evidential relation is a contingent relation. Put in those sorts of terms, it is obvious that Hume would agree; indeed, he just might be prepared to argue that it is some sort of necessary truth that an evidential relation is contingent.

Now, just suppose there is something, call it C, such that it, like evidence, provides one with epistemic justification for the belief that p, and, as well, like evidence, is not such that its obtaining is logically sufficient for p, but differs from evidence in the following way: It is not possible for there to be an empirical discovery that C is not really a reliable predictor of p without an alteration to at least some of the concepts constituting our present understanding of p. That is, there is no possible world in which p and C occur in which C is not an epistemically reliable basis for the belief that p. According to Wright, the rela-

tionship that C here bears to p captures the 'criteriological' relation introduced by Wittgenstein. But I have to add that only a part of what I have said here is borrowed from Wright. For various reasons, which are not central here, Wright deliberately refrains from appending anything like the semantic consideration concerning change of meaning.

Some examples illustrate the kind of relation that is being suggested. Consider red: For any of us who may be totally colour-blind, it is, nevertheless, possible to have good evidential ground for the judgement that the object in front of us is red. A meter that measured and displayed, by means of a readout, the wavelength of reflected white light, in the hands of a colour-blind observer, could serve as an acceptable and reliable producer of evidence for the judgement that something is red. Of course, there are possible worlds in which the wavelength of reflected white light is subject to substantial distortion by intersecting sound waves. In that world, the sort of meter we use in our world would not yield a reliable basis for the making of colour judgements.

But, consider something else; namely, the having of red sensations. I think that we can safely say two things: (i) That having red sensations (in the appropriate parts of one's visual field) is being in possession of reliable evidence for the judgement that the causes of those sensations are, indeed, red; and (ii) That having a red sensation is never sufficient for its being the case that one is seeing something red. Although it just might appear that I'm begging the question here against a sense-datum theorist, I am not. By reserving the expression 'seeing something red' for seeing something extramental which is red, and allowing the sense-

datum theorist to say that we 'have red sense-data,' and that sense-data are 'mental' objects, no question is being begged. Now, the claim here is that there is no world in which the inhabitants of that world could empirically discover that the having of a red sensation was not a reliable piece of evidence for the judgement that one was seeing something red; i.e., provided that we say that 'red' in that world means the same as 'red' in our world.

I frankly don't know how to produce a conclusive argument in defense of this contention. Anything that I've been able to think of here smacks of question-begging. I want, however, to indicate why that is so. The occurrence of a red sensation is never sufficient for the perceiver to have seen something red. Nevertheless, it seems obvious that the connection between 'red' and 'red sensation' is not, as it were, coincidental. What this suggests is that something like 'looking red to standard perceivers in standard circumstances' is a part of what we mean and understand by something's being red. If so, then if it were usually or generally the case that something which seems to standard perceivers to be red turned out not to be red, then, in a world in which that was the case, 'red' would mean something different from what it means in our world; that is, in our language.

Another case: Wincing, groaning, screaming, and ingesting certain drugs are, for us, reliable evidential indicators that someone is in pain; and, moreover, we don't believe that it follows from someone's behaving in those ways that the agent is in pain. Contrary to Malcolm's unfortunately influential early review of The Philosophical Investigations, such behaviour is not sufficient in any circumstances to ensure the existence of pain; even

though it is true, but not of particular importance here, that we take ourselves to be epistemically justified in withholding the judgement that someone is in pain when we see the person displaying that sort of behaviour on a stage in front of what we justifiably take to be an audience. What is being denied here is that we could come to empirically discover that wincing, groaning, etc. were not reliable indications, even in the most appropriate circumstances, that someone was in pain; and consequently that there is a possible world in which such behaviour was not a reliable basis for the judgement that someone was in pain, and that 'pain' meant in that world, or in its language, what it means in ours.

