

## The Etymological Argument Fallacy or Sound Move?

M.A. Thesis in Discourse and Argumentation Studies

To those old and young that I have learned from over the past years of on and off-campus education in Hamburg, Germany, New Orleans, LA, U.S.A. and Amsterdam, The Netherlands, where this thesis is written in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an M.A. Degree in Discourse and Argumentation Studies.

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I hope it all shows.

F. Z.

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### Preface

This text is concerned with the place of etymology as an argument in a critical discussion according to the Pragma-Dialectic model. My thesis is a criticism of the etymological argument for an ontological presupposition of essences beyond the observable real world that seem necessarily implied in forwarding etymology as a means to formulate and justify definitions of key-terms.

The research spells out criteria of fallaciousness and, eventually, suggest that all essential definitions are to be avoided or mitigated so that no ontological import takes place, but the essential method instead assumed as functionally equivalent to the Aristotelian method of defining according to the *genus proximum* and *differentia specifica* scheme to get rid of the ontological problem, at least.

The criticism of essentialism used is the German-Englishman Karl Popper's forwarded in *The Open Society* which is published, in English, at the end of the second world war in criticism of the European totalitarian political excesses at that time. It is a modern criticism that I bring in relation to the comparably relevant, yet somewhat older postulation of an arbitrary relation between the linguistic form and its meaning by the French linguist Ferdinand Saussure in his *Course in General Linguistics*, published by students in 1915.

Popper's criticism is, in his full intent, also a criticism of the methods of 20th century Social Sciences and Humanities in contrast to the Natural Sciences. I try to give this discussion some room but will disappoint anyone who reads the text for a statement on the methods debate. Its centrality is pointed out, though.

I make ample use of notes that distract a smooth reading substantially, especially as I decided to use endnotes. The first reading should be exercised in complete disregard of the footnotes. This way, you get what is in the text. The second should include the endnotes. This way you get to where I come from and it is the level at which criticism should find its most fruitful soil.

'Essentially, what you do in parliament is talking. Parliament. Look at the French word *parler* - to talk. There you have it.'

From a discussion on a Netherlands Radio Station, July 2002

### 1. Introduction

Take the above statement from the radio discussion and look up *parliament* in a dictionary. In the American Heritage College edition (1993:994) you will find the following definition of the term *parliament*:

**par·liam·ent** (phonetic) *n.* **1.** A national representative body having supreme state legislative powers. **2. Parliament.** The national legislature of various countries, esp. that of the United Kingdom. [ME, a meeting about national concerns > OFr. *parlement* > *parler*, to talk. See PARLEY]<sup>1</sup>

What is spelled out in this dictionary entry will be regarded a definition of the descriptively adequate term-to-meaning relation at the time of writing the dictionary. The entry states the term *parliament* and makes available by specification two of the term's meanings. Distinguished are the meaning 'material body', a group of people if you like, and 'constituent of a legal system', which is not a material body in the same sense. The legal constituent is what gives the body its *de facto* legal powers.

Obviously, what is said in the square brackets shows that the radio-speaker above was in agreement with the dictionary's editors. The text in the brackets is titled *Etiologies* (1993:xxvi) and defined thus: 'An etymology traces the history of a word from one language to another as far back as can be determined with reasonable certainty.'

What the speaker above has forwarded will be termed an *etymological argument*. The standpoint 'Essentially, what you do in parliament is talking' is linked to an argument in which the French term *parler* and its meaning *to talk* are presumed to support the standpoint.<sup>2</sup>

From a Pragma-Dialectical perspective, the example constitutes a *use of etymology as an argument*. The practical question is: What can I *justifiably* do with an etymology in an argumentative situation? The theoretical questions is: What is the general form and what are the criteria for evaluating the soundness of an etymological argument?

