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## Intellect and Concept

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## INTELLECT AND CONCEPT<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** The connections between theories of concepts and issues of knowledge and epistemic normativity are complex and controversial. According to the general, broadly Fregean, view that stands in the background of this paper, these connections are taken not only to exist, but also to be fundamental to issues about the individuation of concepts. This kind of view fleshed out should clarify the nature and role of epistemic norms, and of different kinds of epistemic norms, in concept individuation. This paper takes up an aspect of this general task and tries to make explicit the nature and role of *intellectual norms*, and to argue that extant paradigms for theorizing concepts fail because they fail to recognize the nature and individuating relevance of intellectual norms.

The connections between theories of concepts and issues of knowledge and epistemic normativity are complex and controversial. According to the general, broadly Fregean, view that stands in the background of this paper, these connections are taken not only to exist, but also to be fundamental to issues about the individuation of concepts. This kind of view fleshed out should clarify the nature and role of epistemic norms, and of different kinds of epistemic norms, in concept individuation. This paper takes up an aspect of this general task and tries to make explicit the nature and role of *intellectual norms*, and to argue

that extant paradigms for theorizing concepts fail because they fail to recognize the nature and individuating relevance of intellectual norms.

I approach the issues by thinking through some ideas in Tyler Burge's classic 1986 paper, 'Intellectual Norms and Foundations of Mind'. The background in Burge's paper is described in §1. In the broadest outline, Burge's paper envisions an individuating connection between intellectual norms and concepts grounded in the kind of *incomplete understanding* present and perhaps even ubiquitous in philosophical discourse and method. This paper clarifies and explains these ideas, and their critical consequences.<sup>2</sup> §2 considers and develops two general challenges to the key notion of incomplete understanding, challenges that criticize the notion for being overly intellectualized and motivationally unstable. §3 describes two paradigmatic views of concepts—what I call *Concepts as Use* and *Concepts as Pure Reference*—and the role of the challenges to incomplete understanding in reinforcing the theoretical space spanned by the two paradigmatic views. This theoretical space is the target of my arguments in §§4-7. §4 argues against a fortified version of *Concepts as Use* and the challenge to incomplete understanding concerning over-intellectualization that supports it. §5 fixes and clarifies the ideas of §4 with a critical discussion of Robin Jeshion's (2000) illuminating argument against infallibilism about the *a priori*, an argument that makes key use of the notion of incomplete understanding. §6 argues against *Concepts as Pure Reference* and in particular against the challenge to incomplete understanding concerning motivational instability that is supposed to support it. §7 fixes and clarifies the ideas of §6 with a critical discussion of Tim Williamson's recent (2006, 2007) and forceful criticisms of epistemological conceptions of analyticity. Jeshion and Williamson cover important terrain and develop a number of important insights, but an insufficient appreciation of the individuating connection between intellect and concept prevents a proper understanding of the semantic and epistemic issues that are our common concern from emerging in their arguments.

Before beginning, let me register a word of warning. This paper covers a lot of philosophical ground from a considerably abstracted vantage point. The aims and thesis of the paper can, however, be simply stated: the aims are to clarify the notion of incomplete understanding and to explain the nature of intellectual norms and their rel-

evance for the individuation of concepts; and the thesis is that extant paradigms for theorizing concepts fail because they fail to recognize the nature and individuating relevance of intellectual norms. The abstraction in the paper is tempered by detailed critical discussion of the important recent and related views of Jeshion and Williamson. Keeping track of one's position in the overall argument is facilitated with section and subsection titles, named theses, and an orienting diagram. The ambition of this paper, partly reflected in its length, makes for a demanding read, but it is hoped that the efforts undertaken to promote structural and doctrinal comprehension make it no more demanding than it needs to be.

## 1. BACKGROUND IN BURGE

### 1.1. Norms in the discourse and methods of philosophy

'Intellectual Norms and Foundations of Mind' explicitly sets issues about the nature of intentional content and concepts against the background of issues concerning epistemic normativity. Like many of Burge's papers in the philosophy of mind, the paper aims to make, and is mainly read as making, a point about the anti-individualist individuation of intentional content and concepts. But the explicit setting of the paper suggests that the point of the paper is not to establish a familiar anti-individualism again, but rather to explain an issue in the "foundations of mind" (cf. also Burge (2007)), namely that of the individuating connection between concepts and epistemic, in particular *intellectual*, normativity.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Burge holds that "a deep source of interest" of the anti-individualist arguments resides in the help they provide in sharpening our conception of intellectual normativity (Burge (1986): 697).<sup>4</sup>

Burge notes in passing how the notion of intellectual responsibility "undergirds the proprietary concepts of dialectic, rationality, understanding, spirit, and rule-following that Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel and Wittgenstein, respectively, tried to explicate" (Burge (1986): 698). Burge's idea, I think, is that a reflective, explicated, understanding of some of the key notions in the discourse and methods of philosophy makes manifest the distinctive intellectual normativity operative in philosophy. So, putting things together, what we get from Burge are really two thoughts:

1. That a deep source of interest in anti-individualism lies in the help it provides in sharpening our conception of intellectual normativity
2. That intellectual normativity is reflectively manifest in the discourse and methods of philosophy.

(1) and (2) connect concept individuation to the discourse and methods of philosophy. But what exactly is this connection?

I leave aside here the question of what Burge's view of this link is, and propose my own view of it. It is this:

### *Intellect and Concept*

The discourse and methods of philosophy involve *incompletely understood mental attitudes* that are subject to or governed by *intellectual norms* whose existence and bearing figure in the individuation of those very mental attitudes, and in particular in the individuation of certain *concepts* that figure in those mental attitudes.

*Intellect and Concept* instructs us to look at the incomplete understanding exhibited in philosophical discourse and method to find and understand the individuating connection between intellectual norms and concepts. We will not arrive at a full explanation of that connection until §4. In the remainder of this section and in the next two, I lay down some critical background for that full explanation, focusing on the obviously key notion of incomplete understanding.

### 1.2. Incomplete understanding

Burge begins his paper with a discussion of the rational dubitability of necessary truths (1986: 698). Of particular interest is the question of whether analytic or conceptual truths are rationally dubitable. The focus on the *rational dubitability of analytic or conceptual truths* directs attention to the individuating relevance of epistemic norms to concepts.

Some kinds of necessary truths seem obviously to be rationally dubitable. It seems obvious that necessary *a posteriori* truths are rationally dubitable. It seems obvious that one can rationally doubt that water is H<sub>2</sub>O, that whales are mammals, or that Hesperus is Phosphorus. There is also no obvious bar to the idea that many of the truths

of mathematics are rationally dubitable, especially given their abstruse nature.<sup>5</sup> If these cases are genuine, then both the necessary *a posteriori* and the necessary *a priori* are dubitable.

However, one might think differently about whether truths that are not only necessary and *a priori*, but that are also *analytic* or *conceptual* truths, are dubitable. Roughly, the worry is that doubting a conceptual truth for some concept requires, but at the same time, undermines, grasp or understanding of that concept. In related contexts (Burge (1979)), Burge develops the idea that concepts can be *incompletely* grasped or understood.<sup>6</sup> Burge explains his view of the notion of incomplete understanding in a number of different places, but, again, it is not the aim of what follows to get a hold of Burge's view. The remainder of the paper is directed, in accordance with *Intellect and Concept*, at clarifying the notion of incomplete understanding and explaining the nature and individuating relevance of intellectual norms for concept individuation; and to extracting critical consequences for extant paradigms for theorizing about concepts.

## 2. TWO CHALLENGES TO INCOMPLETE UNDERSTANDING

In this section, I develop two challenges to the notion of incomplete understanding. I also make explicit the individuating connection between epistemic normativity and concepts. The first challenge criticizes the notion of incomplete understanding for over-intellectualizing understanding. The second challenge puts into question the motivational stability of the notion of incomplete understanding against the background of the individuating connection between epistemic normativity and concepts that I make explicit. Engaging the challenges as well as the paradigmatic views of concepts that they reinforce (§3) helps to sharpen our grasp of the notion of incomplete understanding, and ultimately to recognize the nature and bearing of intellectual norms in concept individuation.

### 2.1. *The illicit role of reflective thinking in incomplete understanding*

The first challenge can be brought into focus by emphasizing that it is *concepts* and not words that are claimed to be incompletely understood. Kent Bach invokes this distinction in criticizing the notion of

incomplete understanding:

Burge offers no positive account of what it is to think with a concept that one incompletely understands. As for me, it is clear how one can use a word that one incompletely understands, but I have no idea of what it is to think with a concept that one incompletely understands, for I have no idea of what it is to understand a concept over and above possessing it. [Bach (1988): note 3]

Bach's main question here is: what is it for *concepts in particular* to be incompletely grasped or understood? What more is there to grasping or understanding a concept than possessing it, than being able to think with it?

According to a traditional answer, what more there is to understanding is knowledge of the analysis of a concept, knowledge of a conceptual truth. But this answer seems to over-intellectualize understanding.

The kind of incomplete understanding at issue when one doubts an analytic or conceptual truth involves a sophisticated capacity for potentially knowledgeable second-order thinking, thinking that reflectively conceptualizes concepts and their putative analyses. Reflective thinking aimed at producing analyses involves *second-order* thinking in the sense that it involves thinking about concepts—either about the application conditions of concepts, for example in

an argument is *valid* iff whenever all its premises are true, its conclusion is also true

or identities between concepts, as in

the concept of validity is the concept of an argument such that whenever all its premises are true, its conclusion is also true

or

the concept *valid* is the concept *being an argument such that whenever all its premises are true, its conclusion is also true*

In the examples, ‘*valid*’, ‘the concept of validity’, ‘the concept of an argument such that whenever all its premises are true, its conclusion is also true’, ‘the concept *valid*’, and ‘the concept *being an argument such that whenever all its premises are true, its conclusion is also true*’ are all expressions that refer to and not merely express concepts. Concepts themselves are, at least in part, the subject matter of these examples.

But how does incompleteness and error in thinking *about* a concept itself constitute a failure to *possess* the concept, to be able to think thoughts with it? In fact, exactly the opposite seems true: not only does incompleteness and error in thinking about a concept not constitute a failure to possess the concept, it seems positively to presuppose possession. For reflective thinking is reflective not only in being second-order, but also in being about tokenings of concepts in one’s own propositional attitudes. Reflective thinking concerns the evaluation of *thoughts* in their occurrence in *one’s own thinking*. Reflective thinking is first-personal, second-order thinking that identifies, evaluates, and fixes a thinker’s first-order thinking with the aim of epistemic improvement. But then reflective thinking presupposes a more basic individuation for concepts as they occur in one’s first-order thinking, upon which one reflects in reflective thinking.<sup>7</sup> This may or may not be a problem for understanding the nature of reflective thinking in general, but if reflective thinking is supposed to figure in concept individuation, as the reflective thinking aimed at producing analyses is supposed to, the presupposed individuation in first-order thinking looks like a problem.

To one critical of the notion of incomplete understanding, these considerations might suggest the following challenge for the notion:

### ***The Illicit Role of Reflective Thinking***

Reflective thinking cannot play a role in concept individuation because a prior individuation is presupposed in an ingredient aspect of reflective thinking, namely in the first-order thinking reflective thinking is thinking of.

Intuitively, the challenge is that this kind of incomplete understanding overly intellectualizes grasp or understanding. More specifically, reflective doubt or error concerning analytic or conceptual truths is pitched too cognitively high to be relevant to individuation because reflective

doubt or error already presupposes some individuating scheme for concepts as they figure in first-order thinking.

### ***2.2. Transparency and incomplete understanding***

In order to formulate the second challenge, the background, broadly Fregean view that accepts an individuating connection between concepts and epistemic normativity, needs to be made more explicit. It is worth emphasizing that my discussion of Frege is not intended to be scholarly, but is instead intended to provide a new philosophical frame in which the issues should appear intuitive but also at the same time fresh.

Very generally, the individuation of sense is concerned with individuating the entities that are to serve as the constituents of mental attitudes, where the mental attitudes are construed as being governed by a “constitutive ideal of rationality”, in Davidson’s (1970) phrase. In more restricted terms, Frege’s Puzzle about informative identities is supposed to show that an individuation in terms of pure reference—what I, in the introduction called, the view of *Concepts as Pure Reference*—fails to characterize a thinker’s attitudes in such a way that her epistemic status is properly captured. If the thought that Hesperus is Hesperus is the same thought as the thought that Hesperus is Phosphorus, then one who believes the former but doubts the latter is *rationally incoherent* because she believes and doubts the *very same thought*. But one is not rationally incoherent to believe that Hesperus is Hesperus and doubt that Hesperus is Phosphorus. So the individuation in terms of pure reference fails to characterize thinkers’ attitudes in a way that captures their epistemic status.

One needs to be careful in thinking about the puzzle. What needs to be kept forefront is the idea that the puzzle is a puzzle fundamentally about concepts or thoughts, epistemic evaluation, and the constitutive relation between them. The puzzle asks for an account of what thought is such that it is the epistemic evaluation of a thinker’s attitudes, understood as relations to thoughts, that constitute her epistemic status. The suggestion that concepts and thoughts are individuated in terms of pure reference is the immediate target of the puzzle. An individuation in terms of pure reference fails to provide an account of thought such that the epistemic evaluation of a thinker’s attitudes constitutes the

epistemic status of a thinker. But what is fundamental to Frege's Puzzle is the recognition of an individuating connection between epistemic evaluation and concepts or thoughts.

This individuating connection is embodied in a deeply intuitive thesis about thought: that thought is *transparent*. I hope the notion of transparency will be familiar even if my explication of it, at least initially, is not.<sup>8</sup> Let us say that thought is *transparent* iff:

### *Transparency*

For all thoughts  $p, q$  such that  $p = q$ , there is a conceptual norm  $R$ , such that for every thinker  $S$  who can entertain  $p$  and  $q$ ,  $R$  prescribes that  $S$  take non-conflicting attitudes to  $p$  and  $q$ .