Although a criteriological relation is not a contingent relation pure-and-simple, it's not a kind of evidence the obtaining of which is logically sufficient for the occurrence of that which it is evidence for. The variety of non-contingency in this relation is not between, as it were, one fact and another, but rather, between a kind of epistemic ground and the sense of the expression designating the state-of-affairs for which one has adduced the evidential ground. This, of course, is an extension of a perspective on criteria presented in detail by Stanley Cavell.⁶

Wittgenstein does not have to disagree with Hume about induction not providing an indubitable guarantee that the unobserved resembled the observed. Hume was, as well, importantly right about the way in which induction pulled itself up by its own psychological bootstraps. There is no reason, however, for Hume to have concluded from these observations, as Barry Stroud has shown, that our presumed inductive warrants are and must be

defective, unless -- and this is Stroud's main point -- Hume has accepted a conception of justification that includes the idea that all effective reasoning must be deductive.⁷

Against this surprisingly rationalistic sense of reasonableness, Strawson, quite some time ago, suggested that what it means to be reasonable in the appropriate contexts, was to "place reliance on inductive procedures." More specifically, Strawson contended that "It is reasonable to have a degree of belief in a statement which is propositional to the strength of the evidence in its favour" is an analytic proposition.⁸ In a recent work, David Stove reiterates this type of consideration by arguing in detail that it is a necessary truth "That all the many observed ravens have been black is a reason to believe that all ravens are black."⁹

Although Strawson's and Stove's purposes are somewhat different, I think that the same important moral can be drawn from their similar observations. Strawson is mainly concerned with discrediting a traditional conception of reasoning that identifies it with deduction; whilst Stove is at pains to show that since the crucial epistemic principle is a necessary truth, there can be no contingent truth entailed or presupposed by it. That is, for Stove, the acceptance of a non-contingent epistemic principle of induction does not commit one to a principle of the uniformity of nature, nor to any view about the nature of the world.

I think both Strawson and Stove are implicitly preferring a similar perspective on the integration of the epistemic and semantic dimensions to the conception of a 'criterion' being canvassed here. For example: Waking up with a propensity to tell a story of a certain sort is criteriologically

related to 'dreaming' because it is a necessary truth that it is reliable evidence for one's having dreamt, in all possible worlds in which there are dreams and story-tellers. Indeed, as quite a few philosophers have thought, criteria are rather queer sorts of things. They are seen as necessities which are neither, strictly speaking de dictu nor de re; but rather, a bit of both.

Although this is clearly not the place to argue for the following, there may well be an affinity between Wittgenstein and a somewhat modified Lockean position. If 'having the power to produce red sensations in sentient beings' is, at least in part, what it is for something to be red, then, as already suggested, 'That one has red sensations is a reliable piece of evidence for the belief that one is seeing something red' is a necessary truth just because 'having red sensations' is criteriologically connected with redness. There is, however, no reason to agree with Locke that redness is not a property of the surfaces of physical objects. I can see no obvious reason to deny that colours are properties of objects; such properties being picked out or identified by relational propositions.¹⁰

It might seem, then, that Wittgenstein -- or, at least a Wittgenstein who was using this sort of notion of criteria -- could and would agree with Hume that anything distinguishable really is separable. The agreement here, it might be argued, was an agreement that if anything provided evidential justification for something else, the presence of the first was never logically sufficient for the presence of the other. I think, however, that this agreement is more apparent than real. Indeed, criteria do provide us with epistemic justification for a judgement, but they are non-contingently connected

with the kind of thing they are criteria for. This is the point of those well-known comments of Wittgenstein's about grammar and essence, and, of course, about the relationship between them. If Wittgenstein is not a realist, and I don't think he is, then his irrealism is, I think, most clearly seen as being embedded in his understanding of the relationship between grammar and essence; that is, in his understanding of the criteriological relation.