The questions are obviously related: If criteria for fallaciousness are distilled, these can be used to classify uses of etymology as constituting sound and fallacious discussion moves. Good criteria will only be found if there is a principled reason for the exclusion of certain uses and the exclusion, then, takes place because and only because of this reason. Hence, we are looking for what goes wrong in particular variants of what, at this point, is still an undifferentiated notion of the etymological argument.

Both questions find their answer in this thesis. It is an answer that rejects etymology as a function of what is *de facto* done in using etymology in a discussion. Precisely, the use of etymology as a *method* will show to be fallacious in the *context* of a critical discussion if this method is employed for the *purpose* of giving a definition of the term that features in the etymology.

The evaluation is, thus, based on the postulation of a discrepancy between the tool, the end and the situation. The standards under which tool, situation and end are evaluated are inspired by the Critical Rationalist tradition following, most notably, Karl Popper (1963, 1976, 1977).<sup>3</sup> I use his criticism of essentialism, his stance for pluralism and against dogmatism as guidelines for the critical inquiry into fallacy conditions.

For the purpose at hand, I use the following crucial distinctions: term *vs. referent*, term *vs. meaning*, *diachronic vs. synchronic*, *intensional vs. extensional*, *word meaning vs. speaker meaning*. I start with a description of the methods and object of etymology as a branch of historical linguistics. The remaining distinctions, borrowed from linguistics and the philosophy of language, are introduced in due course.

Overall, two insights are employed for an evaluation: We judge from an informed perspective upon the scientific study of language change and stability on the one hand. On the other, we judge from an informed perspective on the dangers of dogmatic or essentialistic meaning assigning processes in discussions.

The minimal-strategy, then, is to arrive at the possibility of identifying two distinct types of the etymological argument, a real and a nominal variant. We will distinguish them according to their *ends* or *outcomes* and rule them out of a critical discussion because the employment of one of these types contradicts the normative postulate of *pluralistic term-to-meaning relations* and, like the other, fails to provide an acceptable reason why the meaning suggested by etymology is a *critically potential meaning* in the discussion at hand.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Etymology and the Meaning of Terms

The above definition of etymology given by the dictionary editors (lexicographers) reflects a distinctly *modern* development in linguistics. The tracing of a term's history in the diachronic perspective is to be contrasted with the study of language as a formal system in the synchronic perspective.<sup>5</sup>

The difference indicates a crucial methodological step: It allows one to isolate what is fully definable, namely: the presently formally determinable constellation of a given language. This new object of study is methodologically constituted in a reductive step by *abstracting* from what would be fully definable *only* by and additional step of reconstruction, namely: the historic process of that very language whose presently final constellation constitutes itself as the modern primary object of investigation to the interested scholar.

The distinction between the synchronic vs. diachronic perspective relates closely to the axiom of the *arbitrariness of the linguistic sign*. This axiom gives a modern inquiry into language a special status. And I suggest that this special status consists in a claiming to have a good take on natural language by treating it *primarily* as a system that endows formal structures.

A description of these structures, then, would be a description of language from a perspective that is historically discharged and, thus, free of evolved criticism in regard to the validity of formal description. What can be seen in the language *at surface level* is fully specifiable and, therefore, at face value, unproblematic data. It is the level at which an enlightened subject perceives objectivity in language.<sup>6</sup>

What used to be old etymology as distinct from how etymology is viewed today is, thus, presented as a change in a methodological perspective on language. In comparison, Trier distinguishes old from new etymology as follows:

Older, that is antique, medieval and baroc etymology moves in the synchronic perspective. By placing the word in view under the hallow of another, etymology wants to know the true content, το έτυμόν. Accordingly, it is named έτυμο-λογία (striving for the true and eternal word-content). Not knowledge of the word's development is the aim of etymology, but the uncovering of a universalisable core. Etymological reasoning is taken to promise helpfull in the search for the right word in a speech, increase in depth, force and the transparency of speaking. Etymology is justified by its rhetorical and philosophical usability.

