DOSSIER

Artefacts: The Big Picture in Broad Terms

Artefatos: As Grandes Linhas de um Esboço

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ABSTRACT

My aim in this programmatic paper is to explore the relationship among three important notions: intentionality, disposition and artefact. There wouldn't be artefacts without what I call "intentional work," a sustained activity directed to the production of some good. I first present contextualism as a method. Then I use it to delimit the problematic concept ARTEFACT, with the intention to apply it to repertoires of mental dispositions that affect directly our personal identity. The unavoidable but loose criterion of human intervention is used, at least to some degree. Attitudes are intentional states with conceptual content, and concepts are dispositions. We acquire concepts during our lives, sometimes unconsciously, sometimes explicitly through definition of some kind, and each cognitive agent has a unique repertoire of concepts and a unique idiolect as well. The idea that our mental representations (at least some of them) are artefacts might sound strange at first sight, but I shall try to show that it makes full sense. Most of our mental dispositions –those provided with a conceptual content– are themselves artefacts. At the end, we are all different psychologically and culturally because our idiolects and repertoires of concepts are different. For a large part, what makes our species so special is an ongoing process through which homo sapiens makes itself what it is.

Keywords: Intentionality, disposition, artefact, contextualism, repertoire.

RESUMO

Meu objetivo neste texto programático é explorar algumas relações entre as noções de intencionalidade, disposição e artefato. Não haveria artefatos sem "trabalho intencional", uma atividade sustentada para a produção de algum bem útil ou de valor. Apresento em primeiro lugar o contextualismo como método usado para delimitar melhor o conceito ARTEFATO, com a intenção de aplicar o mesmo conceito aos nossos repertórios de disposições mentais, particularmente aqueles que afetam diretamente nossa identidade pessoal. O critério da intervenção humana, por mais impreciso que seja, é inevitável. As atitudes são estados mentais com conteúdo conceitual, e conceitos são disposições. Adquirimos conceitos durante a vida toda, às vezes inconscientemente e sem querer, às vezes através de algum tipo de definição, e cada agente cognitivo possui um único repertório de conceitos e um idioleto que lhe é próprio. A ideia de que nossas representações mentais (ou algumas delas) são artefatos pode parecer estranha à primeira vista, mas tentarei mostrar que ela é plenamente sensata. A maioria de nossas disposições mentais – aquelas providas de conteúdo conceitual – são elas mesmas artefatos. Finalmente, a razão pela qual somos todos

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diferentes psicologicamente e culturalmente, é que nossos repertórios de conceitos e nossos idioletos são diferentes. Por uma grande parte, o que torna nossa espécie tão especial, é este incessante processo através do qual *homo sapiens* faz dele mesmo o que ele é.

Palavras-Chave: Intencionalidade, disposição, artefato, contextualismo, repertório.

Applied Concepts

The contextualist treatment of meaning is well-known. The semantics of natural languages must answer to pragmatics. The powerful idea of truth-condition is preserved as a pragmatic notion. There is no such thing as a null context in which words and sentences would have their "pure literal meaning"; an asserted declarative sentence determines its truth-conditions always and only against a background of assumptions. These assumptions must be "weakly activated" for a correct understanding. By that I mean that they are remotely related to the content of an assertion, but their relevance is so weak that they do not even come to mind. They are not the focus of our attention when we hear a sentence, but they are part of the whole information our understanding must consider. A change in the background usually means a change in conditions of satisfaction.[2] A *contrast* in the background of two contexts of use, most of the time, entails difference in meaning (truth-conditions). Words have a nucleus of sense, but it is general in character and get through pre-propositional pragmatic processes prior to any application of the compositional rules (Recanati, 2004, 2010). Like a handshake, the meaning of words can have many different meanings determined by contextual factors. Between two unknown people, it is a way to salute each other, a sign of good will or openness for collaboration. This could be the nucleus of sense of the act of shaking someone's hand. But between two people that just had a fight, it is also a sign of reconciliation; between two old enemies, it means the end of something like a personal war; between two very good friends, it could mean the cooling down of the relation (why not big hugs as usual?). When Marshal Pétain shook Adolf Hitler's hand, it was understood as a sign of submission and shame for the French nation. When Nixon and Zhou Enlai shook hands in 1972, it meant that two great nations will finally have normal diplomatic relations, etc. It is not much different with words and sentences. The word "walk" will be understood correctly if understood differently in different tokens of the sentence-type "Aisha had a walk." In a context where Aisha is a toddler, we understand that she just gave her first steps in her whole life; if she is a healthy adult, we understand that she walked a few kilometers to stay in shape; if she is an athlete that undergone a knee surgery, we understand that she will be back soon to her team; if she is an elderly person in a hospital, that she walked in the hallway for a few minutes, etc.[3]