*Transparency* expresses the individuating connection between epistemic normativity and concepts or thoughts. The individuating connection can be seen from both directions—from both a semantic and an epistemological perspective. Semantically,  $R$  is not just any norm; it is a *conceptual norm*, in the sense that the source of the prescription that every thinker  $S$  who can entertain  $p, q$  take non-conflicting attitudes to  $p, q$  is that  $p$  and  $q$  are the same thought. Epistemically, thought must be transparent if it is the epistemic evaluation of a thinker's attitudes that constitutes her epistemic status. Without the transparency of thought, a thinker's epistemic status is not constituted by the epistemic evaluation of her attitudes.

Reconsider in this light the understanding of Frege's Puzzle, and its treatment of an individuation of senses or concepts in terms of pure reference. Frege's Puzzle shows that thoughts individuated in terms of pure reference do not provide an account of thought in which it is transparent, and it is for this reason that it is not the epistemic evaluation of a thinker's attitudes, understood as relations to thoughts individuated in terms of pure reference, that constitutes her epistemic status. On the individuation in terms of pure reference, there are thoughts  $p, q$  such that  $p = q$ —for example the thought that Hesperus is Hesperus and the thought that Hesperus is Phosphorus—but for which there is no conceptual norm  $R$  such that for every thinker who can entertain the thought that Hesperus is Hesperus and the thought that Hesperus is Phosphorus,  $R$  prescribes that the thinker take non-conflicting atti-

tudes towards them. Understanding alone *does not* impose any rational requirement that a thinker take non-conflicting cognitive attitudes to the thought that Hesperus is Hesperus and the thought that Hesperus is Phosphorus. Simultaneous belief and doubt in these thoughts *does not* belie any misunderstanding or conceptual confusion. In a slightly extended application, we can say that Frege's Puzzle counsels us to think that the thought that Hesperus is Hesperus is distinct from the thought that Hesperus is Phosphorus because co-reference is not in general transparent to thinkers.

What about co-sensicality or co-conceptuality? Is it transparent to thinkers? An immediate reaction is that it must be, given that senses are introduced precisely to replace an individuation of concepts and thoughts whose chief failure is that the entities so individuated fail of the transparency of thought. I will be making much of this in a moment. But it looks as though if concepts can be incompletely understood, then not only *co-reference* but also *co-sensicality* or *co-conceptuality* is not transparent. Let me explain.

Suppose for the sake of argument that, in fact, the correct analysis of the concept of the validity of an argument is that an argument is *valid* just in case whenever all its premises are true, its conclusion is also true. Suppose also that this reports not only a true conceptual *equivalence*, but also, implicitly, a true *identity* between concepts—between *valid* and *argument such that whenever all its premises are true, its conclusion is also true*. And suppose finally that thought is compositional. Now, if one can rationally doubt analytic or conceptual truths, then not only can one have, without rational incoherence, a combination of attitudes in which one

believes that Hesperus is Hesperus

and

doubts that Hesperus is Phosphorus,

so too one can have, without rational incoherence, a combination of attitudes in which one

believes that an argument is valid iff it is valid

and

doubts that an argument is valid iff whenever all the premises are true, the conclusion is also true.<sup>9</sup>

But this is, it seems, just what it is for thought individuated in terms of senses or concepts to fail of the transparency of thought. More specifically, if thought is transparent, then for all thoughts  $p$ ,  $q$  such that  $p = q$ , there is a conceptual norm  $R$  such that for all thinkers  $S$  who can entertain these thoughts,  $R$  prescribes that  $S$  take non-conflicting cognitive attitude to them. Given the existence of  $R$ , taking conflicting attitudes should undermine the rationality of one's doubt (as well as of one's belief) and compromise one's epistemic status. But in incomplete understanding, the relevant doubt is supposed to be *rational*. So it looks as though incompletely understood thoughts fail to support the transparency of thought.

### 2.3. *The motivational instability of the notion of incomplete understanding*

This leads to the second challenge to the notion of incomplete understanding. The second challenge questions the motivational stability of the notion of incomplete understanding against the background of acceptance of the transparency of thought.

Once we understand the role of transparency and its application to the individuation of meaning in terms of pure reference, we can know that it will be a constraint on *any* account of senses or concepts that it should not be subject to the very same problem to which the individuation in terms of pure reference is subject. It should not be the case that just as an individuation of thoughts in terms of pure reference fails to provide an account of thought in which it is transparent, an individuation of thought in terms of senses also fails to provide an account of thought in which it is transparent. That would render the distinction between sense and reference motivationally unstable. An individuation for thought that is to supersede and correct an individuation whose fundamental problem lies in the failure of transparency of the entities it individuates cannot also individuate entities that fail of transparency. That much seems obvious.

But if this is right, and if it right that incompletely understood thought fails to support the transparency of thought, *Motivational In-*

*stability* will follow:

#### ***Motivational Instability***

Any view of concepts that aims to supersede *Concepts as Pure Reference* and that allows incomplete understanding is motivationally unstable against the background of acceptance of the transparency of thought.

*Motivational Instability* thus forces a choice between a view of concepts that is motivated to go beyond *Concepts as Pure Reference* but that prohibits incomplete understanding, and a view of concepts that is not motivated to go beyond *Concepts as Pure Reference*, and that somehow allows a notion of incomplete understanding. I turn now to describing this theoretical space in more detail.

### 3. TWO PARADIGMS COORDINATED

*Illicit* and *Motivational Instability* serve not only to challenge the notion of incomplete understanding, but also to reinforce a theoretical space spanned by the two extant paradigmatic views of *Concepts as Use* and *Concepts as Pure Reference*. This is a theoretical space that is free of robust kinds of incomplete understanding. This theoretical space will be my critical target in §§4-7.

#### 3.1. *Coordinating the paradigms*

The two paradigmatic views emerge from the alternate possibilities of either accepting or rejecting the demand for the transparency of concepts and thoughts. One view develops a view of concepts that accepts the demand for transparency. On this view, concepts are such that they cannot, in some ultimate sense, fail of the transparency of thought. This is *Concepts as Use*. This view is reinforced by *Illicit*. The other view re-emerges as a potential account of individuation for concepts and thoughts when the demand for the transparency of thought is rejected as a general demand. This is the view, already mentioned as the proximate target of Frege's Puzzle, that I have been calling *Concepts as Pure Reference*. The view is reinforced by *Motivational Instability*. Both views exclude robust kinds of incomplete understanding.

### 3.2. *Concepts as Use*

What kind of view of concepts might realize the normative vision of the transparency of thought? I will be arguing that *Concepts as Use* is constitutively such as to fit the bill. In the rest of this subsection, I explain the view, and explain the connection to the transparency of thought. I also explain how the view excludes incomplete understanding.

Although there is no shortage of famous proponents and detailed, articulated accounts, my account will not focus on any particular defender of *Concepts as Use*. My focus is rather to try to understand the limitations of *Concepts as Use* as an overall philosophical perspective on the nature of concepts and grasp or understanding. This is helped by abstraction from the details of the views of particular authors.<sup>10</sup> On *Concepts as Use*, grasping a concept is constituted by the *use* or *role* of the concept in one's thinking. The fact that some concept figures in these uses or roles in one's mental attitudes just is *what makes it the case* that one grasps that particular concept. The view constitutively links the *grasping of concepts* to their *use* or *role* in thinking. Concepts are then individuated as *what* is grasped in thinking involving certain patterns of usage and role. Mark Greenberg and Gilbert Harman have recently described the general view (*conceptual role semantics* or *CRS* in their, and also familiar, terminology) as follows:

... CRS holds that meaning and content (including the meanings of words and other symbols and the contents of mental representations) arise from and are explained by the role words, symbols, and other features of representation play in thinking of various sorts. CRS seeks to describe the relevant sorts of conceptual role and to explain how conceptual roles determine meaning and content. (Greenberg and Harman forthcoming: §1)

A key task for a CRS or the view of *Concepts as Use*, as Greenberg and Harman suggest, is to describe what are to count as the relevant uses. I will be focusing on this task. I do not mean to disparage the task of explaining how use or role determines meaning or concept. But I will be challenging *whether* use can determine meaning or concept, not *how* it can.<sup>11</sup>

In principle, any use might be held to figure constitutively in an account of concepts. I want, however, to focus attention on an understanding of use that construes use to be *cognitive* and *first-order*, where a use of a concept is a tokening or expression of an attitude like acceptance, judgment, or belief that makes reference, in a particular way, to what the concept is a concept of. At this general level, I think that this is the most common and plausible kind of view. One can think of the discussion to follow as trying to motivate these restrictions while at the same trying to explain why they do not really limit the significance of my argument against *Concepts as Use*. But my main concern is to assess the prospects for a version of *Concepts as Use* that accepts these restrictions.

I begin with the idea that the relevant kinds of uses are *cognitive* uses. This should be broken up into two ideas: first, that the relevant uses are tokenings or expressions of *some kind* of norm-governed mental attitude or attitudes; and second, that the tokenings or expressions are of *cognitive* attitudes governed by *epistemic* norms.

For all that has been said so far, the relevant uses that figure constitutively in a grasp of concepts could be uses that token or express nothing that is semantically interesting. They could be uses in free associations, slips of the tongue, stuttering, drunken rambling, etc.<sup>12</sup> These kinds of uses do not seem semantically relevant. What is wanted are uses that can somehow be of semantic relevance. One thing that would seem to be of help is to replace the haphazard and unsystematic character of free associations, slips of the tongue, stuttering, drunken rambling, etc. with tokenings or expressions of something that can in some sense or other be right or wrong—for example of norm-governed mental attitudes. Norm-governed mental attitudes must satisfy certain standards so as to be correct in some full blooded sense, for example in the way that beliefs are required to satisfy certain standards in order to count as attaining correctness in the form of knowledge. Norm-governed attitudes might be semantically relevant because of the role of the notion of correctness they involve.

Suppose that this is right. Then for all that has been said so far, the relevant uses that figure constitutively in a grasp of concepts could be tokenings or expressions of non-cognitive attitudes like desiring, hoping, fearing, planning, etc. (cf. the wide variety of possible uses

mentioned by Greenberg and Harman: §3). These attitudes may indeed be norm-governed and involve notions of correctness, but it is not clear how the relevant norms or notions of correctness would be semantically relevant.

This is in stark contrast with cognitive attitudes like acceptance, judgment, and belief. These attitudes are governed by norms that are epistemic in character and make use of a notion of correctness as truth, which I assume to be a key semantic notion. This assumption is also in accord with the background Fregean assumption of the individuating connection between concepts and epistemic normativity (as well as with Frege's key use of reference and truth). Cognitive attitudes thus seem particularly well suited to function as the uses that serve in concept individuation.

Does this restriction to cognitive use limit the scope of my argument? If a view of use included other kinds of uses, then the argument of this paper would not, strictly speaking, apply to it. For example, Wedgwood (2001) develops a CRS or *Concepts as Use* view for moral concepts or terms in which uses in practical reasoning, in particular, in the formation of conditional intentions, play constitutive roles (2001: 15). Strictly this kind of view is outside the scope of my argument. But as the structure of Wedgwood's paper makes clear, the inspiration for a conceptual role semantics for moral terms is conceptual role semantics for non-moral terms, like the logical constants, and role or use here is to be understood in terms of cognitive notions like acceptance, judgment, and belief (Wedgwood (2001): §3). But if the original applications of the view are problematic, as I am in the process of arguing, it is doubtful that extensions will be problem-free.

I turn now to the idea that the relevant uses are *first-order* uses. The idea is that uses involve thinking *with* concepts *about* the world, and not thinking *about* concepts. The key contrast here is between *using* a concept and *mentioning* one.

Greenberg and Harman suggest a wide variety of uses that might go into constituting grasp of a concept—"in maps, gauges, models and diagrams, mathematical calculations and other sorts of problem solving, lists, labels and naming, categorization of various sorts, inference, and planning" (Greenberg and Harman forthcoming: §3). But in no case do Greenberg and Harman emphasize or even suggest that the rele-

vant uses essentially involve reflective thinking. There is good reason for this.

The reason is that such uses would run afoul of *Illicit*. *Illicit* challenged the idea that reflective thinking can play a role in concept individuation because a prior individuation for concepts is presupposed as an ingredient aspect of reflective thinking. More generally, the charge is that the notion of incomplete understanding involves over-intellectualizing grasp or understanding. Clothed in the garb of the concrete theoretical perspective of *Concepts as Use*, the challenge posed by *Illicit* is that grasp of a concept is constituted by what one *does* with a concept, not what one *thinks* about it. This gives further support to the charge that the notion of incomplete understanding involves over-intellectualizing understanding. The idea can be made more explicit by situating *Concepts as Use* as a relatively recent reaction to what Eric Margolis and Stephen Laurence call "The Classical View of Concepts" (Margolis & Laurence (1999): 8), a view that construes grasping a concept as consisting in knowledge of the analysis of the concept. If use is fundamentally contrasted with mention then the idea that the relevant uses do not involve reflective thinking is supported, and *Concepts as Use* provides an antidote to the over-intellectualization of the Classical View of Concepts. So it should be no surprise that Greenberg and Harman do not include reflective thinking in their catalogue of uses. To do so would be to risk over-intellectualizing understanding.

I introduced *Concepts as Use* as a view that could realize the normative vision of the transparency of thought. We are now in a position both to give a succinct yet general statement of the view, as well as to understand its commitment to the transparency of thought. The view is:

#### *Concepts as Use*

Grasp or understanding of a concept is constituted by facts concerning the use of the concept in first-order cognitive thinking.

What makes a certain concept the concept a thinker grasps are facts concerning the use of the concept in first-order cognitive thinking. Conceiving of use like this makes evident the commitment to the transparency of thought. Because use is cognitive, it is subject to epistemic

norms that govern acceptance, judgment and belief. When these cognitive uses are also first-order, it is evident that the transparency of thought holds: there indeed is a norm such that for all  $p, q$  such that  $p = q$ , and for all  $S$  such that  $S$  can entertain  $p, q$ , the norm prescribes that  $S$  take non-conflicting attitudes to  $p, q$  because  $p, q$  are the same thought. *First-order, cognitive use is such that conflicting uses of the same thought make for rational incoherence.*<sup>13</sup> But this is just to say that the kind of thinking involved in first-order, cognitive use is such as to conform to the transparency of thought.