Trier (1972:816) <sup>7</sup>

Thus, the method is not the crucial difference. Rather, the old purpose of etymology (rhetorical and philosophical usability) gives way to a systematic study exercised for the

sake of specifying the object of historical linguistics in its systematic aspects. This amounts to the construction of a formal system to bring the *de facto* perceived linguistic systematicity into the terms and under the concepts of a generalized description.

The newer etymology is diachronic. It is based on the discoveries of 19th century historical sound-change theory. It has no hope anymore to be of use for stylistics, rhetoric, philosophy. It [the newer etymology, FZ] sees its purpose in itself. At the most it helps to build up a Germanic or Indo-germanic strand of ancient study.

Trier (1972:816) <sup>8</sup>

The observation of systematic sound changes and the corresponding laws of phonetic change formulated for the Indo-European languages are a product of the 19th century comparative study of languages.<sup>9</sup> It marks the rise of a structural and formal over a semantic approach to the study of languages that, methodologically and terminologically, co-exists historically with Darwin's theory of biological evolution.<sup>10</sup>

As a consequence, the regularity of the changes motivates a foregrounding of the structural aspects of language relative to the semantic aspect and, thereby, leads to the abandonment of traditional etymology or, at least, reduces its practicability through a re-definition of the proper object of inquiry after Saussure.<sup>11</sup>

The fall of historical semantics in the philological departments is intimately connected to the reception and influence of Saussure's *Course de Linguistique General*. The structuralist and poststructuralist semantics is the semantics of a language that is cut off from its history.

Stierle (1978:173) <sup>12</sup>

The perceived quality of this methodological cutting off is, I think, what motivates Lyons in his 1977 standard work *Semantics* to state what is regarded a *common-sense insight* in contemporary linguistic semantics, if not linguistic theory:

The etymology of a lexeme is, in principle, synchronically irrelevant. The fact that the word *curious*, for example, can be traced, back to Latin *curiosus* meaning 'careful' or 'fastidious' (and that it also had this meaning in earlier stages of English) does not imply that this, rather than 'inquisitive', is its true or correct meaning in present-day standard English.

Lyons (1977, Vol. I : 244) <sup>13</sup>

This being the accepted view in linguistics, we may note it as a critical statement upon the term-to-meaning relation that concerns us. In simple words: Current linguistic use is

regarded determinative for the specification of a term's meaning, no matter what the employed form's history may amount to.

We may also note that Lyons is certainly right in his wording: The content of a historically warranted term-to meaning relation does not imply, and certainly not logically imply, that the original content is or should be the same as the contemporary content. However, we should likewise note that the notion of *the true or correct meaning* is not given up. Lyons retains it. Under a careful interpretation, he states merely that the true or correct meaning of a term in present-day standard English is *not necessarily* to be found in etymology, old or new.<sup>14</sup>

The requirement for one particular meaning is what Lyons retains as the correct or true meaning. It is a methodological requirement. Without it, you are in no position to say *what exactly* was said. You could, as it were, only say what may have been meant. The objectivity of the phonetic linguistic surface over which the sound-laws are formulated is not quite as easily reached on the semantic level.<sup>15</sup>

For an old language like Greek or just the Middle English Period the phonetic form is, due to the finality of speakers, a 100% reconstruction. You only have written text and then infer from that how that text sounds *would* it have been spoken. You start from textually identifiable units and reach for sound and sound change, meaning and meaning change respectively.

In respect to the role and outcome of modern etymological inquiries, Malkiel, in the Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics, has the following to say:

It is correct to state that the old style etymology, whether satisfied with mere guesses or serving the purpose of helping one to establish and, later, control regular sound changes, seems to have run its course (...). Etymology thus becomes an account -- better still, a bundle of accounts -- of individual word histories or word biographies, with the experienced etymologists prime commitment remaining that of establishing an equilibrium of the separate forces invoked.