I suggest that something very similar happens when we apply concepts, even when they are not the content of words. There can be concepts with no associated words (you can have the ability to (re-)identify a specific shade of blue for which you lack a word.) We apply concepts to identify and classify things. It is an ability, an acquired capacity. Capacity and ability are, of course, dispositions. I take applied concepts to be the manifestations of dispositions acquired in different ways over time and somehow realized in the brain; they are not functions grasped in a mysterious way, but set-theoretical notions can be used to describe their manifestations. They have normative conditions of application, but their extension can change according to the context. The extension can also change according to the time of the tokening or manifestation, and the possible world. It happens frequently that something that is not really C falls under C. A plastic lemon is not a lemon, but in a context where there is no other real lemon, if someone ask you to pick up the lemon, you will correctly *count* the plastic thing *as* a lemon. The extension of a concept is not something given once and for all. In the backyard of your house, there is a rock with the appropriate form that can serve as a bench or garden chair. It will count as a chair insofar as it satisfies your desires, needs or plans.

Concepts and word meanings are relatively stable for the sake of communication, but they are submitted to our conative mental states. By that I mean that they can be slightly "bent" according to our expectations. Standing meanings correspond to what Austin called "descriptive conventions" (Austin, 1979, p. 121-122). Standing meanings are always general in character. But we always talk in highly specific contexts where meanings are applied to particular concrete objects (events, facts, etc.). Of course, the situation is totally different with the regimented languages of science. In a regimented language, all tokens of the same sentence-type determine the very same truth-conditions to secure a common understanding for the members of the same scientific community. In science, meanings and concepts have no plasticity. But in ordinary language, different tokens of the same sen-

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[2] The idea of condition of satisfaction is a generalization of the idea of truth-conditions for assertions. An assertion is satisfied if and only if it is true; an order is satisfied if and only if it is obeyed; a promise is satisfied if and only if it is carried out, etc.

[3] This is a variation on an example given by Julius Moravcsik, in *Meaning, Creativity, and the Partial Inscrutability of the Human Mind.* See Moravcsik, 1998, p. 30.

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tence-type must be understood differently (according to the context) to be understood correctly.

There is an aspect of meanings that I would like to highlight: they are instructions to construct schematic mental representations. I know it sounds like psychologism, but I believe that without imagination and imagery, language use would be a total mystery. The act of grasping the meaning of an arithmetic sentence is certainly not part of the meaning itself. But even the most radical anti-psychologist would admit that there wouldn't be any grasping or understanding at all without some mental activity. In other words, the grasping itself is psychological, "subjective elements are a necessary part and parcel of ... [the] grasping" (Frege, 1979, p. 4).[4] Otherwise, how could there be thoughts or conceptual contents in our mind? Do they get in without knocking at the door? With no invitation? Now suppose someone screams "Let's storm the Bastille!" Those who heard that war cry knew what to do, they were guided, so to speak, by the sentence. How? The answer I want to propose appealed, once more, to dispositions: when we learn to use words, corresponding dispositions are created. Dispositions do not work in isolation. In auspicious circumstances, the hearing (or seeing) of a word could be enough to cause the manifestation of some associated dispositions for discourse recognition (oral and written), and the manifestation of a disposition for semantic content (or the associated concept) in connection with other contents; and this very fast process usually (but not necessarily) involves schematic mental representations. The set of all such linguistic dispositions constitutes a repertoire called "idiolect." Such representations are necessarily schematic because they are general in some degree and can be applied in different contexts, so that they must exclude, therefore, irrelevant details. When a teacher says to his students: "Don't think of an elephant!", the result is unavoidable: they all represent a large animal with a trunk and big floppy ears. Not a particular elephant. Any elephant would do (Lakoff, 2004, p. 3).[5]