### 3.3. Excluding incomplete understanding

The commitment of *Concepts as Use* to the transparency of thought can be combined with the result (from §2) claiming the incompatibility of the transparency of thought with incomplete understanding, to show that *Concepts as Use* excludes the possibility of incomplete understanding. For if *Concepts as Use* individuates thoughts that as a matter of individuation are transparent, and if thoughts that can be incompletely understood fail the transparency of thought, then it follows that *Concepts as Use* excludes the possibility of incomplete understanding:

#### *Excluding Incomplete Understanding*

*Concepts as Use* excludes the possibility of incomplete understanding.

One clarification is in order, however. In an important sense to be explained in §4, this exclusion is only of *robust* kinds of incomplete understanding. The ‘robust’ here figures as a theoretical placeholder through which *Concepts as Use* can be defended, elaborated, and strengthened. *Concepts as Use* is committed to construing robust forms of incomplete understanding as failing the transparency of thought, but it is only a straw man version of the view that is committed to construing *anything* that might intuitively be called ‘incomplete understanding’ to involve a failure of the transparency of thought. A key issue is the limits of this robustness. We will not have a full understanding of these limits until the end of §4.

### 3.4. Concepts as Pure Reference

We were looking for a view that could realize the normative vision of the transparency of thought. This led to *Concepts as Use*. Suppose instead that we rejected the transparency of thought. We would no longer, then, have to worry about any conflict between the transparency of thought and incomplete understanding. Perhaps by rejecting the transparency of thought, we move towards a view of concepts that can vindicate the notion of incomplete understanding. But things are not so simple.

To see the problem let us first ask what kind of view might allow for concepts and thoughts that need not be transparent. We should notice in this connection how the rejection of the transparency of thought activates the second challenge to incomplete understanding, namely, *Motivational Instability*. If thought is not transparent, then a paradigmatic view, *Concepts as Pure Reference*, re-emerges as a promising account of concepts and thoughts. I will first state and briefly explain the view, and then explain why it re-emerges as a promising account.

Let us state the general view as:

#### *Concepts as Pure Reference*

Concepts are individuated purely at the level of reference, perhaps suitably intensionalized.

As a positive doctrine, the key idea behind *Concepts as Pure Reference* is that concepts and thoughts are to be understood in purely representational terms: in terms of what they are about, what they are true of, and whether they are true or false, perhaps with respect to a possible world. As a negative doctrine *pure reference* is fruitfully contrasted with the more familiar notion of *direct reference*. Direct reference is concerned with the appropriateness or not of mediation, presumably of whatever sort, in the semantic relation between representation and referent (see Kaplan 1989: Preface). By contrast, *pure reference* is concerned to reject epistemic notions and hold to the completeness of representational notions for concept and thought individuation.

Why does this view re-emerge? The reason is that although Frege’s Puzzle shows *Concepts as Pure Reference* is inconsistent with the transparency of thought, when the transparency of thought is rejected, this

inconsistency is no longer counted against *Concepts as Pure Reference*. This is not to say that *Concepts as Pure Reference* will not be subject to other challenges, for example, a challenge from the problem of empty concepts, concepts that do not refer to anything. But the major challenge against the view, the challenge embodied in Frege's Puzzle, is rendered impotent. Further, given the importance of the notion of reference and of the idea of representation of an objective world more generally, *Concepts as Pure Reference* looks to be in pretty good shape.<sup>14</sup>

### 3.5. Insufficient resources for incomplete understanding

The re-emergence of *Concepts as Pure Reference* following the rejection of the transparency of thought is one thing, but the ability of the view to provide a notion of incomplete understanding is another. In fact, *Concepts as Pure Reference*, like the view *Concepts as Use*, excludes the possibility of incomplete understanding. The possibility of incomplete understanding is excluded in this case because the view contains insufficient resources to make sense of the notion of incomplete understanding. The problem is that incomplete understanding involves not only ordinary factual incompleteness or error but also conceptual incompleteness or error. It involves a lack of conceptual knowledge or of understanding. But it is not clear what resources, according to a view of *Concepts as Pure Reference*, can be marshaled to make sense of this. Both incompleteness in factual knowledge and in conceptual knowledge or understanding involve incomplete knowledge of the referent. But *Concepts as Pure Reference* has nothing more to appeal to, theoretically, to distinguish merely factual error from the additional, conceptual, error. This leads to:

#### *Insufficient Resources for Incomplete Understanding*

*Concepts as Pure Reference* contains insufficient resources to make sense of incomplete understanding.

On *Concepts as Pure Reference*, either all incompleteness is incompleteness in understanding, or none of it is. In a different but clear sense of 'robust', this is just to be unable to make sense of robust kinds of incomplete understanding.

So *Concepts as Use* and *Concepts as Pure Reference*, backed by *Illicit* and *Motivational Instability* respectively, function to span a theoretical

space that excludes, in the different ways that *Excluding* and *Insufficient Resources* do, a robust notion of incomplete understanding. Picturesquely:

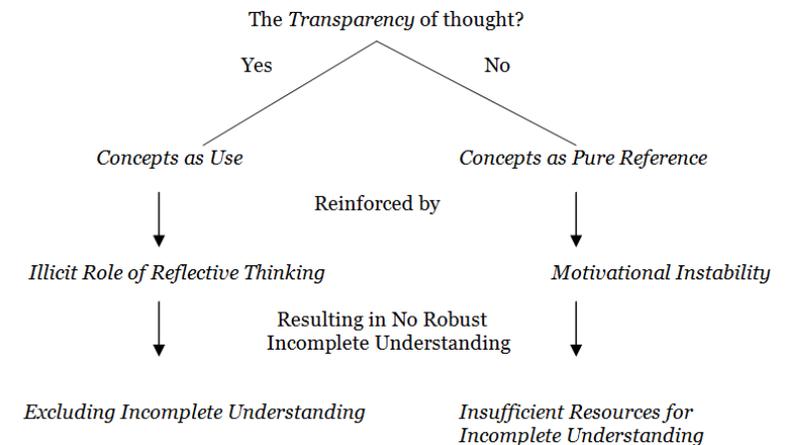


Figure 1: The Theoretical Space

In the rest of the paper, I want to argue against this entire theoretical space. §§4 and 5 focus on *Concepts as Use*, and §§6 and 7 focus on *Concepts as Pure Reference*.

## 4. AGAINST CONCEPTS AS USE: THE DIALECTICAL EPISTEMOLOGY OF UNDERSTANDING

In this section, I argue against *Illicit* and *Concepts as Use* by showing how understanding philosophical discourse and method involves characterizing thinkers' attitudes in such a way as to impute incomplete understanding to them. The kind of incomplete understanding involved in philosophical discourse and method is distinctive for the role that reflective thinking plays in it. I will be arguing that understanding the role of reflective thinking in incomplete understanding allows one to turn *Illicit* on its head. With respect to *Concepts as Use*, I will not be arguing that the view is unable to make sense of incomplete under-

standing *at all*; but that it is not able to make sense of a robust kind of incomplete understanding. More specifically, I will concede that *Concepts as Use* has the resources to accommodate some kinds of cases of incomplete understanding. But this extensibility of the theory is not indefinite, and comes up against an insuperable hurdle when disputes become *intellectual*. *Concepts as Use* fails because it fails to make sense of a key aspect of what I will call the *dialectical epistemology of understanding*, and in particular of the role of intellectual norms in that dialectical epistemology. These points will be made in the context of thinking about epistemic aspects of *conceptual analysis*.

#### 4.1. *Illicit turned on its head*

*Illicit* challenges the idea that reflective thinking can play a role in concept individuation, on the grounds that a prior individuation is presupposed as an ingredient aspect of reflective thinking. More generally, incomplete understanding of this reflective kind over-intellectualizes grasp or understanding.

There is something right in this challenge. But it does not put the notion of incomplete understanding into jeopardy. Rather, it demands greater clarity in the picture of concepts and their grasp or understanding that is presupposed by the notion of incomplete understanding, and second, a limitation of the application of this notion. What is demanded is that there be a distinction between *possessing* a concept and *fully understanding* or *mastering* it, a distinction that holds for at least some concepts, even if not for all concepts. This picture of concepts and their grasp or understanding can be used to turn *Illicit* on its head.

Grasping or understanding a concept suffices for having the concept figure in mental attitudes. This is what Bach called ‘possession’. Full understanding or mastery of a concept requires more. Full understanding is a cognitive ideal. Full understanding requires, as its ideal, the ability to provide reflective and fully explicit justifications of the use of a concept in one’s first-order attitudes by an appeal to one’s conceptual knowledge.

We routinely and intuitively recognize that there is more to understanding a concept than its use in first-order thinking, than its possession. For at least some concepts, there is a commonplace and intuitive sense in which someone who can justify her use of a concept

in first-order attitudes by reference to an explicit analysis or definition *understands* a concept better than someone who cannot.<sup>15</sup> Students in an introductory philosophy class who can justify their first-order intuitive uses of the concept of the validity of an argument by reference to a definition or analysis of *validity* in an intuitive sense understand the concept better than those students who can merely reliably distinguish a range, maybe even a large range, maybe even approximately the same large range, of valid arguments from invalid ones as those who know the correct analysis. I say “approximately”, because mastery will always come with its proprietary knowledge, namely that knowledge that is the result of the application of mastery in reflective justification of difficult or novel first-order uses (cf. Williamson (2007): 43-47). This is a kind of extra breadth of knowledge that is enabled by the more complete understanding. But improved understanding contributes not only to the quantity of knowledge, but also to its quality. It contributes to reflective justification.

To choose another example, one may be able to recognize a certain, perhaps very wide, range of mathematical functions as having certain limits. But one may not be able to justify the thought that some particular function has some limit because one has not mastered the concept of a limit. Without mastery, one will not be able to provide a fully explicit justification for the thought, for one will not have the analysis or definition at hand to slot into the justification. Students’ misconceptions of the concept of the limit is the subject of numerous articles in journals of mathematics education (for example, see Tall & Vinner (1981); Przenioslo (2004) and the references therein). A common thought in these articles is that incomplete understanding of mathematical concepts can serve certain cognitive purposes, but is problematic when students are required to solve difficult or novel problems and produce proofs. These are problems of producing reflective justifications.

These ideas about the mastery of mathematical concepts can be seen writ large in the history of mathematics (Burge (1990); 2007: 170-172; Jeshion (2000); Peacocke (2003); for dissent see Rey (1998)). Perhaps what is true of the *students* of calculus *now* was true of the *discoverers* of calculus *then*. Perhaps Newton and Leibniz grasped the very concept of the limit that we use today so as to be able to have mental

attitudes with the concept, but did not have the reflective understanding or conceptual knowledge provided by Cauchy's definition. We may suppose that Cauchy's breadth of knowledge of limits did not significantly exceed Newton and Leibniz's. But it seems reasonable nevertheless to suppose that Cauchy possessed a reflective appreciation of the conceptual and practical advantages, including the possibility of new proofs, of the  $\epsilon - \delta$  definition over previous, infinitesimal, analyses. This reflective appreciation shows a deeper grasp of the concept.

This last example can also be used to show that conceptual error and disagreement is not confined to novice competencies but persists even among experts. Perhaps Newton and Leibniz would not acquiesce to the  $\epsilon - \delta$  definition, and instead would think that although the definition improved in certain ways on their own formulations, that it is nevertheless wrong-headed. They might find support in recent contributions to the issue. Abraham Robinson's non-standard analysis (Robinson (1996)) and recent work in *smooth infinitesimal analysis* (see Bell (1998)) have in different ways placed the notion of infinitesimals on a rigorous footing. Perhaps these views capture what Newton and Leibniz were after. But, more importantly, perhaps one of these views expresses a fuller understanding of the concepts of calculus by providing a larger range of more explicit justifications of the use of those concepts in first-order attitudes by an appeal to improved conceptual knowledge.

What is illustrated by the concept of validity and of the limit is also illustrated by other concepts. Most relevant here are the numerous examples provided by philosophy. The concept of a singular term, of a proposition, of reference, of predication, of quantification, of necessity and possibility, of *de re* and *de dicto*, of convention, of vagueness, of knowledge, of infinity, of time, of space, of a person, of agency, of free will, of beauty, of justice—all these concepts readily permit a distinction between possession and mastery. That is, there is a distinction between being able to think thoughts involving these concepts, and being able competently to justify one's first-order applications of these concepts by appeal to one's reflective and explicit understanding of these concepts. Even for experts, the possibilities of disagreement and conceptual error persist, and indeed pervade.

All of this is consistent with the idea that not every concept or kind

of concept permits incomplete understanding. For example, perhaps it is a mistake to think that reflective thinking plays an individuating role in the contents of perception. The reasons for this need not detain us here. Reflective thinking is likely not always relevant to concept individuation. But that does not mean that it is never relevant. It means that the role of reflective thinking in individuation is not universal but limited. It is enough for the argument of this paper that what with some plausibility may be true of the contents of perception is not true of concepts and content in general.

These ideas suggest the following, which is intended both as a thesis about the existence of certain kinds of concepts—those that permit a distinction between possession and mastery—and as a partial explication of the concepts of mastery, possession, and incomplete understanding:

#### ***Mastery, Possession, and Incomplete Understanding***

For some concepts, there is a standard of *fully understanding* or *mastering* them that consists in explicit, reflective, conceptual knowledge. A thinker can *possess* such a concept without fully understanding it. Such a thinker *incompletely understands* the concept.<sup>16</sup>

This partial explication limits and clarifies the role of reflective thinking in understanding. It takes what is right in *Illicit*, namely that not all concepts permit the kind of incomplete understanding at issue here, while sketching a general picture of concepts and their grasp or understanding that nevertheless permits incomplete understanding.