Malkiel (1994:1172)

I propose we understand the *de facto* existent separate forces invoked of which Malkiel speaks as a, well yes: natural evil. Discrepancies of views in etymology is just as much a function of the reconstructive method as of the political chargedness of historical linguistics.

How so? You just do not find neutral texts to work with, because there was, historically, no neutrality that would equate with the modern neutrality that linguistics acquires by understanding itself as methodically descriptive. That neutrality is a modern

neutrality and it would be stupid to presuppose it in your non-modern texts. Linguistic neutrality is a modern analyst-category, not a historic speaker-category.

Thus, in this brief overview of etymology we distinguish old etymology as a primarily semantic inquiry into the right use of words that lets itself be informed both by the history of the term *and* its current day use. New etymology, on the other hand, is a historical inquiry primarily into the regularity of sound change on the phonetic level and a specification of a loan-effect's semantic direction or trajectory from one language to another on the lexical level.

Instead of generalizing over classes, new etymology is primarily concerned with individual terms, not sets of terms. Why *handy* came to be the German term for those situations in which the English use *cell-phone* or *mobile* is, in the end, an semantic explanation to demand from modern etymology.

Insofar as new etymology is semantic it is concerned with specifying the *primary* meaning of a term in a given language and the points of contact at which a term T1 in the primary meaning M1 from the historical stage S1 of language L1 is adopted as the term T2 in the meaning M2 into the historical stage S2 of language L2. The regularities of change (in and across languages), among them the motivations for neologisms (the coining of new terms and meanings), are manifold.

Ross (1969:31, 1958<sup>1</sup>) distinguishes between '(A) Changes due to the influence of one language upon another and (B) Changes not due to this cause.' The (A) causes he terms 'loan-effects'; the (B) causes are, again, divided into 'B: 1 Sound change; B2 Semantic change; B:3 Analogy.' The B2 category, that is of relevance when it comes to the meaning of terms '[...] may best be described by saying that it comprises all those linguistics changes in which the attention of the philological observer is focussed upon the meaning, rather than upon the form' (p. 33).

For the German term *Handy*, you could say that the English grammatical adjective *handy*, meaning something like 'good for a particular purpose', comes to be used as a German noun, meaning cell-phone around the time that cell-phones become not possible but popular, which would be around 1997/98, for Germany. That would not be incorrect, but one had to do a lot of research and, in particular these days, speak to the marketing departments to have a better than grammatically adequate explanation.<sup>16</sup>

It seems fair to say, then, that semantic change on the word or term level is one of the most difficult and least understood phenomena in linguistics. And it seems just as fair to say that this difficulty is matched in respect to the local meaning assigning processes on the utterance and discourse level.<sup>17</sup> From the diachronic perspective, semantics is difficult because the reconstructive method does not allow for more than

plausible results, to begin with. Compare Malkiel above, who speaks of balancing of *divergent views*.

From the synchronic perspective, semantics is difficult as soon as the mere conventionality of meaning (the *implicit* agreement on the use of a word in a specific meaning) is made explicit. The meaning dynamics of a discussion are what the (originally structuralist) notion *fixtiness of meaning* wants to remedy, but never fully achieves unless in closed systems. And that means semantically specified, too.

Structure is only useful if the semantic aspect has its situationally adequate place in the structure.

## 2.1 Distinction from Conceptual History/Cultural Studies

A field outside of linguistics proper, the young and, some claim, distinctly German study of the *history of concepts* (Begriffsgeschichte) attempts to come to (better) terms with the semantic question. Stierle writes:

There is however a humanities-historical form of meaning-historical inquiry that emerged from the philological tradition of historical semantics. This form of inquiry claims its own place in between Linguistics and Literary Studies. The works from this direction are oftentimes rather essayistic than strictly methodologically oriented. Yet, precisely in this open form they grasp the phenomena of language-change in an oftentimes subtle and precise way. A point of origin for the entire direction may be located in Karl Vossler (1913) who conceives of a language as an expression of a nation's and an epoch's collective consciousness.