Human Intervention

There are distinctions important for us that cannot be made easily in a principled way. For instance, we can normally distinguish between what we do and what happens to us. But it is very hard to say exactly how we do it. Carl Ginet talks about an "actish phenomenal quality" (Ginet, 1990, p. 11 *et passim)* that we feel when we act voluntarily and that is not present when we stumble. But when the eye doctor puts a drop of collyrium in my eye and says, "Try not to close your eye!", I can't help but closing it... If it makes sense to try, it should be within my power not to close it. But I close it. Is it really something I do? [6]

When it comes to the distinction between artefacts and things-found-in-nature, we find ourselves in the same predicament. There are two parameters to be considered here: on the one hand, raw (natural) material, and on the other, some degree of human intervention. The proportion changes according to the case. Most of the time, trees and flowers are found "untouched" in nature, in forest or countryside. But what about planted trees in the king's garden? Are they artefacts? Since the Renaissance, gardening is seen as a sublime form of art. Practices like crossbreeding are very ancient. Like any living organism, ewes come from a long evolutionary (natural) process. The ewe Dolly is a clone and would not exist without human engineering. All the genetic heritage used for the cloning came from a natural process. Is Dolly an artefact? It would be easy to add other examples. They show how hard it is to delimit exactly the extent to which human intervention must be allowed in order to count something as an artefact. Every little thing we produce intentionally: hammer, watch, chair, pencil, you name it, requires raw material, but we all consider them artefacts. I am pretty sure that most people would say that domesticated animals are not artefacts. To put a necktie on a pet cat does not change his nature.

We can distribute along the same line different artefacts according to the degree of human intervention: at one extremity, say the left side of the line, we have cultural objects like institutions and fictional characters, that is, abstract artefacts where human intervention is almost everything. The fabrication of silex axes represents quite a lot of work. Then we have, in between, artefacts of first generation (wheels, houses, tables, some tools, cars, mechanical devices, etc.) and artefacts like robots, designed to make other artefacts (cars, for instance). Many artefacts today are made by robots or some mechanical devices. At the other extremity of the line (on the right side), we have things like readymade works of art. A walking stick found in the wood falls in the same category; a cave can be a shelter for many families, etc. Here, human intervention is almost nothing.

The identity of a fictional character does not depend on anything material even though, of course, it could not exist without a material base (flesh and blood actors, token-books, token-films, DVDs, etc.). An institution cannot be identified with its material base (a building, and people working in it). In the same way, an institution needs a material base to fulfill its proper function. Perhaps, the most famous example of a readymade work of art is Marcel Duchamp's bottle rack (1914): just pick up a bottle rack, put it on a pedestal, and call it *the* Bottle Rack. Well, any bottle rack is already an artefact, but readymade works of art, most of the time, are taken directly from natural environment. You go for a walk by the sea and find an old stump on the beach brought by the tide. It has

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[4] "Even if subjective elements are a necessary part and parcel of ... [the] grasping of a content, we shall not include them in what we call 'truth'" (Frege, 1979, p. 4).

[5] Lakoff calls "frames" these schematic mental images.

[6] See Ruth Millikan (2004, p. 3), for that example.

an interesting form that looks like the Nefertiti bust you have seen in Berlin; you call it Titi and bring it home. Perhaps, a few chisel strokes are necessary to underline the resemblance. It now has a place in your living room. A lock of hair can become a fetish; it once belonged to a beloved person, help you to remember her and you believe it brings you luck. In the middle of the line we would find most manufactured objects made by transforming raw material in something that satisfy our desires and needs.

Any artefact presupposes some mental states, acts, events, needs, attitude or stance. The Nefertiti's head is in the eye of the beholder and depends on an attitude, intellectual or emotional. The attitudes and activities of the sculptor who made the original bust seen in Berlin are very different and quite complex. An institution like the Supreme Court exists because of the thoughts and hopes of people working in a constituent assembly. The art of storytelling and the creation of characters would be impossible without mental imagery. Nowadays, we create artefacts (machines, robots) that produce other artefacts (hammers, pencils, knives, cars, etc.). But the machines or robots are, of course, created with certain purposes.