In fact, once this general picture is in mind, one can see how *Illicit* can be turned on its head. In introducing *Illicit* I emphasized that reflective thinking involves not only thinking *about* thoughts, but also thinking *with* those very thoughts about the non-mental world. According to *Illicit*, this makes problems for concept individuation. The general picture of concepts and their grasp or understanding I have just sketched is supposed to assuage those fears. But the general picture I have sketched does not take issue with and in fact accepts the view of reflective thinking that *Illicit* outlines. Indeed, that view of reflective thinking is key in what is to follow. A reverse emphasis in thinking about the nature of reflective thinking is especially helpful to

bring out the inversion of *Illicit*: reflective thinking involves not only thinking *with* thoughts about the non-mental world but also thinking *about* those very thoughts. The relevant concepts figure in thinking not only as *ways of thinking* (Evans (1982)) but also as the *subject matter of thinking*. In reflectively thinking the second-order thought that I believe that I believe valid arguments preserve truth, I both think *with* the thought *valid arguments preserve truth* and *about* that very thought. I am having a thought about a thought that I am having, and in any case, that I can think. This is not a point fundamentally about first-person authority—about whether such second-order beliefs constitute a special kind of knowledge. The point is rather about how competence in thinking about thoughts is related to competence in thinking the relevant first-order thoughts themselves, especially as those competences figure in reflective thinking that aims to improve the epistemic quality of one's own thoughts.<sup>17</sup> The general idea is that in such reflective thinking, a thinker cannot be competent in thinking about thoughts without being competent in being able to think those very thoughts.

More explicitly, we have:

#### ***The Duality of Reference in Reflective Thinking***

Reflective thinking involves thinking about thoughts and thinking with those very thoughts about the non-mental world.

*Duality* inverts *Illicit* by separating the conception of reflective thinking it employs from the scepticism about the role of reflective thinking in concept individuation to which *Mastery, Possession, and Incomplete Understanding* provides a response. I cannot give a full defence of *Duality* here, or, *a fortiori*, of the stronger thesis according to which in reflective thinking, thoughts are thought *about* and thought *with* simultaneously and with a single conceptual constituent.<sup>18</sup> It is worth noting however, that *Duality* derives independent support in the case of reflective thinking most interest to us here, of reflective thinking aimed at producing analyses. If we want both to avoid a bad conception of analytic or conceptual truth where such truths are made true by concepts or meanings, rather than the world, while at the same time retaining the idea that in analyzing a concept one is thinking about the conditions of application of a concept, *Duality* helps.<sup>19</sup>

I will now apply these ideas in thinking through an example of philosophical discourse and method that is intended to bring out the limitations of *Concepts as Use*. The example brings out what I will call the *dialectical epistemology*, in this case, of conceptual analysis. Especially important for the argument of this paper is a distinction between two junctures or stages in the dialectical epistemology of understanding.<sup>20</sup>

#### **4.2. Early in analysis**

Conceptual analysis involves a thinker's progression from an epistemic position of unreflective belief and knowledge to, ideally, a position of explicit conceptual knowledge or full understanding. When one has such knowledge, one has conceptual knowledge or knowledge of an analytic or conceptual truth. Such knowledge involves a dialectical epistemology in the rough sense that it involves constitutively a critically rational back and forth between intuitions and reflective thinking aimed at discerning conceptual knowledge. I will be analyzing this rough idea as the idea of a quite definite epistemic structure of non-inferential justifications or *entitlements*. This epistemic structure is what I am calling the *dialectical epistemology of understanding*. Recognizing and understanding a special aspect of reflective thinking in this overall epistemic structure will be of primary interest and importance for us. But it will keep things oriented to present that idea in its proper place.

Consider a progression in conceptual analysis from an implicit to an explicit understanding of *validity*. This is the progression in explicit thinking resulting from a rational back and forth between, on the first hand, intuitions about examples and, on the other, proposed analyses. Consideration of examples for intuitive evaluation provides input from which analyses are proposed, tested, and revised, *en route* to a stably accepted analysis of the concept, and even conceptual knowledge. Important for the discussion here is that conceptual analysis will involve a thinker or thinkers in a number of false starts and errors, including conceptual error and incomplete understanding, *en route* to conceptual knowledge.

Suppose that Liam becomes interested in what makes for good reasoning because he finds himself arguing with others about topics of

common concern. Suppose for the sake of argument, as before (§2 above), that the correct analysis of *validity* is that an argument is valid just in case whenever all the premises are true, the conclusion is also true. Liam listens in on some philosophy students who are trying to understand what they learned in philosophy class that day about arguments and what makes them good—what the students called *valid*. Liam suspects that the students are confused, but he is keen, and sets himself the project of figuring out himself, without being taught, what it means for an argument to be valid. He is confident that the question of what makes for a good argument is something about which he can come to know just by thinking carefully and with clarity about it.

Focusing for the first time on the question of what it is for an argument to be valid, Liam conjectures that validity is, fundamentally, say, just a matter of an argument having a true conclusion. He finds this idea intuitive, because surely true conclusions are fundamental to good argument. This comports with what he heard somewhere—maybe from the students—namely, that truth has something to do with good argument. But Liam gives up on his conjecture immediately upon reflecting that if validity is just a matter of an argument having a true conclusion, then the argument from the thought that Mercury is a planet to the thought that Saturn has rings is valid. That's obviously not a good argument, even though its conclusion is true, so validity cannot be a matter just of an argument having a true conclusion. Liam realizes he is confused and quite far from fully understanding the concept of validity. So far, Liam has mental attitudes with the concept *valid*, some of them even justified, but does not have explicit knowledge of its analysis. In fact he is very confused about the concept. At this stage, he would not even recognize the correct analysis if it were presented to him. Liam incompletely understands the concept of validity.

To get a better handle on what it means to say an argument is valid, Liam starts to reflect on his practices of reasoning and arguing and to think of new examples of valid and invalid arguments. Suppose that Liam is especially wont to use *reductio*-type arguments against his opponents, where at some point in his argument against his interlocutor he shows his interlocutor to be committed to a contradiction. Reflecting on his practice, he comes to believe that good arguments essentially employ this *reductio*-type structure. Suppose further that Liam comes

to think that deriving absurdity is the hardest part of arguing with an opponent, and because of this confuses the reduction to absurdity with the point and conclusion of his arguments, which are different and variable. Liam neglects to consider wider forms of argument, and neglects to distinguish the proper conclusion of his own arguments from the technique he uses to establish those conclusions; nevertheless, on the basis of these preliminary reflections, Liam comes rationally to believe that what makes for good argument in general is for an argument to have a contradictory conclusion. Here Liam arrives, by focusing on some unrepresentative and misleading aspects of genuine examples, at an analysis for *validity* that is exactly or almost exactly wrong, for it follows immediately from the proper analysis of validity that such arguments are almost never valid (except when the premises are themselves contradictory). Suppose on the basis of this Liam comes to doubt the correct analysis, that a valid argument is such that whenever all the premises are true, the conclusion is as well. Such an account, he reasons, fails to mention anything about contradiction or absurdity, which he takes to be the essence of validity. At this point in analysis, Liam knows a number of things about validity, and has reasoned to some degree competently, but mistakenly, about it. He believes that valid arguments have contradictory conclusions, and doubts that an argument is valid just in case whenever all the premises are true, the conclusion is also true. Liam still incompletely understands the concept of validity.

Finally, suppose that, later, Liam comes to recognize and correct his errors through a combination of a consideration of more examples and further reflection upon them. Back talking to the philosophy students, who now seem to talk about validity much more coherently, he is sometimes tempted by clever but from his point of view merely putative counterexamples. He can explain why the counterexamples are only putative to his and many others' satisfaction, but of course not to everybody's, and not for every putative counterexample. Still, many of the students, as well as those with more expertise, take him to know what it means for an argument to be valid.

Let us now ask whether *Concepts as Use* can make sense of all of this: epistemically speaking—whether it can make sense of the *dialectical epistemology of understanding* exhibited in the possibility of conceptual error and incomplete understanding, and its rational correction

or remediation, in conceptual analysis. I will be arguing that there are two significant junctures in this dialectical epistemology, and that although *Concepts as Use* can accommodate conceptual error and its correction at the first juncture, it cannot accommodate conceptual error and its correction at the second juncture.

*Concepts as Use* has resources to make sense of some conceptual error and its correction. I explain two such resources. These resources can be invoked to defend *Concepts as Use*, to allow it to accommodate, rather than exclude incomplete understanding. Although what I will be saying below is not uncontroversial, it should be remembered that controversy is being courted for the sake of further argument. These resources fortify *Concepts as Use*, and explain how it can accommodate what would otherwise seem to be phenomena beyond its reach. The existence of such resources makes it more difficult, not less, for me to reach my critical targets. Most importantly, mentioning them here clears the space for the fundamental problem for *Concepts as Use* to take stage, in the next subsection.

I begin with some terminology. Think of *intuitions* as intellectual seemings—how things appear not perceptually, but intellectually (Bealer (2002)). Call judgments that result from taking intuitions at face value *intuitive judgments*. Later we will have reason to consider intuitions that have survived or emerged from reflective scrutiny. Call these *reflective intuitions*.<sup>21</sup>

A first resource for making sense of conceptual error comes in the possibility for error deriving from social aspects of grasp and understanding. Intuitions encapsulate a kind of minimal competence with a concept. At least in some cases, this minimal *competence* is itself to be explained in part by the existence of a not merely causal but *epistemically entitling* relation to a social environment from which this minimal *competence* is acquired. Call this relation *epistemic deference* when competence is epistemically unmediated—not mediated by further justifying belief about the reliability of the social environment, or about the subject matter.<sup>22</sup> It is possible that on the basis of epistemic deference one can come to believe a quite wrong-headed analysis and to doubt a correct analysis. We can think of this as Liam's predicament when he thinks that what it means for an argument to be valid is for it to have a true conclusion. His intuition can be thought of as a result of epis-

temic deference to the social environment from which he acquires the belief but with neither justification for the reliability of the source (suppose he heard it from the philosophy students, whom he suspected to be confused) nor any independent justification concerning the subject matter.

The key point for present purposes is that the kind of incomplete understanding at issue is consistent with *Concepts as Use*. It is consistent with this use of intuitions that what makes it the case that some particular concept, and not some other, is grasped is the existence of a relation like epistemic deference between a thinker and her social environment, *and the concept constituting uses to be found there*. Given a social basis for minimal competence, incomplete understanding looks to be consistent with *Concepts as Use*.

The second resource can be found in a plausible connection between the kinds of attitudes that are to count as concept individuating uses, on the one hand, and intuitions and intuitive judgments about examples, on the other. It can plausibly be held that intuitions and intuitive judgments about examples are among the uses that are supposed to constitute grasp of some relevant concept. Intuitive judgments are tokenings or expressions of first-order, cognitive, attitudes. In conceptual analysis, intuitive judgments often function to correct conceptual error. For example, when Liam corrects his conceptual error about validity through his intuitive recognition that the argument from the thought that Mercury is a planet to the thought that Saturn has rings is not a good one, his intuitive judgments are being used to correct conceptual error. If intuitive judgments are held to be among the relevant uses that are supposed to constitute grasp, then proposed mistaken analyses are being corrected by understanding. If the proposed mistaken analyses amount to incomplete understanding then *Concepts as Use* is making sense of what is happening with Liam in a very natural way—Liam is correcting his incomplete understanding with his conceptual grasp or understanding—that is, on this view, with his intuitive judgments about examples—in the course of conceptual analysis. Far from challenging *Concepts as Use*, the correction of conceptual error by intuition in conceptual analysis looks to be easily explained in its terms.

So conceptual error can be corrected by intuition in a way that is

consistent with *Concepts as Use*. However, *Concepts as Use* not only allows the correction of conceptual error, but it also illuminates the first key juncture in the dialectical epistemology of understanding operative in conceptual analysis. It highlights the role of intuitions and intuitive judgments about examples in the first juncture of the dialectical epistemology understanding, early in conceptual analysis. Intuitions and intuitive judgments provide starting points for conceptual knowledge.<sup>23</sup> Early in analysis, greater epistemic authority attaches to intuitions and intuitive judgments about examples than to thinking, even reflective thinking, that proposes conceptual knowledge. This authority allows one's intuitive judgments about examples to serve as a needed corrective to reflectively generated mistaken analyses. This is not to say that early in analysis, corrections never run in the other direction, with reflective thinking inhibiting the move from intuition to intuitive judgment or even correcting intuitive judgments. But it is to say that early in analysis, progress is *driven by* intuitions and intuitive judgments. *Concepts as Use* illuminates this aspect of the dialectical epistemology of understanding.

Whatever kind of incomplete understanding is supposed to be excluded by *Concepts as Use*, it is not the kind of incomplete understanding exhibited early in conceptual analysis where conceptual error is corrected by intuitions about examples. I want, however, to emphasize one more resource for conceiving of use so as to further fortify *Concepts as Use* against objection. This resource makes explicit the background Fregean assumption of this paper in which an individuating connection between concepts and epistemic normativity is accepted. One aspect of that assumed background is that the relevant uses are cognitive and subject to epistemic norms. Non-normative, for example, dispositional, accounts of use have been suspect at least since the discussions of Quine (1960) and Kripke (1982). Dispositional accounts face problems both about determinacy and rule-following. So if it is the case that an injection of primitive normative elements into the conception of use can help to avoid the indeterminacy and rule-following objections of Quine and Kripke, so be it.<sup>24</sup>

So *Concepts as Use* has more resources than may have appeared initially. These extra resources show how conceptual error and its correction are possible early in analysis. Early in analysis one can and

should be thought of as *working out* use and bringing one's explicit attempts at analyses *into alignment* with concept individuating use. The upshot is that the kinds and extent of incomplete understanding that have been discussed until this point—the kinds and extent exhibited early in analysis—are not inconsistent with any fundamental feature of *Concepts as Use*.

But a consideration of the second important juncture in the dialectical epistemology of understanding reveals the limits of *Concepts as Use*.