Stierle (1978:158, footnote 11)<sup>18</sup>

The specification of meaning assigning and meaning shifting processes in a given language, then, is attempted for particular words of a language. These terms correspond to cultural key-concepts (freedom, justice, equality, autonomy, democracy, pluralism, ...). Therefore, the object of a history of concepts are the *different conceptions* that historically corresponded to *the same term*.

In the Anglo-American tradition, Raymond Williams' (1976) work is, by Martin Jay (1998:2) at least, regarded as the outcome of '[...] pioneering efforts in tracing the fortunes of what he [Williams, FZ.] calls keywords' (*my italics*). These efforts

[...] have demonstrated the value of frankly acknowledging the ideological charge on certain *pivotal terms*, which Williams defines as 'significant, binding words in certain *activities* and their *interpretations*' and 'significant, indicative words in certain *forms of thought*' (*my italics*).

Jay (1998:2)<sup>19</sup>

Let me use Jay citing Williams to explicate further what we are looking for in this thesis and what is distinctly different about the Pragma-Dialectic approach. There are four italicised words in the quote above: terms, activities, interpretations thereof and forms of thought. I rearrange these and re-state the thesis from above that said we look upon the etymological argument as the use of etymology as a (i) *method* for the (ii) *purpose* of giving a definition in the (iii) *context* of a critical discussion.

(i)-(iii) are to be reconciled, to be justified, and it will be claimed that this is impossible in contemporary objective scientific thought. At the most one can have two notions reconciled, but never all three. In a matrix, it looks like this:

	Action Constituents		Quality of Result
	Etymology used as a Method...	for the Purpose of Giving a Definition... in the Context of a Critical Discussion	
1	OK	OK	semantically definite but no critical standards
2	OK	NO	critically reflected but not semantically definite
3	NO	OK	not about etymology, therefore not relevant

Table 1: Matrix of relevant action constituents<sup>20</sup>

While the cultural semanticist is interested in the ideological charge of (the use of) specific culturally important (pivotal) terms, we are interested in the ideological charge of the particular activity of giving a (indeed any) term's definition.

Like the cultural semanticist we suspect certain forms of thought to be indicated by (the use) of certain terms and we describe a distinct form of thought that, we claim, underlies the etymological argument as an argument-scheme on which particular arguments are built, mapped or constructed in an argumentative situation.

Just as the cultural semanticist, we distinguish actions from interpretations. In fact, the Pragma-Dialectic reconstruction of argumentative (sequences of) discourse amounts to a particular interpretation of situated participant behaviour that, in turn, specifies the kind of action that the behaviour is to count as when dialectical obligations are to be allocated to the participants of the discourse. These obligations consists

practically in the *de facto* owing of a justification for the forwarded standpoint argumentation if prompted, nothing less.

In the case of the etymological argument we interpret the use of etymology as the giving of a definition. Thus, we interpret the behaviour according to its result, namely the intersubjective availability of a finite material statement that was either not available at all in the discourse or not available as a definition. And we demand that a definition be justified in respect to both the situational adequacy of its outcome and its procedural features. Content of definition and method of defining, respectively.

Before showing exactly how etymology is a low quality tool to build a definition, I present what can be regarded at least as descriptions (if not definitions) of and opinions about the etymological argument or etymological fallacy. The account will be brief as the stance towards etymology has been a rather uncritical one in the, admittedly young, tradition that Pragma-Dialectics situates itself in.

## 2.2 Opinions about the Etymological Argument/ the Etymological Fallacy

As a standing term, etymological fallacy is currently *more entrenched* than etymological argument. You may test this by comparing the search results for both terms in the world wide web and an average university library system and expect to find mainly sources from religious science. The false interpretation of a biblical source, as one not backed by the reference cited or employed in a different sense than in the reference cited, is commonly regarded to constitute the etymological fallacy.