Whether the world 'as it really is' is exactly like the world as our most fundamental beliefs take it to be, or whether it's just a bit different (as, perhaps, an optimistic convergentist might take it), or whether it's radically different, it -- the world as it actually is -- is a possible world. Consequently, the 'actual' world is a possible world, whether or not we really know anything about how it is. It is an essential ingredient of metaphysical realism that it is possible that the actual world is quite different from the world as we believe it to be. There is, then, a possible world in which everything is entirely different from the way it is in the world described by our fundamental beliefs; and that possible world just could be the (i.e., our) actual world. For example, in that world, it is not the case, and, as well, it has been discovered empirically not to be the case, that having red sensations is evidentially connected to seeing red things; and, as well, in that world, grimacing, groaning, and ingesting aspirin are not evidentially related to people being in pain; although in that world red objects are seen and sentient beings do feel pain; and, moreover, 'red' and 'pain' mean in that world just what they mean in ours.

This is the logical and metaphysical underpinning of the Humean doctrine of the separability of the distinguishable. Hume, as far as I can discern, never wavers from the, as it were, 'principle of separability.' Small wonder: since to do so would, in effect, be to allow a deluge of necessary connections of just the sort that he denied we could know of.

My own view is that Wittgenstein was denying the possibility of a possible world of the sort that must be allowed by Hume. Attention to these and related passages by Kripke might have made him less anxious to cast Wittgenstein as a Humean (or Berkeleyian, as Kripke sometimes says) skeptic. Consequently, Wittgenstein is, contrary to the received view, an essentialist! Perhaps he isn't quite the sort of essentialist that one usually encounters in recent writings, but that might only show that the net is usually cast far too narrowly. I find it implausible to give any other reading to the remarks that "Essence is expressed by grammar" and "Grammar tells us what kind of object anything is." (Phil. Inv., §§371 and 373) At any rate, there is no need to be taken in by the sometimes religiously held view that the so-called doctrine of 'family resemblances' is a Wittgensteinian ode to anti-essentialism.

I don't suppose that I can really get away with characterising Wittgenstein as an essentialist without saying more about what I'm taking to be the essentialistic commitment in Wittgenstein. Here, then, are examples of the sort of de re necessary truth characterised by Wittgenstein's idea of a 'criterion':

- (1) Having red sensations is evidence for seeing something red; and in 'normal' circumstances it is reliable evidence.

- (2) Crying out, groaning, and grimacing constitute evidence that someone is in pain; and in 'normal' circumstances it is reliable.
- (3) Picking out a colour on a colour chart in response to a request to point out a colour one has imagined is evidence for that being the colour one has imagined; and in 'normal' circumstances it is reliable evidence.

A brief comment on Phil. Inv., §391 may be of some help here. Wittgenstein writes:

I can perhaps even imagine (though it is not easy) that each of the people whom I see in the street is in frightful pain, but is artfully concealing it. And it is important that I have to imagine an artful concealment here.

The first sentence can be taken as a form of a Humean separability thesis. It certainly does state the rather obvious fact that pain behaviour is not a necessary condition either for pain, or, if the case in point were to be extended (as he does in §393) for ascribing pain to someone. Consequently, conjoined with earlier comments, pain behaviour is neither necessary nor sufficient for being in pain, or even for ascribing pain to someone. None of that, however, is news to anyone. Wittgenstein's point here is in the second sentence. In order for one to intelligibly imagine that everyone is concealing their pain from everyone else, it is necessary to imagine inter alia, just what it is that is being concealed or suppressed, or held back, or kept in check, or whatever. The answer is obvious; namely, the customary modes of pain behaviour. I'm trying to treat this section as a reductio of the view that we can imagine a possible world in which pain and pain behaviour were not evidentially connected.