#### 4.3. Late in analysis

The second important juncture is late in analysis. Late in analysis, one has come to a stable conception of the relevant concept, in the sense that one's intuitive judgments about examples stably conform to one's proposed analyses. One's intuitive judgments have passed or been modified through reflective evaluation, and in this sense are now reflective intuitions. Late in analysis one's reflective intuitions are in equilibrium with one's proposed analyses. But, typically, this equilibrium is *active* and not *passive*, with equilibrium *intentionally maintained* against recalcitrant intuitions. What I mean by this is that, late in analysis, the normative force a recalcitrant intuition has for shaping one's reflective thinking is not determined by what accrues to it in virtue of being an intuition, but instead must involve a contribution, a minimal reflective endorsement, from reflective thinking itself.<sup>25</sup>

The authority of reflective thinking is grounded in the epistemic structure of dialectic. It must be allowed that even reflective thinking can be challenged and is not immune from rational revision. But it cannot be allowed that just any recalcitrant intuition has the normative force to challenge the gains achieved by reflection.<sup>26</sup> An intuition needs a minimal reflective endorsement. This is because late in analysis, epistemic authority attaches to reflective thinking *over* intuition. This authority allows reflective thinking to serve as a needed corrective for mistaken intuitions and intuitive judgments.<sup>27</sup> This is not to say that corrections never run in the other direction, from intuitions to intuitive judgments to the results of reflective thinking. But it is to say that it is a feature of the epistemic structure of dialectic that there is a juncture at which progress is *sustained* by requiring that intuitions can

shape reflective thinking only if they have a normative force that goes beyond that accruing to them in virtue of being intuitions, by including a minimal reflective endorsement. Late in analysis, one has become an expert, where understanding is grounded in reflection on first-order practice that is harmonized with first-order practice by being corrected by and, later, by correcting, first-order practice. In Liam's case, this juncture of dialectic occurs where Liam turns back many but not all of the challenges to his proposed analysis, but nevertheless knows the analysis. At this juncture, Liam's reflective understanding is not immune from rational challenge and revision, but it is not rationally required that Liam take seriously and answer every challenge that appears before his reflective understanding in the form of a recalcitrant intuition.

But how is the rational recognition of a counterexample as a counterexample late in analysis even possible? And how does one move rationally from conceptual error late in analysis to its correction? These things must be possible if reflective intuitions are to be subject to challenge, revision, and correction. But how can one rationally recognize a normative demand for the application of a concept when that application is *conceptually* mistaken from one's reflective point of view, late in analysis?

It is in responding to this question that *Intellect and Concept* will be vindicated: where the individuating connection between concepts and intellectual norms is made manifest in the phenomenon of incomplete understanding in the discourse and methods of philosophy.

In the previous subsection, I explained some further resources available for *Concepts as Use*. These resources allow *Concepts as Use* to recognize the possibility of conceptual error and to construe correction early in analysis as a bringing *into alignment* of proposed analyses with one's use. But the answers to the questions of how the rational recognition of a counterexample as a counterexample late in analysis is possible, and of how conceptual error late in analysis can be rationally corrected, cannot be explained in terms of the resource of epistemic deference, for the authority that attaches to one's reflective thinking surpasses that accorded to epistemic deference. Late in analysis, simply finding a counterexample believed in one's social environment does not give one a sufficient reason to believe it. Again, the rationality of

the recognition of a counterexample as a counterexample and the correction of conceptual error late in analysis cannot be explained as being grounded in intuition about examples. This is because late in analysis our reflective understanding and not our intuitions about examples are generally epistemically authoritative. The counterexamples may be intuited, but recognizing the counterexample as a counterexample requires that the intuition have a normative force that goes beyond that accruing to it in virtue of being an intuition. So late in analysis the further resources that I described for *Concepts as Use* are exhausted.

Within the confines of *Concepts as Use*, perhaps the clearest and most plausible response remaining explains the achievements as one of the acquisition of *discursive justification* as the result of *reasoning*.<sup>28</sup> We can recognize a counterexample as a counterexample to an analysis late in analysis, and correct conceptual error, not by intuition, or by epistemic deference, but by reasoning with the proposed analysis in a deductive argument for the conclusion. This response accords epistemic authority to the results of reflective thinking by using the proposed analysis as a premise in deductive reasoning that concludes with the counterexample to the proposed analysis. On this view, the rational recognition of a counterexample late in analysis consists of reasoning that transmits justification from premises to conclusion through the employment of a deductively valid argument form. Call this *the discursive model*. Can the discursive model explain how a counterexample can be rationally recognized as a counterexample late in analysis, and how conceptual error can be corrected?

As some reflection shows, the discursive model cannot be right. The problem in general is that either such reasoning will not have justification to transmit, or that it cannot be understood as employing a justification-transmitting deductively valid form.

Here is the argument. Either the premises of the argument constitute a formal contradiction, or they do not. Suppose that they do. This can be divided into three cases. Either the analysis itself is formally contradictory, or some supplementary premises are formally contradictory, or the conjunction of the analysis and the supplementary premises are formally contradictory. The second and third cases fail to allow one to recognize a counterexample as a counterexample *to the analysis*, for it can always be maintained that the putative counterexample arises

from the role of the supplementary premises, and not from the analysis.

Suppose then that the analysis itself is formally contradictory. But if this is so, then it is not at all clear how such an analysis can be possessed of justification. Contradictions are ordinarily thought to be without justification, to be obviously unjustified. Further, if the analysis is a contradiction, its counterexample will be a logical truth, and its proof will not require any undischarged assumptions. But then the occurrence of the analysis in the premises would be inessential, and thus not part of the explanation of how rational recognition of a counterexample as a counterexample is ultimately possible. That ultimate explanation would thus would not vindicate the idea that rational recognition is possible by transmitting justification by means of reasoning with a deductively valid form and justified premises, and in particular with the mistaken analysis as a premise. In this case, then, although there are the means to transmit justification, by way of the deductively valid form of the argument, there will not be any justification to transmit to the conclusion.

Suppose then that neither the analysis nor any supplementary premises, nor their conjunction, are formally contradictory. But then, because the conclusion is a counterexample to the analysis, not only will there exist an interpretation that makes the premises true and the conclusion false, every interpretation of the premises that makes the analysis in particular true will make the conclusion false. The reasoning is thus invalid. In this case, then, although the reasoning may have justification to transmit, it will not have a means to do so because the argument cannot be employing a deductively valid form.

The overall conclusion is that one cannot rationally come to recognize a counterexample as a counterexample to an analysis or to correct conceptual error *through* reasoning that uses the proposed analysis that is being counterexamined and corrected in accordance with the discursive model. Such reasoning is supposed to be made rational by transmitting justification from the premises to the conclusion by means of a deductively valid form, but either there will be no justification to transmit or the reasoning will not employ a deductively valid form by way of which that justification can be transmitted.

What is happening here is that *Concepts as Use* is stretching to the

point of breaking in trying to make sense of a robust kind of incomplete understanding. The point is helpfully put in terms of transparency. What is wanted is an account of how the rational recognition of a counterexample as a counterexample late in analysis is possible. Trying to explain this in terms of the discursive model stretches *Concepts as Use*, but the view is incapable of stretching far enough. The view breaks if one insists that despite the problems I have described, discursive justification is generated and acquired in such reasoning. For if this were right, one would be in a position to have *rationally* conflicting attitudes to the same thought.<sup>29</sup> But this is what the transparency of thought rules out, and as we have seen, *Concepts as Use* is committed to the transparency of thought.

This is in effect the more precise basis for the idea that *Concepts as Use* excludes robust kinds of incomplete understanding that required clarification earlier (§3). We can also now understand the relevant sense of ‘robust’: robust incomplete understanding can remain even upon reflection. The connection between *Concepts as Use* and the transparency of thought explains why the kind of incomplete understanding that can be exhibited late in analysis exists on the far side of the limit of the kind of epistemic phenomenon that *Concepts as Use* can make sense of.

So how is a counterexample recognized as a counterexample and understanding corrected if not as according to the discursive model? Precisely what is missing in *Concepts as Use* is an understanding of the dialectical epistemology of understanding, and in particular of the nature of the authority of reflective thinking at the second juncture of the dialectical epistemology of understanding. The discursive model tries to recognize the authority of reflection by using its results, proposed analyses, as premises in the reasoning. This does not work, I have argued.

But the discursive model does not and cannot utilize *The Duality of Reference in Reflective Thinking* because, according to that thesis, reflective thinking is thinking that not only uses, but also mentions concepts. But this cannot be an aspect of use. But *The Duality of Reference* is what is required. One moves late in analysis from a conceptual error to a recognition of a counterexample as a counterexample by reflectively evaluating the potential systematic repercussions of an intuition. This

confines or elevates the normative force of the intuition so that either it can be ignored or it must be taken into account. When one does not ignore a recalcitrant intuition but instead recognizes it as a counterexample, this is the result of a reflective evaluation of the intuition that elevates its normative force to the point that it cannot be ignored. Further reflection then evaluates the systematic advantages and disadvantages of rejecting, accommodating, or accepting the counterexample. One then makes up one's mind and fixes (retains, revises, or suspends) one's first-order attitudes in the light of the reflective evaluation, with that attitude-fixing justified not by the authority of specific intuitions, but by the authority invested in reflective thinking late in analysis. Recognizing a counterexample as a counterexample and correcting understanding make ineliminable use of reflective thinking both in evaluating the possible systematic repercussions of recalcitrant intuitions, and when intuition passes this test, in reflectively evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of accepting or rejecting the potential counterexample. The way that first-order belief is fixed through reflective evaluation is not deductive but instead is justified by the authority of reflective thinking late in analysis, where a thinker expresses her considered point of view.

We are finally ready for some major conclusions. First, what I have been calling *intellectual norms* are the norms that govern thinking late in analysis, when reflective thinking authoritatively fixes first-order attitudes. That's what intellectual norms are. We are also finally in a position to draw a key conclusion of this paper. The key conclusion is that *Concepts as Use* fails to make sense of a robust kind of incomplete understanding because it fails to recognize the nature and bearing of intellectual norms for concept individuation.

## 5. A WORKED-OUT EXAMPLE: JESHION ON THE OBVIOUS

The discussion so far has been very abstract, and so it will help to fix ideas to consider the relation between the points here and another recent discussion. I think the points here suggest problems for Robin Jeshion's (2000) argument against infallibilism about the *a priori*. Although I think that her conclusion is correct, I think that the argument is problematic because of the way it tries to make sense of how in-

complete understanding is challenged and corrected. In the terms of this paper, Jeshion's view attempts to make sense of incomplete understanding late in analysis with a view of *Concepts as Use*, and in doing so is forced into exactly the bind I described in the previous section. The result prevents Jeshion's considerable insights in the paper from taking proper shape. The way out of this bind is to recognize the existence and bearing of intellectual norms for concept individuation.

### 5.1. Infallibilism and conceptual understanding

Jeshion's target in her article is infallibilism about *a priori* justification—the thesis that “if agent A is *a priori* justified in believing p, and A's basis for belief involves no inductive reasoning, that which justifies A's belief that p must guarantee the truth of p” (Jeshion 2000: 336). Jeshion argues in a very compelling and illuminating way that infallibilism about *a priori* justification need not be rooted in any asymmetric standards thesis (where the standards for having *a priori* justification are held to be more stringent than the standards for having *a posteriori* justification), and instead can be rooted in the idea that putative *a priori* justifications that do not guarantee truth involve unclear and conceptually confused cognitive states (Jeshion 2000: §1) that, because of their confused character, cannot justify.<sup>30</sup> But there are examples, Jeshion argues, in which one is *a priori* justified in believing p, but where that which serves to justify one's belief does not guarantee truth because that which serves to justify consists in unclear and confused cognitive states. Jeshion's key example (described below) is one in which “conceptual understanding” is challenged and corrected even when one is “exercising the finest control on... conceptual thought, drawing on [one's] fullest clearest conceptual understanding” (Jeshion (2000): 347); in the terms of this paper, Jeshion's key example is one in which proposed analyses are challenged and corrected late in analysis. The fundamental point of Jeshion's key example is that infallibilism about *a priori* justification makes impossible either the justified recognition of a counterexample as a counterexample to an analysis, or the justified correction of understanding.

### 5.2. *By Reasoning*

I think that an argument close to this in structure may indeed be sound. But Jeshion's argument has an extra layer of complication. Jeshion accuses the infallibilist of falsifying the following principle, which I'll call:

#### *By Reasoning*

For any true proposition *p* that someone *S* can know, *S* can believe *p* with the services of only justified beliefs, and in particular without the services of beliefs that are accidentally attained. [Jeshion (2000): 344]

I call this *By Reasoning* because it builds in the idea that the beliefs whose epistemic status is of interest are justified "with the services of" other beliefs. I assume that Jeshion intends that these other beliefs play a role in reasoning to the conclusion *p*. What role and what kind of reasoning? Jeshion cannot mean that these beliefs play a role in a priori *inductive* reasoning because Jeshion's target infallibilist thesis explicitly excludes *a priori* inductive reasoning from its purview. Jeshion excludes *a priori* inductive reasoning from the purview of the infallibility thesis because although such reasoning is fallible "it is extremely doubtful that there is anything epistemically inadequate, much less defective, about such reasoning" (Jeshion (2000): 336). For Jeshion's dialectical purposes, infallibilism about a priori inductive reasoning is a straw man. I assume that Jeshion would say something similar about a priori *abductive* reasoning. So in the argument against infallibilism, the kind of reasoning that is relevant can be neither inductive nor abductive. So I assume in what follows that the reasoning is deductive. It is reasoning that generates discursive justification.

Now *By Reasoning* is a puzzling thesis to hold in a paper on *a priori* justification, especially given Jeshion's view that *a priori* justifications "depend upon and are constituted by or refer only to reasoning, conceptual understanding, or rational intuition" (Jeshion (2000): 333). It is made even more puzzling when one finds that Jeshion holds the (in my view, correct) idea that "finding *p* true on the basis of conceptual understanding alone is direct, non-inferential acceptance of *p* as true. It is based in no inductive or deductive reasoning, no sense perceptual

experience, and no insight or imagination" (Jeshion (2000): 345). It is not clear how or why *By Reasoning* is applicable to beliefs justified by conceptual understanding *unless* conceptual understanding itself consists of certain kinds of beliefs—beliefs that constitute one's grasp of a concept. That is, it is not clear why *By Reasoning* should apply unless something like *Concepts as Use* was true. *Concepts as Use* both makes sense of Jeshion's argument, as well as makes clear how the relevant cognitive states are states of *understanding*.