Charles Hamblin (1970:142) in his standard work *Fallacies* notes the Etymological Argument in passing, stating only that it had been mentioned by Abraham Fraunce (1588) as a new addition to the traditional types under the heading 'Notation or Etymology'. Fraunce's example is:

A woman is a woe man, because she worketh a man woe... But all the sport is heare the Moonkish notations of woordes both Greeke and Latin....

Hamblin (1970:142)

Fraunce is noted by Hamblin (1970:142) to be 'the first writer to tell us of the Fallacies, among others, of False Definition, False Etymology, False Testimony and False Analogy.' Hamblin does not develop further.<sup>21</sup> I have not read Fraunce, yet.

David Christal (1985) talks about the etymological fallacy as:

[...] the view that an earlier (or the oldest) meaning of a word is the correct one (e.g. that history really means investigation, because this was the meaning the etymon had in classical Greek). This view is commonly held, but it contrasts with the attitude of the linguist, who emphasises the need to describe the meanings of modern words as they are now, and not as they have been in some earlier state of the language (the *oldest* state, of course, being unknown).

Christal (1985:113)<sup>22</sup>

Christal opts for a *meaning-is-use view* -- '(...) the meanings of modern words as they are now (...) -- and rejects the relevance of an etymological inquiry into original meaning. His rejection is based, firstly, on the *contingency* of the historical stages that an etymological inquiry can reconstruct. Secondly, he emphasizes a *need* for present meaning specification today that cannot be satisfied by a historical inquiry.

While this sounds right, he strictly speaking begs the question. *That* there is nothing critical to be learned about the present meaning of terms (or the use of present terms in particular meanings, at that) would be presupposed, if he is to have a point. One would like to say in qualification that, of course, some things can be learned from an inquiry into the history of a language, just not employed to any end.

John Lyons (1977), whose work we have referenced above already, brings the term etymology fallacy in direct relation to the Saussurean distinction. He says:

A particular manifestation of the failure to respect the distinction of the diachronic and the synchronic (coupled with a failure to keep distinct the descriptive and the prescriptive point of view in the discussion of language) is what might be called the etymological fallacy: the common belief that the etymology of a lexeme can be determined by investigating their origins.

Lyons (1977, vol. I:244)

And he seems to use the word etymology in its Greek original meaning (true word-meaning) to criticize not those who assume that there be a true meaning, but those who believe the true meaning could be 'determined by investigating their origins'.<sup>23</sup> And that is a criticism of the method for arriving at the true meaning. It is not a criticism of setting out for the true meaning.

What we may retain from this overview is the following compressed statement: *The arbitrariness of the linguistic sign is the arbitrariness of the etymological fallacy.* The case, as far as we have seen, hinges on the Saussurean distinction into a synchronic and a diachronic perspective on language. Without that separation, the above emphasis on meaning-as-present-use or the *primacy of the semantic present*, if you like, would be simply unmotivated.

We will not touch the Saussurean distinction. Rather we highlight it as a necessary presupposition, thus add its defence to the dialectical responsibilities of those who adopt the solution presented here.

Plus, as Lyons states, the distinction *prescriptive vs. normative* in respect to language use is, to say the least, coupled with the *diachronic vs. synchronic* distinction. And this shows when the issue of an argumentative situation comprises traditional, historically warranted, for short: conservative standpoints (and parties at that) and those of parties who, in exercising their right for invention, novelty and social-reform, find their disagreement space to include divergent meanings of term s.

### 2.3 Divergences of the Meanings of Terms

Divergences in the meaning of terms are indicative of the divergence of the languages and thus cultures that are spoken or, at least, used in (or during preparations of) discussions. I mean to say this in the full critical sense and claim that we speak, in academia at least, two languages and use a third and fourth at the same time standardly in 2002 A.C. Our own(!), English and Latin (less so for Greek) and Logic.