Garth Hallett says that what Wittgenstein is suggesting is that we cannot dissociate something from its ordinary criteria in order to articulate an hypothesis which is "merely contrary to fact."¹¹ This is quite close to what I'm saying here. Imaginability is often taken as the mark of possibility, and consequently, as the determinant of a possible world. Hume's principle "of the liberty of the imagination" (T 10) commits him to the notion that whatever the imagination can wed, it can, as well, put asunder. And, of course for Hume, whatever is imaginable is possible. Hume's famous pronouncement that "Any thing may produce anything" (T 173) leaves no doubt on this score. In discussing what we might call 'the limits of imaginability,' Wittgenstein is placing an anti-Humean constraint on possible worlds.

Near the beginning of this paper I suggested that there might be something of interest in the difference between basing one's judgement on demonstrably weak evidence and misunderstanding what one was presumably talking about. Wittgenstein's distinction between criteria and symptoms (which I will call 'evidence' here) is what makes it possible for him not only to acknowledge this sort of difference, but, as well, to begin to provide some sort of account of it.

Hume, as I read him, cannot have this distinction in any interesting or useful way. What I mean here by 'any useful or interesting way,' is any way other than by simply asserting that someone doesn't have a word (or concept, if one prefers) in their personal idiolect. Consequently, there is nothing that constrains Hume from imagining a possible world in which pains and pain-behaviour are, in some absolute and unlimited sense, evidentially

unrelated; and, moreover, a world in which how things look to folks has no evidential connection with how they are judged to be.

Hume is, as we know, quite silent with respect to most of the details concerning language. I don't want to entirely ignore the fact that insofar as Hume is concerned with the origin of our 'ideas' -- i.e., on a somewhat standard understanding of Hume, with our concepts -- he is concerned with the ways in which we acquire our uses of language. If Hume were simply a psychologist -- or a simple psychologist -- that just might have been good enough for him. There are, however, just too many things that he does consider which indicate that the genesis of our concepts does not give us the whole story. However, if we take him strictly at his word in the Abstract, when he says that if no impression can be produced which is the impression from which an alleged idea is derived, the "term" designating the idea is "altogether insignificant," we can see him as well on the way to becoming a skeptic about meaning. If the announced programme is the one which is carried through without deviation in the body of his work, then we will have to take it that this is Hume's first and last relevant word on the nature of language. We will have to take it, that is, that unless there is a psychological fact-of-the-matter (an impression) that is both necessary and sufficient for the correct use of an expression, the concept cannot be said to have meaning.

This, of course, is not very far from Kripke's interpretation of a central feature of Wittgenstein's thought. Small wonder, then, that Kripke can so easily cast Wittgenstein as a Humean 'meaning-skeptic.' Hume does seem to have taken himself to be at least a limited meaning-skeptic.

In a recent article, Michael Williams has argued at length that Hume, in the Abstract, is not to be taken as the final word on whether or not he is a meaning-skeptic.¹² Although I don't think that Williams has been entirely successful, there is at least one major thesis of his that I find more than plausible, and, more importantly, one that can be used to forge a tenuous, but non-skeptical, link between Hume and Wittgenstein.

Williams distinguishes between naturalism and foundationalism in epistemology by saying that the underlying motif of naturalism is the idea that "beyond a certain point, questions about why we believe the sorts of things we do can only be answered causally," and contrasts this with the view of foundationalism, which has it that justification "goes all the way down."¹³

This is what I think is going on here: Skepticism can be derived from foundationalism just in case it is argued that the appropriate foundation for our beliefs cannot be provided; i.e., that there is something 'lacking,' the obtaining of which would verify our beliefs, and, in so doing, make knowledge possible. The point here is that there is nothing but conditions of verification that can provide a rationale for the beliefs we have. A naturalist, however, will proffer an 'alternative' to verificationism; namely, the view that, although justification comes to an end, insofar as our beliefs can never be placed beyond all possible doubt, the rationale for them is to be found in something other than justification; namely, the causal conditions under which they are acquired.