A critical consideration of Jeshion's key example should clarify these points. The example concerns the mistaken conceptual understanding of the mathematical notion of continuity that is manifested in finding obvious the false proposition *all continuous functions are differentiable, except at isolated points*. According to Jeshion, one must use one's unclear, confused, and mistaken conceptual understanding to arrive, first, at the rational recognition of a counterexample, and then, at the rational recognition of a correct analysis. Jeshion holds that reasoning *with* one's confused understanding is the only way to recognize and correct one's confused understanding. In the example about mathematical continuity,

one recognizes a counterexample *as* a counterexample to the proposition one finds obvious. But recognizing a counterexample as a counterexample to the proposition one finds obvious entails judging—hence believing—that such-and-such is a counterexample to the proposition that one finds obvious. Such a judgment must itself be grounded in one's conceptual understanding alone, indeed, normally on the same unclear conceptual understanding that one initially thought with in finding the false proposition obvious. Therefore correction of false beliefs based upon one's best, yet still unclear conceptual understanding requires reliance in—beliefs in propositions grounded on—one's best yet still unclear conceptual understanding alone.<sup>31</sup> [Jeshion (2000): 350; cf. also 355]

But, the argument runs, using one's confused understanding cannot be allowed by the infallibilist as a way to form justified beliefs (cf. Jeshion (2000): 350). Infallibilism can make sense of neither rationally recognizing a counterexample nor rationally coming to a correct analysis.

Since we can come rationally to recognize a counterexample and to correct understanding, infallibilism must be incorrect.

I think that Jeshion's argument is deeply interesting. But in evaluating it, it is striking to see that it is subject to *exactly* the problem described earlier for *Concepts as Use*. To repeat, that problem was that rationally recognizing a counterexample as a counterexample to one's conceptual understanding or proposed analysis late in analysis is not recognizable in the way that the discursive model describes, through reasoning that uses the proposed analysis that is being counterexampled to transfer justification to a counterexamining conclusion by means of a deductively valid argument form. Our justified grasp of a counterexample as a counterexample cannot be inferred from the conceptual understanding for which the counterexample is a counterexample; there is no rational route from an analysis to a counterexample to that analysis.

Let me be absolutely clear about my criticism of Jeshion's view. It is true that the appreciation of a counterexample and of the correct analysis presupposes being able to reason with the concept that is confusedly understood. But that is not to say that it requires reasoning with one's *conceptually mistaken beliefs*. Those claims are the same claim only if grasping a concept consists in these beliefs; but the very phenomenon around which Jeshion adduces her argument shows that that view cannot be correct. The problem in Jeshion's paper is the extra layer of complexity of argument that is introduced with *By Reasoning*; the problem is that rationally coming to a correct conceptual understanding or analysis cannot be as the discursive model makes out, but *By Reasoning* demands just that. Jeshion's imposition of *By Reasoning* precludes a view in which the correction of understanding is a *non-inferential* and entitled matter—where beliefs are corrected without the service of other beliefs.

How should Jeshion's argument be run? Jeshion's argument requires that we reason from the confused conceptual understanding of the mathematical notion of continuity; and because of *By Reasoning*, this means that we should reason (in her key example) from our conceptually mistaken belief *all continuous functions are differentiable, except at isolated points* to counterexamples and to the correct analysis of the concept of continuity. But there is no rational route from an

analysis to a counterexample to that analysis. But what is problematic here is neither the idea of confused conceptual understanding, nor of confused conceptual understanding being involved in recognizing counterexamples and correcting understanding. But that is, officially, all that Jeshion needs for her argument against infallibilism - to show how one can have justified beliefs that are based in confused and unclear understanding. But that correct idea is being interpreted so as to mesh with an argument that involves *By Reasoning*. This is what brings in *Concepts as Use*, and this is what makes it impossible to make sense of recognizing a counterexample and correcting understanding. Jeshion's argument can be improved by making it simpler, by removing the layer of complexity introduced by *By Reasoning*.

Jeshion's argument should insist on the non-inferential and entitled nature of recognizing a counterexample as a counterexample and correcting understanding late in analysis. Construing the epistemology involved here dialectically, and in particular insisting on the authority of reflective thinking late in analysis highlights the non-inferential, entitling nature of that epistemology. Recognizing a counterexample as a counterexample and correcting understanding make ineliminable use of reflective thinking in appreciating and evaluating the systematic merits of intuitions about examples, and in fixing first-order belief in a way that expresses a thinker's considered point of view late in analysis. The epistemology here is dialectical, not discursive.

#### 6. AGAINST CONCEPTS AS PURE REFERENCE: ON A CONFUSION ABOUT THE TRANSPARENCY OF THOUGHT

In this section, I will argue that the reasoning employed in *Motivational Instability* is confused and fails to vindicate *Concepts as Pure Reference*. In particular, I will be arguing that the truth about the transparency of thought is more complicated than may appear on the surface, and that the way that it is conceived in *Motivational Instability* is too crude. Again, what is missing is an appreciation of the nature and bearing of intellectual norms for concept individuation.

### 6.1. Transparency and incomplete understanding again

Most compactly, the reasoning in *Motivational Instability* relies on two points: first, that the shortcoming revealed by Frege's Puzzle for *Concepts as Pure Reference* is that concepts so individuated fail to satisfy the transparency of thought; and second that an individuation of concepts that allows incompletely understanding also individuates concepts so as to fail to satisfy the transparency of thought. Just as one can without rational incoherence have a combination of attitudes in which one

believes that Hesperus is Hesperus

while one

doubts that Hesperus is Phosphorus,

so one can, if there is such a thing as incomplete understanding

believe that an argument is valid just in case it is valid

while one

doubts that an argument is valid just in case whenever all  
the premises are true the conclusion is also true.

In other words, just as co-reference is not transparent, so it seems that co-conceptuality or co-sensicality is also not transparent. The conclusion is that the motivation for introducing incompletely understood concepts is unstable against the background of an acceptance of the transparency of thought. A corollary is that if concepts are no longer individually constrained by the transparency of thought, then the most forceful objection to *Concepts as Pure Reference* lapses, and the view regains plausibility.

It is this reasoning that I want to argue is too crude. It is too crude, because it fails to recognize the existence and bearing of intellectual norms governing reflective thinking in incomplete understanding. The nature and bearing of intellectual norms explains why although both incomplete understanding and the shortcomings of *Concepts as Pure Reference* are of individuated relevance for senses or concepts, the individuated relevance of incomplete understanding is nevertheless distinct from the individuated relevance of the shortcomings of *Concepts*

as *Pure Reference*. Further, whereas *Concepts as Pure Reference* conflicts with the transparency of thought, incomplete understanding not only allows the transparency of thought, it essentially relies on it. But if incomplete understanding does not conflict with the transparency of thought, then it follows that incomplete understanding is not subject to the same shortcomings as *Concepts as Pure Reference*, and this renders *Motivational Instability* unable to lend support to *Concepts as Pure Reference*.<sup>32</sup>

Why is the reasoning in *Motivational Instability* crude? When a thinker takes conflicting attitudes to thoughts that are equivalent merely with respect to reference, she makes errors, but she does not make conceptual errors; she fails to recognize identities that hold at the level of reference. But when a thinker, in the course of reflective thinking aimed at improving conceptual understanding, takes conflicting attitudes to one and the same thought, she makes conceptual errors; she fails to recognize identities at the level of concepts. Now, according to *Duality of Reference*, reflective thinking involves not only thinking with the relevant concepts, but also thinking about them. Understanding this is key to recognizing the crude use of the notion of transparency in *Motivational Instability*.

It is true, if the transparency of thought holds, that in reflective thinking aimed at improving conceptual understanding, failing to recognize an identity at the level of concepts is a violation of a conceptual norm that prescribes that a thinker take non-conflicting cognitive attitudes. But the situation is complicated by the role of reflective thinking. For in reflective thinking one does not only think *with* the relevant concepts, one also thinks *about* them. The presence of reflective thinking in the situation does not cancel or eliminate the prescription of non-conflicting attitudes. But the role of reflective thinking does blunt or mitigate the force of the violation. This is because although one fails to recognize an identity at the level of reference *and* at the level of concepts, this latter failure is justified or rationalized by the role of second-order attitudes in reflective thinking, and in particular by the fact that not only can objects be presented in different ways to first-order thinking about the world, but so too can concepts be presented in different ways, to *second-order* thinking—to thinking about thoughts. Just as Hesperus and Phosphorus—one and the same thing—can be presented

two different ways, so, for example, can *validity* and *being an inference such that whenever the premises are all true, the conclusion is also true*—one and the same concept—be presented to second-order thinking in different ways. Concepts and thoughts themselves can be presented in different ways to second-order thinking.

If this is right then although incomplete understanding does involve the violation of a conceptual norm that prescribes non-conflicting attitudes to certain thoughts (to  $p$  and  $q$  when  $p = q$ ), that violation is blunted or mitigated by the role of second-order attitudes in incomplete understanding. In incomplete understanding one *does* violate a conceptual norm but that violation is itself rationalized by the fact that concepts and thoughts can be presented in different ways to second-order thinking. Recognizing that the same concept is being presented to second-order thinking can be an intellectual achievement—in fact exactly the intellectual achievement, governed by the dialectical epistemology of understanding, of arriving at a successful conceptual analysis.

But it might be asked now why this difference makes a difference. *Motivational Instability* relies on the idea that the very same problem that applies to concepts as individuated by *Concepts as Pure Reference* applies to concepts that can be incompletely understood. Is not the idea that concepts and thoughts can be presented to second-order thinking in different ways a *vindication* of *Motivational Instability*, and not a refutation of it?

It is not a vindication because the application of Frege's Puzzle at the second-order level, on senses or concepts instead of ordinary referents, presupposes that the concepts or thoughts being thought about at the second-order level are one and the same, and thus that, at the level of first-order thinking, one's thinking involves taking conflicting attitudes to the *same* thought. This is exactly the reverse lesson of the lesson that ought to be derived from the shortcomings of *Concepts as Pure Reference*. What is counseled by the recognition of the shortcomings of *Concepts as Pure Reference* is an individuation for thoughts that allows for a *multiplicity* of co-referential thought constituents to avoid the spurious attribution of a violation of conceptual norms. But what is counseled by a proper understanding of incomplete understanding is an individuation for thoughts that effects a *consolidation* of co-sensical

thought constituents to preserve the reality of a violation of conceptual norms, a violation that is mitigated, though, by the different ways concepts and thoughts can be presented to second-order thinking in reflective thinking.<sup>33</sup>

We are thus ready to draw a final conclusion. The idea that *Concepts as Pure Reference* derives support from *Motivational Instability* is confusion, confusion engendered by an overly crude understanding of the notion of transparency. Thought is transparent, in this sense of *Transparency*, but thoughts are nevertheless such that they can be presented in different ways to a thinker's second-order thinking in reflective thinking. But the reasoning that leads to *Motivational Instability* fails to recognize the role of reflective thinking in understanding, and in particular fails to recognize the nature and individuating relevance of the intellectual norms that govern such thinking.

#### 7. A WORKED-OUT EXAMPLE: WILLIAMSON ON EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONCEPTIONS OF ANALYTICITY

I have already mentioned examples where the kind of reasoning in *Motivational Instability* is invoked to support a *Concepts as Pure Reference* type view (see note 13). But I would like to develop my criticisms by considering in broad strokes Tim Williamson's recent (2007: Chapter 4) assault on epistemological conceptions of analyticity. As I will try to make clear, close approximations to my *Concepts as Use*, *Transparency*, *Illicit*, *Motivational Instability*, and *Concepts as Pure Reference* are operative in Williamson's discussion, and many of the critical arguments and conclusion to a significant degree agree with the views expressed here.<sup>34</sup> But Williamson's view suffers when it moves away from criticism, in my terminology, of *Concepts as Use*, and offers an account of the nature of meaning and concepts in the largely de-epistemologized terms of an intensional version of *Concepts as Pure Reference* (2007: 127-130).<sup>35</sup> That inference, made without additional grounds, has exactly the inferential structure licensed by *Motivational Instability*. Williamson's view thus provides a convenient way for me to concretize my criticism of *Concepts as Pure Reference*, and in particular the idea that it receives support from *Motivational Instability*.

Williamson introduces epistemological conceptions of analyticity

with an example, and the rough intuition about the example that epistemological conceptions of analyticity take as their starting point for theorizing:

If someone is unwilling to assent to the sentence “Every vixen is a female fox,” the obvious hypothesis is that they do not understand the word “vixen.” The central idea behind epistemological conceptions of analyticity is that, in such cases, failure to assent is not merely *good evidence* of failure to understand; it is *constitutive* of such failure. [2007: 73]

Williamson expresses the constitutive (or at least modal) link between assent and understanding with his “understanding-assent links” (2007: 74), which can be formulated for language and thought:

(UAL) Necessarily, whoever understands the sentence “Every vixen is a female fox” assents to it.

(UAt) Necessarily, whoever grasps the thought *every vixen is a female fox* assents to it. [2007: 73-74]

I’ll confine myself here to thoughts. From the understanding-assent links, a notion of analyticity for thoughts can be defined: “a thought *t* is analytic just in case, necessarily, whoever grasps *t* assents to it” (2007: 74). This is Williamson’s target.

But, as should be evident, it is also one of the targets of the discussion here, namely *Concepts as Use*. It is clear that Williamson has the same kind of general philosophical position in mind as I do—views that somehow make use or role in thinking constitutive of understanding (see Williamson (2006): note 5 and Williamson (2007): 76 for explicit statement). Assent is, in my terms, a kind of use; and indeed it is a cognitive use. Further, Williamson is explicit that assent is “no metalinguistic or metaconceptual attitude” (2007: 75). In an earlier chapter, Williamson tells us that we should not confuse the thought *vixens are female foxes* with the thought *VIXENS ARE FEMALE FOXES is true* (2007: 49). So Williamson’s target is a view in which certain first-order cognitive uses, namely assents to putative analyticities, are constitutive of understanding. This is *Concepts as Use*.

How does Williamson argue against *Concepts as Use*? A simple rendition of the argument is that epistemological conceptions of analyticity assume that understanding-assent links hold; but understanding-assent links fail; so epistemological conceptions of analyticity fail. This rendition of the argument leaves unexplained why epistemological conceptions of analyticity assume that understanding-assent links hold. I think, however, that Williamson’s argument is more nuanced, and fills this lacuna. The argument is, rather: epistemological conceptions of analyticity assume the transparency of thought; the transparency of thought entails that understanding-assent links hold; but understanding-assent links fail; so the transparency of thought fails; so epistemological conceptions of analyticity fail. The transparency of thought connects epistemological conceptions of analyticity to understanding-assent links. Let me explain.