Francis Bacon's belief in Latin as the eternal language of Science, which could historically be a linguistically descriptive language only since 1915, the publishing date of Saussure's *Cours*, proved historically valid exactly up until the end of the 19th century. It is in the 20th century that the political domination of an American-English axis has its linguistic repercussions in the new language of the Sciences being English. The U.S.A. are the *de facto* strongest nation to emerge from the 20th century European struggles for domination. The English language became the scientifically accepted *lingua franca* that it had been unofficially all along.

That English did not exist as just another language may be indicated by pointing to Third Reich Germany negotiating the World War Two treaty with the Japanese government in English. The representatives of two undemocratic people with quasi-feudally structured 'governments' from collective societies at the same table and mitigated by diplomatic protocol. English (locally like Dutch, that was in a German 19th century port-city, Hamburg, the local trader's means of communication) is the *de facto* language of international discourse and that has, historically at least, been a trade-discourse, too. If not even primarily a trade discourse. England is next to France the third historical axis power in continental Europe, Germany being the third.

Jürgen Habermas (1998), speaks of a short 20th European century, extending from 1914 (First World War) to 1989 (Soviet disintegration, German reunification),

following a long 19th European century beginning in 1789 with the French revolution. By means of citing Habermas' contrasting an American conception of liberty (free individual choice of an otherwise unbounded agent) with a European conception of liberty (collectively born responsibility in regard to shared cost, inspired by the idea of a welfare-state) it should be quite clear that, by sheer translation, the term *freedom* or French: *liberté* or German: *Freiheit* is the same in North-America and in Europe, but it has different meanings on either side of the Atlantic.<sup>24</sup>

Habermas is equally clear in saying that Europeans, these days, seem to adopt the American perspective and prefer to forget about the distinctly European tradition of understanding both the term freedom and the exercising of a praxis that is called free. At this point, then, the terminological and the material side of the issue lay bare. It makes the greatest difference what a speaker means with a term and that is not just a linguistic issue.

The issue is immediately relevant in the sense that Kapteyn (2002:38), a law professor at the University of Amsterdam, makes clear in an article on the (debate about a) European constitution. He says that what is a common constitution is not brought about by adopting new words for old things, because it is *not possible* to be brought about in this way. There is a material difference, not just a nominal one. In respect to the European constitution it will certainly be more that one difference. Here is his quote:

Constitutionalism basically entails the desire to prevent arbitrary government. The means to this end is to subordinate governmental power to rules such that the law serves both as an instrument of the government and as a safeguard against the government. The exercise of public power in what we have come to call the state raises the question as to whether the terms of constitutionalism are applicable to an international organization such as the European Union. Such a practice may be justified, on the understanding that *the mere use of these terms will not transform the Union into a state, even a federal one* (*my italics*).

Kapteyn (2002:38)<sup>25</sup>

Now, that parties, for the above reasons, may eventually find themselves using the same terms in different meanings would not be the crucial problem, though. Rather, what kind of work is shouldered onto the meaning of terms in arguing for their standpoints will constitute the problem-case at hand here. Hence, we talk about the dynamics of the term-meaning relation in discussions next.

## 2.4 The Term-Meaning Relation: Dynamic versus static Meaning

The belief most of us subscribe to, namely: *Descriptively speaking, meaning is use* rests, in its theoretic justification, on the same Saussurean distinction between a synchronic and a diachronic perspective that separated semantics from historical lexicography. Modern speaker meaning, in contrast to word or sentence meaning, is the manifested potential of specific linguistic forms to be meaningful when a particular person is putting these forms to use. This is contextual meaning.

The observation that terms can and do have varying meanings (in the same or a different historic context) motivates the word-level label *polysemy* and, practically manifested, gives us dictionary entries with primary and secondary meaning-specifications as well as conservative vs. progressive language use.

Yet, it is never clear who, right now, is conservative or progressive based on the *general* conservativeness of language use. Descriptively speaking, it might always only be politeness surfacing -- though *only* gives the wrong idea, here. However, in political contexts and the law especially, what constitutes the meaning of a term, sentence or text is of the highest relevance. And this relevance calls practically for a non-dynamic term-meaning relation.