That 'justification comes to an end' is, of course, one of those quite well-known Wittgensteinian slogans. I read this as Wittgenstein's way of

rejecting foundationalism; that is, as saying that as long as one confronts skepticism by saying that there just is something that, in the end, will conclusively verify my basic beliefs, the skeptic will always -- and of necessity -- win the day. Wittgenstein, however, shifts the focus of attention by introducing criteria as distinct from evidence, and in so doing is arguing that the skeptic is right that no evidence can ever be conclusive. If Williams is right, then what the naturalist in the theory of knowledge is doing is something parallel to Wittgenstein's procedure; namely, a kind of shift of epistemic focus. The naturalist is, in effect, saying that the account to be given of the genesis of our beliefs offers an alternative response to a foundationalist skepticism. Both Hume and Wittgenstein were pioneers of the primacy of human 'practices' as the conceptual determiners of our understanding of the world. If, however, Hume is presenting us with a naturalist (i.e., causal) alternative to foundationalism, Wittgenstein is offering a conceptual replacement in terms of criteriological necessity. This radical difference makes all the difference between a skeptical and non-skeptical stance.

Perhaps Hume is pulled in different directions. He is motivated not only by a desire to ground human understanding squarely within the confines of human experience, but as well, by the quite reasonable wish to explain to ourselves and others just what it is that our beliefs are about. On the other hand, Hume seems, again and again, to appreciate and acknowledge the fact -- or what presents itself to us as recalcitrant fact -- that certain of our beliefs incorporating concepts which

cannot be traced back to particular sense impressions are not, nevertheless, without sense; and certainly not without a significant place in our lives.

With this sort of suggestion to hand, I want, then, to look at a passage in Hume that is, I think, most revealing:

Thus upon the whole we may infer, that when we talk of any being ... as endow'd with a power or force ... [or] ... when we speak of a necessary connexion betwixt objects, and suppose, that this connexion depends upon an efficacy or energy, with which any of these objects are endow'd; in all these expressions, so apply'd, we have really no distinct meaning, and make use only of common words, without any clear and determinate ideas. But as 'tis more probable, that these expressions do here lose their true meaning by being wrongly apply'd, than that they never have any meaning; 'twill be proper to bestow another consideration on this subject, to see if possibly we can discover the nature and origin of those ideas, we annex to them. (T 162)

Hume does seem to be denying that the meaning of our words depends upon their standing for "clear and determinate ideas." I take him to mean here that an idea is clear and determinate just in case it is derivable from a congeries of simple impressions. He seems to me to be saying that so long as we insist on this, we are, as it were, compelled to say that these expressions are without meaning. But, Hume is suggesting that we are so constrained only insofar as we insist, that meaningfulness depends upon picturability. He seems, as well, to be suggesting that philosophers, in Wittgenstein's terms, are captivated by a model, a model that induces them to 'wrongly apply' the terms in question. Hume does say quite clearly here that the likelihood is that the

problematic expressions do have a meaning; and that their meaning can be investigated in a manner that does not presuppose a name-object pictorial relation.

I will take yet another big leap here. Suppose that we take it that Hume is denying that "meaning" is inextricably linked to correlative impressions. More clearly: the meaning of an expression -- and, consequently, the sentence or statement having the expression as a component -- need not consist in a picture, or anything else that can substitute for a picture. It would follow, then, there are at least two radically different 'modes of signification' available to us within our linguistic resources.

Is this really what Hume thought? I am not at all sure that Hume himself was entirely clear on this sort of matter. When speaking of our "idea" of necessary connection, Hume notes that despite the fact that no matter how many times we have observed x and y connected in the way that leads us to say that they are causally connected, these observations are never sufficient to produce in us an idea which is new and is, as well, an idea the linguistic deployment of which refers to a quality of the connected objects. But, he continues, "the observation of this resemblance produces a new impression in the mind, which is its real model." (T 165) If "impression" is here taken in a univocal sense, then, I think, there is good reason to think that Hume is contradicting himself in the space of a single sentence. I find this most implausible. What is more likely, is that "impression" had a broader extension than 'sense-impression'; i.e., it encompasses anything which is "in the mind," and that what is in the mind need not be pictorial or anything which functions as a pictorial representation. If

so, then a 'mental picture' or 'imagist' view of the nature of thought, understanding, and belief is not one which is being proffered deliberately by Hume.¹⁴