The status of understanding-assent links is crucial for Williamson’s argument, but when Williamson explicitly sets out his critical target for the chapter, understanding-assent links are given a revealing gloss:

a natural project is . . . to try to explain the armchair methodology of philosophy as based in something like understanding-assent links: our sheer linguistic and conceptual competence mandates assent to some sentences or thoughts and inferences, which form the starting point of philosophical inquiry. [2007: 76]

The natural project is to determine whether conceptual competence itself places any rational constraints on thinkers. I think that this idea is or is very close to my idea of the transparency of thought. My idea claims the existence of conceptual norms for the cognitive attitudes of those who grasp concepts and thoughts. Conceptual norms are norms for cognitive thinking that derive from the identities of the concepts and thoughts grasped in cognitive thinking. Williamson describes a mandated assent (presumably rationally mandated assent if it is to play the envisaged role in philosophical inquiry), deriving from our sheer linguistic and conceptual competence. This may not look like a notion of transparency, but it is - a notion very much like the one that I have described in this paper.

I turn now to the “main argument”—the argument against understanding-assent links. The argument is that understanding-assent

links fail because it is possible to understand some concept without assenting to and even doubting the understanding-assent link that is supposed to provide its analytic content. This is true, Williamson argues, of basic logical truths (2007: Chapter 4, §3), as well as for “traditional paradigms of analyticity” (2007: Chapter 4, §6).

But what does the failure of understanding-assent links show? As I am reconstructing Williamson’s argument, they do not themselves show the failure of epistemological conceptions of analyticity directly, but show that a key assumption of epistemological conceptions of analyticity, namely that of the transparency of thought, is mistaken. This is suggested perhaps first and foremost by the organization of his chapter, which, as I explained above, takes its critical focus to be the transparency of thought in something like my sense, with the “main argument” against this consisting of an argument showing that understanding-assent links fail. It is also suggested by some passages, for example when Williamson tells us that the failure of understanding-assent links for concepts shows us that

[w]e may sometime be unable to determine whether we are employing two concepts or one. That makes the individuation of thoughts and concepts less accessible to the thinker than many theorists of thought have wished. [2007: 129]

Here Williamson is objecting to the idea, in my slightly extended sense, that co-conceptuality is transparent. The objection, elaborating a little bit, is that there are cases in which thinkers can make errors about co-conceptuality without irrationality. But if thought is transparent, such a thinker is irrational. So thought is not transparent.

But most relevant for present purposes, the critical focus on transparency is also suggested by the large-scale structure of Williamson’s argument not against understanding-assent links or epistemological conceptions of analyticity, but for an intensionalized version of *Concepts as Pure Reference*. What we are supposed to learn from the failures of understanding-assent links is that thought is not transparent, and that since the transparency of thought is a key assumption of epistemological conceptions of analyticity, that epistemological conceptions of analyticity fail. How do we get from this negative conclusion to

the positive view that an intensionalized version of *Concepts as Pure Reference*, a view that does not make use of epistemic notions, can account for meanings and concepts? I want to suggest that the inferential conduit here is *Motivational Instability*. For if transparency fails, then the motivation for accounting for concepts in epistemic terms is undermined, and a return to *Concepts as Pure Reference* becomes available.

For present purposes, I have no objection to Williamson’s arguments against understanding-assent links, nor against that idea that these arguments, ultimately, devastate a view of concepts based on understanding-assent links, a view like *Concepts as Use*.<sup>36</sup> But I reject Williamson’s contentions that the arguments tell against the transparency of thought, against epistemological conceptions of analyticity in general, and for an intensionalized version of *Concepts as Pure Reference*. I reject these contentions because they fail to take notice of the bearing and role of intellectual norms in concept individuation. I close the paper with a description of what seem like some wrong turns that take Williamson off track.

The first step to recognizing the role of intellectual norms is to recognize the phenomenon of incomplete understanding, especially as it occurs late in a dialectic epistemology. Indeed, one might take Williamson’s point about the failure of understanding-assent links to constitute just such recognition. But Williamson does not take this first step - for him, the failure of understanding-assent links do not constitute a kind of incomplete understanding. Early in his chapter, Williamson warns friends of epistemological conceptions of analyticity from straying too far from the simple understanding-assent links model by distinguishing possession from full understanding (2007: 74). He argues further that failures of understanding-assent links cannot be understood in general as a matter of a distinction between mere possession and full understanding if that distinction is understood in terms of a linguistic division of labour. For example, Vann McGee’s doubts concerning *Modus Ponens* show the failure of understanding-assent links not only for lay, but also for expert speakers (2007: 94).<sup>37</sup> The overall drift is that the failure of understanding-assent links does not call for a distinction between full and incomplete understanding, and thus that that distinction cannot help the friend of epistemological conceptions of analyticity.

Intellectual norms are norms governing cognitive thinking at the second juncture in the dialectical epistemology of understanding. They are norms governing an aspect of the reflective thinking that is operative there. This reflective thinking involves what I have called the *Duality of Reference in Reflective Thinking*—reference both to a concept and with that very concept to the non-conceptual world. But Williamson explicitly rules out the relevance of such reflective thinking. Williamson is especially concerned to put aside the idea that epistemological conceptions of analyticity involve any special connection with reflective thinking. Indeed, *immediately* after announcing his critical focus in the chapter, Williamson tells us that the contribution of epistemic conceptions of analyticity for understanding the armchair methodology of philosophy

cannot accurately be characterized as ‘reflection on our concepts’. For that description specifies the method only as “reflection,” which applies to virtually all forms of philosophy. Moreover it specifies the subject matter as “our own concepts”, whereas the envisaged method involves reflection with our own concepts, and is therefore reflection on whatever our concepts happen to refer to—in most cases not concepts. [2007: 77]

According to Williamson, epistemic conceptions of analyticity and understanding-assent links have no special connection to reflective thinking, and in any case, understanding-assent links are not to be understood in a metaconceptual way. They involve only reflection with concepts, not on concepts.<sup>38</sup>

Williamson considers the idea that analyticities make reference to concepts or meanings (Chapter 3) and that they make reference to the world (Chapter 4) but nowhere does he set analyticity and analysis in their proper epistemological setting in reflective thinking. Nowhere does he consider the idea that the reflective thinking operative here makes reference *both* to concepts and to the non-conceptual world, as in *Duality of Reference*. Once that is allowed, the failures of understanding-assent links take on a more nuanced significance. The failures do not undermine the transparency of thought and the consequence that a conceptual norm is violated. The role of reflective

thinking explains how such a failure can be rational, consistently with the transparency of thought. What is crucial to that explanation is how one and the same concept can be presented in different ways to second-order thinking.<sup>39</sup>

To put aside incomplete understanding and the role of reflective thinking in conceptual analysis leaves one in a position to be tempted by the kind of reasoning in *Motivational Instability*, where one moves from the failure of understanding-assent links to the failure in general of epistemological conceptions of analyticity and to the renewed plausibility of a kind of *Concepts as Pure Reference* view. But that reasoning is invalid. We can reject understanding-assent links yet hold to an epistemic conception of analyticity and continue to reject *Concepts as Pure Reference* by recognizing the individuating connection between intellect and concept.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>This paper has been under construction for a long time, and has benefited from the input of a number of people. Thanks to James Beebe, Stephen Biggs, Akeel Bilgrami, Tyler Burge, Ben Caplan, Imogen Dickie, Ken Ehrenberg, Matti Eklund, Jane Friedman, David Hunter, Robin Jeshion, Sari Kisilevsky, Martin Lin, Josh Mozersky, Jennifer Nagel, Michael Nelson, Doug Patterson, Christopher Peacocke, Diana Raffman, Dustin Stokes, and Jessica Wilson. Thanks also to audiences at Concordia University, Queen’s University, University of Ottawa, and SUNY Buffalo.

<sup>2</sup>This paper is indebted to Burge’s for inspiration. But beyond some initial orienting discussion in §1, it is not about Burge’s views. A fuller discussion of Burge’s views, and in particular, of his anti-individualism, can be found in Rattan (manuscript a).

<sup>3</sup>Burge’s text also suggests a reading in which the aim of the paper is to establish anti-individualism, understood as what looks to be a kind of local anti-supervenience thesis (Burge (1986): §2 especially). The paper is also read as being fundamentally about the semantics of attitude attributions (see for example Bach (1988) and Elugardo (1993) for criticisms of Burge, Goldberg (2007a) for defence, and Bach & Elugardo (2003) for criticism of Goldberg). Burge has made it explicit more recently that anti-individualism is not to be understood as a kind of anti-supervenience thesis, nor as a thesis about the semantics of attitude attributions (see Burge (2007): 19 and 157-162 respectively). My reading focuses, as the title of Burge’s paper suggests, on the relation between an issue in the foundations of mind, the individuation of concepts, and an important aspect of epistemic normativity, namely *intellectual normativity*. Burge 1986 provides no explicit statement of what intellectual norms are, nor how they fit into what is presumably the more general category of epistemic norms (although §2, §4, and §5 of his paper offer many hints of what his view is). I clarify and locate intellectual normativity in the more general setting of epistemic normativity as the paper progresses, and especially in §4, without making any claim about what Burge’s view is.

<sup>4</sup>If the connection to intellectual, or more generally, epistemic normativity is *simply* “a deep source of interest” for anti-individualism, then the anti-individualist thesis must be a *different* thesis from a thesis that connects concepts and epistemic normativity more directly. I think that the correct view involves a more direct connection, which I assume (with the assumed Fregean background) but do not argue for. See Rattan (manuscript a)) for further considerations and argument.

<sup>5</sup>The issue of whether one can *rationally* doubt mathematical truths is a difficult one, and like Burge (1986: note 4), I do not take it up in detail. However, some of the discussion of Robin Jeshion’s work, below, is relevant to the general question. I assume for now that such doubt is possible; nothing in the argument of the paper depends upon that. Incidentally, Burge speaks only of dubitability and not *rational* dubitability; but I think that Burge’s arguments generalize to the latter, more demanding kind of dubitability, and that the more demanding kind is in fact most relevant for Burge’s discussion.

<sup>6</sup>Burge (1986: 708-709) suggests that the arguments of ‘Intellectual Norms’ do not involve the idea of incomplete understanding. I think that this is misleading. It is more appropriate to say, I think, that the arguments of ‘Intellectual Norms’ do involve incomplete understanding, but that they do not involve the kind of incomplete understanding highlighted in ‘Individualism and the Mental’ (Burge (1994)). See Burge (2007): 23; 175, and Åsa Wikforss (2004): 294 for congenial discussion (although I believe that Wikforss is mistaken in thinking that the relevant incomplete understanding is of “real definitions”, of definitions that state a posteriori essences). This paper focuses on intellectual kinds or aspects of incomplete understanding. For a more general guide to Burge’s views of understanding, including of incomplete or partial understanding, see his subject index entry for ‘understanding’ in Burge (2007).

<sup>7</sup>This is why being able to analyze a concept requires already having a competence with it. I say more about this below, in §4.

<sup>8</sup>Others have considered and argued for the views that meaning and thought are transparent. Transparency is often understood as the idea that if two expressions have the same meaning, then anyone who knows the meanings of those expressions knows that they have the same meaning (Dummett (1973): 95; cf. also Dummett (1978): 131). Paul Boghossian 1994 defines transparency similarly, but for thoughts, and connects the discussion of transparency to issues about anti-individualism. Jessica Brown (2004: 160) defines transparency in a way similar to Boghossian, but helpfully distinguishes between transparency of sameness of content and transparency of difference of content. These ideas of transparency differ from my idea of transparency because they are formulated at the second-order level of thinking *about* meanings or thoughts; my idea of transparency is concerned with first-order thinking *with* meanings or thoughts and with what it is for attitudes containing them to be rationally coherent. Because the cognitive value of second-order thoughts will be important in my discussion later, for my purposes, the standard definitions of transparency confuse issues of thinking with thoughts and thinking about them. There is an associated risk for those who employ the definition that aspects of the cognitive value of second-order thinking are obscured by collapsing metacognitive and cognitive aspects of thinking. Sandy Goldberg’s 2008 discussion of the role of metacognitive aspects of cognitive value and transparency (2008: 166; 172-174) may be guilty of this. Further discussion of transparency can be found in Fine (2007), where Fine, unlike most referentialists, endorses the transparency of meaning (Fine 2007: 60ff.). Something like transparency in my sense is a critical target of

Williamson’s (2007: 76; see also the discussion in §7 below). My idea (like the ideas of Dummett, Boghossian, Brown, Goldberg, Fine, and Williamson) should be distinguished from the more narrowly logical/semantical idea of a transparent linguistic context, or of the transparent occurrence of an expression in a linguistic context. The notion of transparency that figures in the literature on perceptual consciousness is even more distant (Harman (1990)).

<sup>9</sup>Does one believe that that an argument is *valid* iff it is valid, or that an argument is valid iff it is valid? That an argument is valid iff whenever all the premises are true, the conclusion is also true, or that an argument is *valid* iff whenever all the premises are true, the conclusion is also true? As we shall see, that is a key distinction for understanding the notion of incomplete understanding. But we do not at this point in the paper know how the reference to concepts, as in ‘*valid*’ works—we do not understand at this point in the paper what I will call in §4 *The Duality of Reference in Reflective Thinking*.

<sup>10</sup>Williamson (2006, 2007: Chapter 4) considers the issues from a similar abstract vantage point. In Williamson’s terminology the question is that of the viability of views of meaning and thought that appeal to constitutive “understanding-assent links”. I agree with Williamson that it is fruitful to pursue the issues at this level of abstraction, but as will be clear (§7), I disagree with the lessons he draws in his discussion.

<sup>11</sup>For some relevant discussion, though, see Rattan (2004).

<sup>12</sup>In a different but related vocabulary, one might think that these phenomena are irrelevant to competence and instead are aspects of mere *performance*. Cf. Chomsky (1965), Chapter 1.

<sup>13</sup>What about non-cognitive and/or second-order attitudes? Are they not such that conflicting use of the same thought makes for rational incoherence? Maybe, but even if they are, this is not obvious like in the case of cognitive first-order use. Further, arguing that non-cognitive and/or second-order attitudes are such that conflicting use of the same thought makes for rational incoherence requires one to make additional significant and controversial assumptions about what conflict between non-cognitive attitudes amounts to, about the notion of rationality governing non-cognitive attitudes, and about the nature of second-order thinking.