Summing up: artefacts would not exist without human intentional intervention. Trees, and flowers are not artefacts, but gardens are, when contrasted with what we find in forests and countryside. The case of human manipulation of the genetic pool of a species is not crystal clear. Dolly would not exist without human intervention. I think we hesitate to count Dolly as an artefact because she has, after all, a certain autonomy, like pets and domesticated animals. Her behavior does not depend on some artificial programming. It is indiscernible from the behavior of any other ewe. She is not a robot. When the contrast is between Dolly and any other "naturally born" ewe, we are inclined to classify Dolly as an artefact; but if the contrast is between Dolly and common or typical products of human engineering, the tendency is just the opposite.

Formal and Natural Languages

Formal languages are clearly artefacts. They are sharable entities created by one person or a small group, with a rigorously specified structure, and generated by the rules of a grammar that do not allow for exceptions. The syntax introduces the semantics, and the semantic properties of any sentence-type are inherited by all its tokens. Things change with indexicals and demonstratives (tokens of "I am thirsty" may have different contents.) But contextual dependency is a late concern in the philosophy of ideal languages. Formal languages used in mathematics and pure science do not need linguistic resources like indexicals and demonstratives. So, very

much like fictional characters, formal languages are artefacts created from the scratch.

Regimentation is a kind of human intervention. There are degrees of regimentation. Languages used in mathematics, for instance, are totally regimented, and do not evolve over time. They have strict conditions of identity. If you add new operators or expand the vocabulary, the result is a new language, allowing new inferences. But the language used in judicial affairs, for instance, is a mixture of natural language and a lot of technical jargon. Different people, sometimes easily identified, at different moments, made contributions to a judicial tradition (from which other judicial traditions can borrow). The language of that tradition is something unique, expressing the rules and criteria guiding the decisions of the judiciary of one nation. Each tradition determines how to apply correctly the terms of its own language. In some tradition the intervention is massive. The Catholic Church is a good example of an institution mastering her own language, which is not anymore, to some degree, a *natural* language.

Portuguese, French, English, Latin, are natural languages. But why do we call them "natural"? Sometimes we hear that Dante is the "father" of the Italian language, Camões, of the Portuguese, Shakespeare, of English language; Molière of the French language and Goethe of German. Of course, nothing of that is true. These are just *façons de parler*. No identifying group, let alone a single author, could have created something like Portuguese. But no natural language would exist without the intentionality of personal users, and the use of language presupposes mental states, intentions, desires, beliefs, plans and needs. The arbitrariness of language would be, we are told, the proof that it is an artefact. A long tradition talks about the "imposition" of meanings to words, as an act depending on intelligence and will (Locke). After all, natural languages do not come from a natural process, and nature cannot, just by itself, produce a song or a language like Portuguese. But are natural languages really artefacts? The metaphor of language as an instrument suggests that it is. Let us call "intentional work," a sustained and dedicated activity oriented toward the production of some good or artefacts. It seems clear that *collective* intentional work is perfectly possible; we have example of that every day, for example, in the construction of a house. But a natural language is not like a house, not even like a boat. On that score, Putnam's comparison between a language and a boat that requires a whole crew for the maneuvers is flawed. The collective intentional work of the crew is somehow unified by the captain's orders; and the construction of a house is guided by the blue print of an architect, while there is nothing like that for a natural language. There is no maestro conducting the evolution of natural languages. Philosophers writing in the great *Encyclopedia* suggested the idea of *a metaphysics*

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[7] K. Twardowski, in *On the Content and Object of Presentations*, argues that the expression "painted landscape" can refer to the primary object (the real landscape which is the model of the painter), or the landscape we can see on the canvas (secondary object) through which the real landscape is referred to. In the ongoing case, there is no clear intentional object, primary or secondary. See Twardowski, 1977, p. 16.