I have suggested that Wittgenstein's distinction between evidence and criteria, or, at least, something similar that could play the same functional semantic role as criteria do for Wittgenstein, could provide the basis for distinguishing between a gross lack of epistemic justification for a belief, and misunderstanding the sentence used to express the belief. Hume saw no need to deal with this sort of matter; but it does not follow that there is nothing in Hume that could be utilised to develop just this sort of distinction. Not at all surprisingly, 'habit' and 'custom'; that is, the 'naturalisers' within Hume's version of an epistemological naturalism, are the materials out of which one might well construct a Humean account of the difference between unjustified belief and a failure to understand.

But, despite the fact that quite a few similarities between Hume and Wittgenstein can be noticed, I can't ignore the fact that Hume rightly took himself to be a skeptic, and that Wittgenstein did not. Of course, Hume writes:

Nature, by an absolute and uncontrollable necessity has determin'd us to judge as well as to breathe and feel; nor can we any more forbear viewing certain objects in a stronger and fuller light, upon account of their customary connexion with a present impression, than we can hinder ourselves from thinking as long as we are awake.... Whoever has taken pains to refute the cavils of total skepticism, has really disputed without an antagonist, and endeavour'd by arguments to establish a

faculty, which nature had antecedently implanted in the mind, and render'd unavoidable. (T 183)

Again, Hume sets himself apart from what he has called "total skepticism" by commenting:

We may well ask, What causes induce us to believe in the existence of body? but 'tis vain to ask, Whether there be body or not? That is a point, which we must take for granted in all our reasonings. (T 187)

We can compare these passages in Hume with dozens of well-known and not so well-known passages in Wittgenstein. In the Blue Book Wittgenstein notes that, "The difficulty is to realize the groundlessness of our believing." (p. 24) In Section 217 of the Phil. Inv., he says quite explicitly that we can exhaust our justifications, and in so doing "reach bedrock." There is, as well, the well-known allusion, in Sect. 415 to his supplying "remarks on the natural history of human beings." Strawson has recently discussed a kind of similarity between Hume and Wittgenstein quite close to the sort of comparison I am making here; and in so doing, mentions about a dozen "relevant passages in On Certainty."¹⁵ According to Wittgenstein, there are certain, as it were, propositions which are "beyond being justified or unjustified..." which "underlie all questions and all thinking"; which are "exempt from doubt"; and which function as the "scaffolding of our thoughts"; and so on.

What Strawson notes, and emphasises, is that in the sense in which epistemological naturalism is the view that our "fundamental beliefs," or, in Wittgensteinian terms, the "bedrock" that constitutes the conceptual matrix for the beliefs we have, are not themselves appropriate subjects for justification, both Hume and Wittgenstein are engaged in

similar enterprises. I would say, as well, that there is something a bit like this that Kripke has discerned, however unclearly, that leads him correctly to say of both Hume and Wittgenstein that they do not confront the skeptic directly, but rather, indirectly. That is, neither of them undertake to demonstrate that we do know, in the standard epistemic sense of 'know,' what the skeptic denies that we are justified in claiming to know. Kripke, however, is wrong in thinking that it is this that constitutes a "skeptical response" to skepticism. I have suggested that Hume is, and has to be, a metaphysical realist in order to justify his skepticism. Consequently, the, as it were, 'naturalistic facts of life' for Hume may well be indubitable by virtue of our psychological makeup -- and, indeed, this psychological makeup may well be a part of our evolutionary heritage. But these are, and must be contingent truths about our world; even if they are truths the denial of which is psychologically impossible for us. How the world is 'in itself' -- as a noumenal world, necessarily inaccessible to sense experience -- may be entirely different from the way in which we may be necessitated to believe it to be.