<sup>14</sup>Millians often emphasize something like this kind of instability point. See, for example, a use of something like this idea in Kripke (1979): 260; Soames (1987): 123; Salmon (1989a): 216-218; Salmon (1989b): 265-266. Recent appeal to the idea comes in Nelson (2008) and, as I shall argue below (§7) Williamson (2007). One difference between some of these discussions (not Nelson 2008 or Williamson 2007) and the discussion here is that, here, what fails to be recognized by speakers is not synonymy between distinct words (cf. Salmon’s 1989a, 1989b, ketchup/catsup example) but the kind of analytic or conceptual equivalence that holds between a concept and its analysis (cf. Rieber (1992): note 2)

<sup>15</sup>According to Jeff Speaks (2005: §4.1), the problem with the notion of full understanding or mastery is “not that we cannot define some theory internal notion” of it; Speaks means “only to deny that . . . there is any pre-theoretically appealing principle for singling out . . . those agents . . . who can not only have thoughts involving [some concept] C, but also full grasp of C” (§4.1). The intuitive idea that reflection is a source of deeper understanding provides a basis for such pre-theoretically appealing principles.

<sup>16</sup>For non-intellectual kinds or aspects of incomplete understanding, a weaker notion of mastery according to which mastery of a concept does not require explicit, reflective,

conceptual knowledge but only (the reliable) avoidance of conceptual error in first-order thinking may be appropriate (this approximates the understanding of incomplete understanding operative in Burge (1979)). But the mastery that stands opposed to intellectually based incomplete understanding requires explicit, reflective, conceptual knowledge. See also note 5.

<sup>17</sup>However, the point does seem to hold in some cases of thinking about others' thoughts. When I believe that Ella believes that valid arguments preserve truth, I do not merely think *about* the thought that Ella thinks, I also think (but may not believe) that thought myself. It certainly seems correct to say that I would not be able to think about Ella's thought in that way if I were not able to think that thought; and why must I be able to think it if not for the fact that in thinking about Ella's thought in that way, I do think it? Further, if I did not think the thought Ella thinks in attributing a thought to her, there would seem to be no difference for me between thinking that Ella thinks that validity preserves truth, and thinking that Ella thinks that 'validity preserves truth' is true (of course the attribution to Ella would be different). I can certainly think the latter without thinking the thought that validity preserves truth, but this seems to be precisely the contrast between the two attributions. Other cases of thinking about someone else's thoughts do not, however, conform to the pattern. Contrast the attribution of a demonstrative thought to Ella, for example when I believe that Ella believes she herself is in trouble, I am thinking (at best) only *about* Ella's thought about herself, not thinking the presumably first-person thought Ella is thinking about herself. For related discussion see Peacocke (1981): §1; 1996: §3.

<sup>18</sup>For more on the duality of reference see Burge 1986: 704-705. For more recent related discussion, see Burge and Christopher Peacocke's discussion of "canonical names of senses" and "canonical concepts of concepts", respectively, in the Postscript to 'Frege and the Hierarchy' (Burge (2005): 170ff.) and in Peacocke's chapter (2008: Chapter 8) 'Representing Thoughts'.

<sup>19</sup>On this kind of bad conception of analyticity (sometimes called "metaphysical analyticity") see Quine (1951b): §3; Burge (1992): 6; Boghossian (1994): 364-366; Williamson (2006): note 8; Williamson (2007): Chapter 3. On retaining the idea that in analyzing a concept one is thinking about the application conditions of concepts, see §2 above. For elaboration of the role of *Duality* in conceptual knowledge, see Rattan (manuscript b)

<sup>20</sup>Some related ideas already appear in the literature. Burge marks a distinction between "conventional linguistic meaning" and "cognitive value" (Burge (1986): §4) that is related to but distinct from my distinction between two stages of dialectic. Jeshion distinguishes Lena, who is subject to conceptual error from insufficient reflection, from Cauchy, who is subject to conceptual error even when exercising "the finest control on his conceptual thought, drawing on his fullest clearest conceptual understanding", and focuses, like I am about to, on Cauchy-type cases. The idea that there are a division of dialectic into two important stages or junctures in Plato's *Meno* is highlighted in Franklin (2001). Relevant in a more general way is the general issue of the nature of reflective equilibrium.

<sup>21</sup>I do not think that the argument relies on any specific view of intuitions, although it is important that intuitive judgments are understood as being non-inferentially justified. The arguments to follow could be recast, I think, in a framework like the one Tim Williamson 2004, 2007: Chapter 7 outlines, in which intuitions are not rational bases for

judgments but are themselves judgments, or the application of concepts in judgments. As long as it makes sense to speak about the justification for these applications of concepts in judgments, and for that justification to be non-inferential, that will suffice for my present purposes.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. Burge (1993) for more detailed discussion, including of the a priori and entitling character of epistemic deference, and of the key notion of content preservation. Burge's focus is narrower than what is at issue here—on knowledge through testimony rather than the more general epistemic dependence of individuals on their social environments (the former may play a large role, but does not exhaust, the latter). Burge's discussion connects explicitly neither with issues concerning incomplete understanding, nor to his anti-individualism. In other work I argue that there is an important connection here—see Rattan (manuscript a).

<sup>23</sup>In this respect the role of intuition can be compared to the role of perception in providing starting points for empirical knowledge. Both intuition and perception contribute non-inferential justification or entitlement. Intuitive and perceptual judgments are precisely not justified by being the conclusions of arguments. They are entitled starting points for argument. The similarities with perception are, however, incomplete. One difference is that perception is, but intuition is not, sensory, and lacks the rich and varied phenomenology of perception. A second, more important difference is that although both intuition and perception are starting points for argument, intuitions are subject to reflective evaluation in ways that perception is not. Intuition and reflective evaluation take part in a critically rational back and forth that perception and reflective evaluation do not or do not to the same extent. (There is no *perceptual* analysis in the way that there is *conceptual* analysis). For related discussion see Sosa (2007): 43-50. Sosa seems to me to err in thinking that only reflective intuitions, and not intuitions and intuitive judgments, are of epistemic and in particular foundational interest.

<sup>24</sup>Understood another way, this injection of primitive normative elements fortifies *Concepts as Use* against the better-known criticism that concept individuation is a normative matter, but that *Concepts as Use* fails to be normative. The criticism that I will be pursuing is not that *Concepts as Use* cannot incorporate normativity, but that it cannot incorporate the *full extent* of normativity, and in particular, *intellectual* aspects of normativity.

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Weatherson (2003): 7-10. A central point of Weatherson's article is to establish that if intuited counterexamples are to challenge entrenched analyses, the counterexamples must have epistemic virtues that go beyond those that accrue to them in virtue of being intuited. Weatherson argues that, by this standard, Gettier examples may not be challenges to the JTB (justified true belief) analysis of knowledge (see Weatherson (2003): 27, and the discussion of Peter Klein). Weatherson also thinks, like Jeshion and Eklund (2002) that the kind of phenomenon involved in recognizing counterexamples to entrenched analyses puts stress on the idea that meaning is use (Weatherson (2003): 10). I think that all of these points are correct, but in trying to understand them, Weatherson does not explore the relevance of reflective thinking for understanding the nature and individuation of meaning, but instead moves to a form of *Concepts as Pure Reference*. I criticize the move from the acceptance of the existence of this kind of phenomenon to *Concepts as Pure Reference*-type view below in general (§6), and in application to some recent work by Tim Williamson (§7).

<sup>26</sup>I discuss the connection to Quine's (1951a) "nothing is immune from revision" and to his idea of "minimal mutilation" in Rattan (forthcoming). There are also connections

with Kuhn's (1962: Chapter 8) idea that mere anomaly is insufficient to produce scientific crisis. However, I do not put the sceptical spin that Quine and Kuhn put on the ideas.

<sup>27</sup>A version of my distinction between two stages in dialectic can be read into Burge's distinction between conventional linguistic meaning and cognitive value (Burge (1986): §4), but it is unclear whether he accepts the idea in general. In the editors' introduction to a recent festschrift for Burge, Martin Hahn and Bjørn Ramberg write that a fundamental methodological insight of Burge's is that: [a]ny principles a philosopher might produce must yield to what we say in the face of examples; our practice and responses are more reliable than our attempts to capture them with definition and theories. [Hahn & Ramberg (2003): xv-xvi] This is almost a direct rejection of my characterization of the epistemic situation late in analysis. But, besides the fact that it seems correct that there is an epistemic difference between the two stages in dialectic, in holding to this idea I locate intellectual norms as a special category of epistemic norms. On the view to be defended here, intellectual norms explain the authority that attaches to reflective thinking.

<sup>28</sup>I take 'discursive justification' from Goldberg (2007b).

<sup>29</sup>For suppose the analysis took the form of a universally quantified claim, for example that for every  $x$ , if  $x$  is a bachelor, then  $x$  is unmarried and  $x$  is adult and  $x$  is male. Then the inferred counterexample would be a witness to the negation of the analysis (there is an  $x$  such that  $x$  is a bachelor and is either married, not an adult or not male). If one had justification for that analysis to begin with, then one would be in the position of being rationally able to believe it and its negation; and this would put one in the position to believe and doubt the analysis.

<sup>30</sup>Consider for example the unclear and confused cognitive states that would be involved in thinking that ' $p \rightarrow q$ ' entails ' $\sim p \rightarrow \sim q$ '. The 'infallibilist' idea is that these kinds of cognitive states cannot justify belief, because of their unclear and confused character (Jeshion (2000): 341). This need not involve any asymmetry in standards between *a priori* and *a posteriori* justification because both *a priori* and *a posteriori* justification can be subject to the standard that judgments made on the basis of unclear and confused cognitive states are not justifying. It is also worth noting a further claim of Jeshion's, despite the fact that it plays no role in Jeshion's larger argument against infallibilism (Jeshion (2000): note 13). This is the claim that infallibilism may also be thought to be grounded in the idea that *a priori* justifications that do not guarantee truth involve having, but failing to deploy, information that would preclude error. Plausibly, both *a priori* and *a posteriori* justification are subject to the standard that errors in judgment attributable to one's failing to deploy information that is available is always going to be unjustified error.

<sup>31</sup>This passage is not straightforward to interpret. It looks like Jeshion is saying that a conceptually mistaken belief can be grounded in the very same conceptual understanding that a counterexample is grounded in. Nothing in this suggests the epistemology of the discursive model, the epistemology imposed by *By Reasoning*. Further, as I have already noted, Jeshion thinks "finding  $p$  true on the basis of conceptual understanding alone is direct, non-inferential acceptance of  $p$  as true". But Jeshion nevertheless imposes *By Reasoning*. It seems to me that Jeshion's view of conceptual understanding is very congenial to the views being espoused here, but that her argument against infallibilism, which grounds the correction of understanding in conceptual understanding *and* in

conceptually mistaken beliefs suggests a view of conceptual understanding as constituted by such beliefs. This is a vexatious concept's ase.

<sup>32</sup>Insofar as the argument for *Excluding Incomplete Understanding* relies on construing transparency to be inconsistent with incomplete understanding, *Concepts as Use* is also guilty of the crude application of transparency.

<sup>33</sup>For further discussion of the consolidating role of an individuating principle for senses or concepts, see Dickie and Rattan (forthcoming).

<sup>34</sup>For example, Williamson's "main argument" (2007: 77) against epistemic conceptions of analyticity involves, in broad strokes, challenging epistemological conceptions of analyticity with the phenomenon of incomplete understanding (although this is not the way Williamson understands his main argument - see main text below). Williamson also seems to recognize very clearly how attention to clarifying semantic and conceptual understanding can be fundamental to epistemic endeavors (2007: 41-47, especially 43-47). Further, Williamson locates the fundamental problem with *Concepts as Use* at exactly the right level, as a problem of making sense of the full extent of epistemic normativity (2007: 82-83; 97-98; 115; 126). What he fails to do is to connect the insight about semantic and conceptual understanding to the insight about the importance of the full extent of epistemic normativity for a theory of concepts. What he fails to recognize are *Intellect and Concept*, and the role of the *Duality of Reference in Reflective Thinking*. I detail all of this below.

<sup>35</sup>I say "largely de-epistemologized" because Williamson's most recent presentation of the issues closes (2007: Chapter 8) with a chapter arguing that the nature of reference is to maximize knowledge. This is in (perhaps not irresolvable) tension with the aggressively anti-epistemological character of his Chapter 4. Further, as I noted, Williamson's version of *Concepts as Pure Reference* is intensional—he argues against extensional versions in some criticisms of direct reference (see 2007: 67). This also brings out the key idea in my *Concepts as Pure Reference*, namely that of the sufficiency of representational notions for an account of concepts, and of the inessentiality of epistemological notions.

<sup>36</sup>I say 'ultimately', because, as I explained in §4, *Concepts as Use* has resources to accommodate certain kinds of incomplete understanding.

<sup>37</sup>Later, Williamson claims that the McGee example shows that the lessons of anti-individualist thought experiments go deeper than the immediate lessons of Putnam (1975) and Burge's (1994) original thought experiments (2007: 97-98). That is right, but the point favours a stance opposite Williamson's stance on incomplete understanding. The deeper lesson of a McGee-type example is that there are deeper forms of incomplete understanding than those involved in Putnam's linguistic division of labour.

<sup>38</sup>This is something like my *Illicit*, although the focus of *Illicit* is the role of reflective thinking in individuating concepts. Williamson's focus, by contrast, is the special role, if any, of reflective thinking, in explaining the armchair methodology of philosophy.

<sup>39</sup>It is worth noting further that *Duality of Reference* constitutes an intuitive and natural first step in responding to the puzzle about the armchair knowledge that Williamson begins with, namely that of how it is that we can come to knowledge of the world by thinking about concepts or meanings (2007: Chapter 2: §3). Although this is the puzzle that, in Williamson's discussion, motivates appeal to analyticity, once analyticity is discredited, the issues raised by the puzzle are left behind. But Williamson does too good a job of motivating the puzzle, and one is left wanting to know how it should be answered. I think that the *Duality of Reference* offers a promising approach to the puzzle.

For more on this see Rattan (manuscript b).

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