of instinct and sentiment guiding unconsciously the formation and development of languages. This could be an intentional process, but only in a very diluted sense. Using Twardowski's notions, in this case there is no presentation of the primary intentional object, not even of the secondary intentional object (Twardowski, 1977, p. 16).[7] We can trace back in some cases linguistic individual contributions to the persons who made them, but this is rarely possible. The idea to treat nations as collective agents looks a bit weird in that case. What kind of agent would be that? Nations can act as one, when they are at war, for instance, when a whole hierarchy of command is at work. But the creation and evolution of language do not correspond to any collective intentional work. Natural languages are natural because there is no corresponding intentional work, collective or individual. They have morphological structures to welcome and host lexical innovations. But they are more alike readymade works of art than it seems at first sight. We are all born in linguistic communities, each one with a fully constituted language. But each speaker-hearer has the opportunity to contribute by adding something (coining a new expression, a neologism, introducing a new funny metaphor, etc.). What we call a "language" is abstracted from the idiolects of the living speakers in a community.[8] The knowledge each one has of the language is always incomplete. Some people can spend a whole time life without creating a new expression, a neologism or even a new metaphor. But most people do these things. We are like workers constructing a road of the type *via romana*, but so long that no one has ever seen its end. Each one put a few stones on the soil, but no one, absolutely no one, knows where it goes. Paradoxically, each worker does his part intentionally and individually, but without this individual work, there wouldn't be any language; however, there is no "conducting intentionality." So, after all, we have some good reasons to call natural languages "natural." They developed anarchically, randomly, through mixtures with other languages spoken by other people, invaders or conquered. But the sentences we use and create everyday are clearly artefacts.

How do we Specify our Thoughts?

There are various theories of propositions elaborated by logicians and philosophers of language. We are told that propositions have different logical forms; that language, sometimes, masquerade their real logical form, and that they fulfill many different functions: they are the meanings of sentences, the bearers of truth value, the contents of utterances, and the objects of attitudes. I won't discuss all these important aspects.

Rather, I would like to defend the idea that, when it comes to the pragmatics of natural languages, propositions are phenomenologically suspect, and that sentences are enough for specifying our thoughts. Thoughts are not grasped by a mysterious kind of intellectual intuition. We made them each time we have to *specify* what we think, what we understand, or when we have to make explicit what we communicate. Thoughts are mental representations of their conditions of satisfaction constructed by following the instructions (meanings) acquired in a linguistic community. We acquire our linguistic dispositions in a community, and the community, most of the time, provides the stimuli for the manifestations of these dispositions out of which the thoughts are composed.

According to Soames, propositions are the result of an act of predication (Soames, 2010, p. 99). More precisely, a proposition would be the *type* of an act of predication. That view of proposition, be it correct or not, looks like a good start, because propositions are things we make by using predicates, not something pre-existing and waiting to be grasped in a third realm. But specifying is also an act and I believe one of the most important and not much discussed in the philosophy of language. I take inspiration from Condillac, today a very neglected philosopher, but quite influential in the XVIIIth century. Condillac's idea is this: the analysis of thought is already made in language. I suggest a reinterpretation of Condillac's idea. The content of words, that is, the manifestation of dispositions associated with a word, is used to identify, analyze and express parts of our mental representations. In other words, the mastery of a language is what allow us to specify what we think and understand.[9] What happens in our mind is a quick succession of fleeting mental images, perceptions, proprioception and "quasi-perceptions". All our sensorial experience is temporally ordered (Leclerc, 2017). In terms of *activity* and *passivity* – terms borrowed from Husserl's phenomenology –, we can distinguish two levels in what has been called "stream of consciousness", by James and Husserl. At the first level, that of sensorial experiences as such, passivity prevails, but we can close our eyes, choose to look in a different direction, from a different angle, etc. At the second level, that of imagination and memory, activity prevails; we can bend at will our stream of consciousness. A classic example: I have lost my keys; so, I try to go back in time up to the moment when I remember having them in my pocket; then I "go forward" remembering all the places where I have been since then. I am in control as much as I am when I move my eyes, my limbs or my tongue. Language is a way out of this stream, so to speak. It fixes what we think for ourselves and the members of our community and made it sharable. No need to say: it is indispensable for all human affairs, especially for science and serious reasoning in complex matters.

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[8] This is how I understand Davidson when he says: "I conclude that there is no such thing as a language, not if a language is anything like what many philosophers and linguists have suppose." (Davidson, 2005, p. 107). When we try a concrete approach to language, we do not find something abstract (which, consequently, cannot exist in space and time), but the idiolects of speakers-hearers, that is, a collection of different but converging repertoires of dispositions.

[9] See Condillac (1947-1951). *Essai sur l'origine des connoissances humaines* (1746) and Traité des sensations (1754).