If these fundamental pseudo-beliefs, or indubitable pseudo-propositions, are, as Wittgenstein characterises them to be, grammatical; i.e., as pseudo-statements of the unstateable criteria that determine the sense of the concepts we have, then they have that status in every possible world in which these concepts designate phenomena that they have in our world. Of course, there could be worlds in which there are no dreams; but in any world in which there are dreams it must be the case that

"waking up with a propensity to tell a story of a certain kind" is reliable evidence that the person has been dreaming.

Again and again I return to just the same point: If neither Hume nor Wittgenstein attempted to argue that we do, contrary to the skeptic, know that there are other minds, substances, causal connections, and so on, how, in detail, does it come about that one is a skeptic and the other is not? My own problem here is that I really do not know just what is more important, the similarities or the differences between them. In the shadow of Malebranche, Hume came to reject anything like an 'occult power,' calling them sometimes "fictions" and sometimes "illusions." Wittgenstein attempted to deflect a charge of being a behaviourist by saying that if he was speaking at all of a fiction, then it was a "grammatical fiction." Neither of them, in the end, seem to have been committed to the idea that a word had meaning only if it stood for a component of a picture that mirrored the thought or the experience which was being described. The only answer I can come up with is the one that I have already suggested: Hume's commitment to the separability thesis is necessary (and, most likely, sufficient) for his skepticism. It -- the separability thesis -- is incompatible with the conceptual constraints imposed by Wittgenstein's notion of a criterion. Consequently Wittgenstein cannot be a Humean skeptic.

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1. David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 635. Further references will be cited as 'T' followed by the relevant page number(s).
2. I have, however, encountered the objection that since all of my relevant citations are to the Treatise, and since, as is often argued, Hume abandoned so many of the views he held in the Treatise, my characterisation of him as a skeptic is inadequately supported. To this I reply: There is no evidence that strongly supports the contention that Hume surrendered the principle that whatever is (psychologically) distinguishable is (conceptually) separable. The significant contrast between Hume and Wittgenstein for which I argue here depends almost entirely on Hume's commitment to that principle.
3. Saul A. Kripke, Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language: An Elementary Exposition, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982).
4. Kripke, p. 65.
5. Crispin Wright, "Anti-Realist Semantics: the Role of Criteria", in Idealism Past and Present, G. Vesey (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
6. Stanley Cavell, The Claim of Reason, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).
7. Barry Stroud, Hume, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 60.
8. P.F. Strawson, Introduction to Logical Theory, (New York: Wiley, 1952), pp. 256-257.
9. David Stove, The Rationality of Induction, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), Ch. I.
10. This suggestion has been argued for quite persuasively in a recent (unpublished) paper by Frank Jackson and Robert Pargetter.
11. Garth Hallett, A Companion to Wittgenstein's "Philosophical Investigations", (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 436.
12. Michael Williams, "Hume's Criterion of Significance," Canadian Journal of Philosophy IV (June, 1985): 273-304.

13. Ibid., p. 278.
14. P.S. Ardal, in "Convention and Value", in G.P. Morice, ed. David Hume: Bicentenary Papers, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1977) has already argued that Hume does not hold an imagist theory of meaning. Although I think that Ardal's conclusion just may be right, I am not convinced of this by the considerations he adduces. The section in the Treatise on "Abstract Ideas", upon which Ardal heavily relies, seems to me to offer very little with respect to a rejection of imagism; and does not really go any further than Berkeley had gone; but of course, Hume well knows this when he says of Berkeley's discussion of abstract ideas that it is "one of the greatest and most valuable discoveries that has been made of late years in the republic of letters...." (T 17)
15. P.F. Strawson, Skepticism and Naturalism: Some Varieties (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), Ch. 1, Sec. 4.