The view I would like to develop is that what we call "propositions," most of the time, are expanded sentences used for specifying thoughts expressed in ordinary language or in the regimented languages of sciences. If propositions are eternal abstract entities, they are not artefacts, we do not make them. On that score, I follow Quine, at least up to a certain point (Quine, 2013, p. 189), but I am an intentionalist and I accept the first-person perspective. "The present king of France is bald" does not have the form F(a) because it means the same as "There is at least one and no more than one king of France and he is bald". Both sentences have the same truth-conditions; we get the second by expanding the first and by following a model, a guide. That guide is a schematic mental representation of the truth-conditions.

Most philosophers admit that native speakers-hearers of different languages can express the same thought and grasp the same truth-conditions. People using different languages will specify what they think by using a sentence of one of the public languages used in their community. If François asserts sincerely "Il pleut" and Hans asserts sincerely "Es regnet," we agree that they both express the same thought, the same truth-conditions, something that is true or false exactly in the same circumstances. What thought is that? Simply, the thought *that* it is raining or that the conditions for the truth of the sentence used in specifying the thought (the one in French or German) are fulfilled. Specifying that thought is just using an English sentence (in that case, but it can be a sentence of any other language) in the scope of the operator "that." This is how we proceed for specifying our own thoughts or the thoughts of other people.

But there is a difference between the way we understand our own thoughts and the way we understand those of the others. Burge calls the first "comprehension" and the second, "interpretation" (Burge, 1999, p. 236). The first is immediate, non-reflexive and non-inferential, but the second is just the opposite, reflexive and inferential. I doubt that the understanding of other people's thoughts is always inferential. But there is clearly an asymmetry between comprehension and interpretation. Like Hume, unable to find a collection of impressions within himself that could be called a "self," when I understand my own thoughts, I do not find within myself or "before my mind" something like a proposition, a structured entity made out of concepts or Fregean senses. I have a readily representation of how the world is which is relevant for my expectations. And when I hear someone saying something familiar, "The soup is on the table," or something weird like "There is a blue elephant in front of your doorstep," I construct a representation of how the world would be if the sentences were true (or how the world would be if my desire were satisfied or my intention fulfilled). And this construction, of course, is the result of a mental activity.

We have to learn languages. For most of us, that knowledge is far from complete; we absorb what we can, but our **idiolect** is enough to communicate in everyday situations. We get used to words and their meanings through repetition and training. To each word we have learned corresponds a **disposition** realized in the brain. This seems to me to be the best explanation we have. The cognitive part of language, what we grasp when we understand words and sentences, the senses of the words, are manifestations of these dispositions. Senses are instructions for constructing representations. Usually, these representations are schematic. The senses described by Austin's descriptive conventions are general in nature. What we understand is always more specific, enriched by contextual factors.

When I think (judge, believe) that something is F, I don't have a proposition "present to my mind". Propositions, as inner objects "present to the mind" are phenomenologically suspect. What is before the mind when I understand a sentence is a schematic representation that could be true in different, but similar situations. When I read in a fictional story that Sherlock does this or that, different readers will form different but similar representations, each one following the semantic instructions of her/his own idiolect, each one filling the gaps from his/her own experience. If that view is correct, the manifestations of dispositions associated with words (nuclei of sense) are general instructions helping us to construct such schematic representations. The mental imagery may differ, but the situations are similar enough. Meanings are general in character, but they are precise enough to give specific instructions for the construction of schematic mental representations. However, each one does it according to his/her own idiolect, that is, according to the dispositions acquired over time to which one's meanings and concepts are associated.

Spontaneous linguistic understanding presupposes a whole mental machinery, especially when something important is at stake and we are really paying attention. Then we do worry about the truth of what we think and what we (or the others) say. When something important for us depends on the truth of our thoughts and utterances, our understanding does not stick to the standing meanings specified by the descriptive conventions. It considers a lot more (Leclerc, 2012).

So why do we need propositions in the first place? Why not just sentences? The demand, I believe, comes from logic. In order to check our intuitions of validity, the sentence meaning of the premises and conclusion must be fixed and interpreted literally. But that can be done by expanded sentences fixing the relevant contextual factors. When the language is regimented and insensitive to contextual factors, as in pure science, you may call the premises and conclusion of a reasoning "propositions" if you like.

When it comes to the pragmatics of natural languages, with context dependency everywhere, sentences are enough, because understanding comes first. Our mutual understanding always goes much beyond syntax and semantics. Our understandings are complex processes that contain more information than the sentence understood; we can expand the sentence we use to specify our thoughts following the mental representations associated with our understanding. We use all sorts of knowledge (most of the time, an understanding of the whole situation, including the identity of the agents of the context,

their expectations, encyclopedic knowledge, etc.). If someone tells me "I am thirsty," what do I understand? The truth-conditions are the following: "I am thirsty" is true if and only if *the person who says "I" is thirsty at the time of the utterance.* But a full understanding of the sentence-used-in-context involves an identification of the speaker and a knowledge of the time of utterance. To get there, we just expand the sentence by adding singular terms. But how do we do that? How do we know which terms are to be supplied? By following a rule, a model. Meanings are rules for the construction of mental representations (even when the representation is far from satisfactory or just a "vehicle" for an abstract thought). The model is the mental representation of the truth-conditions, something that contains more information than just the initial sentence. By expanding the initial sentence, I specify information contained in the representation. We only need sentences.

Final Remarks

Things found in nature can serve our purposes. A cavern can be a shelter for several families. Other species transform their immediate environment to survive. *Homo sapiens* does it on the largest possible scale. We colonized space, send artefacts on the Moon, on March, and beyond. But nothing of that would be remotely possible without sharable mental representations of truth-conditions (or conditions of satisfaction). What makes our representations and understandings sharable is precisely a repertoire of concepts and meanings associated with the words we have learned to use, that is, convergent idiolects. This repertoire is a huge set of dispositions acquired over time, but the acquisition is not always a matter of being fully in control all the time. On the contrary, "we can know more than we can tell," as Polanyi happily says, because we do not pay full attention to everything we learn (Polanyi, 2009, p. 4).[10] Think for one moment about all the words you have learned in your mother tongue, just by being there circled by loving people. No special training is necessary. The proportion of the words learned through explicit definitions or in a dictionary is in fact relatively small. In the same way, we acquired concepts inadvertently. Our repertoire of concepts is so large that it is not possible to scrutinize it exhaustively. In our researches and new experiences, we acquire new concepts and knowledge, but in the basement of our repertoire of personal knowledge, there are things that hardly can be put in words. I believe that Francis Bacon and Descartes, in their philosophy of preconception (idols, bias or prejudices) had something important to say that goes exactly in that direction.

But Descartes' quest for an absolute commencement was an illusion. Many concepts and beliefs are acquired *involuntary*. Usually, racists become racist in racist families. No one says: "I wanna be a racist!" Our different repertoires (of meanings, concepts, or knowledge) are acquired partly through explicit training and repetition, and partly involuntarily, just by being accustomed or by a kind of acclimation. They are, in part, passively inherited. In terms of "human intervention," these repertoires are artefacts like natural languages and gardens. Each one has an idiolect, and a repertoire of concepts. The language we use, the knowledge we possess are inherited for a large part, *but they contribute directly to our personal identity.* They are for a large part inherited. They also can be changed and correct with hard work and good education. The artefacts of our everyday life somehow oblige us to acquire new skills and "shape our minds" (Malafouris, 2019, p. 5). The idea is not entirely new. *Homo sapiens* is the result of a long process of evolution. That process is natural, but the human beings as we find them today using sophisticated machines, languages and living circled by artefacts, are what human beings have made of human beings.[11] We domesticated ourselves.

Some Enlightenment philosophers expressed that point with simplicity: "The measure of reflection we have beyond our habits is what constitutes our reason. The habits are enough when the circumstances are such that one has just to repeat what we have learned" (Condillac, 1755, p. 363). Unfortunately, that measure of reflection is not always enough to resolve all the problems we face. More recently, van Fraassen says nicely that "rationality is but bridled irrationality" (Van Fraassen, 2002, p. 92). That measure of reflection beyond our habits and other dispositions, as the Greeks perceived clearly, is what make us special, what makes it possible to change, to correct what's wrong, to fight for a better life for all.[12]

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[10] "I shall reconsider human knowledge by starting from the fact that we can know more than we can tell. This fact seems obvious enough; but it is not easy to say exactly what it means" (Polanyi, 2009, p. 4).

[11] One of the first to voice this idea was James Burnett, a.k.a. Lord Monboddo, in his *Of the Origin and Progress of Language*, claimed that language is not a natural faculty and that men as we find them in society, politically organized and communicating by means of articulated languages is what Man has made of Man.

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