The observation that speakers make varying use of the same terms, though, motivates to distinguish word- and sentence-meaning (or lexical meaning) from speaker-meaning. The observation that terms, over time, change their meaning and are reordered and sometimes raped to bear new meanings is what motivates historical lexicography.<sup>26</sup> That the author is not the text and the reception not the author's intention is what motivates post-nonclassical semiotics. Finally, in hermeneutical terms, what is meant is what is understood.

In short, the descriptively adequate term for the *de facto* term-to-meaning relation is: *dynamic*. The relation is a dynamic one by virtue of being *manipulatable* by speakers. Semantic change is man's power over linguistic form and those in search of a term's true meaning would ultimately be looking for that which speakers are exercising their power over, namely the rigidity of the belief in one true meaning of a term.

In stark contrast, the descriptively adequate term-meaning relation for the duration of a critical discussion is: not dynamic, at least not in the same sense. And that is so, because what may rightfully be called a necessary precondition of a critical discussion is that the meanings of terms be clear and known to all participants at all times.

Thus, *polysemy*, the *de facto* meaning variety of a linguistic term is restrained as a function of the justificatory standards of my discourse. At the same time, the lack of this restraint can be used as an indicator for the absence of critical standards. The

standards may be judged absent insofar and whenever there is no action taken to specify the meaning of the debate's key-terms.<sup>27</sup>

Generalizing grossly, then, there is no term that could not change its meaning, given speakers perform that change and hearers recognize the term in the new meaning.

It does not seem to matter, if the change is brought about intentionally or conventionally, as is the case with taboo words or the eventually expectable consequences of politically correct vocabulary. It will be entrenched as a function of the finality of speakers. At least it does not matter in regard to the facility of the new meaning. On the dialogue level, if you explain to me that you use the term *bank* in the meaning of *automobile*, what am I to do? If this is how you do it, can I say that it is wrong? Hardly, that particular use may not be very feasible and certainly against convention, but that is about it, by itself.

Hence, the postulation of a definite and singular non-dynamic term-meaning relation, in our interest: the *etymological* or the *true meaning relation*, is only interesting in the light of the facility of a dynamic term-to-meaning relation. It is, so the speak, the same difference against which the meaning pluralists and the meaning essentialists position themselves against.

While meaning pluralism is the critical stance *per se* (and so long time before Popper's criticism of essentialism), it is a methodological, read: procedural requirement to use the terms in distinct and finite meanings for the duration of a critical discussion. At the very least, one may allow that opponent and proponent use the same term in different meanings, but they must know exactly how the other wants the term to be understood.

Pragma-Dialectics spells this requirement out in the following 10th and last rule for a critical discussion.

### 10. The Usage Rule

Parties must not use any formulations that are insufficiently clear or confusingly ambiguous and they must interpret the formulations of the other party as carefully and accurately as possible.

(Eemeren; Grootendorst; Snoek Henkemans, 2000:121)

Given that the point of the exercise is to facilitate the resolution of an issue between conflicting parties, this is a most basic requirements. Accepting the rule does not only imply that a critical-edge resolution is minimally impossible when terms are not used in an univocal sense. It implies also, and this is a distinct reflection, that the quality of a

factually reachable resolution that is not based on an univocal use and understanding of the terms cannot be termed critical but, instead, hypo-critical.

And a discussion that would require all terms, instead of the central ones only, to be used in a univocal sense is to be termed hyper-critical. The last, by the laborious procedure of defining the senses of all terms used, may be called hyper-criticality qua impracticability. Conceiving of a state in which all terms used are defined (first?) turns into conceptual luxation.<sup>26</sup> It requires a practically impossible state, only a reduced version of which is implementable under standards of closed-system adequacy.

Axiomatic mathematics like classical logic is a system the constituents semantical values and structural employment-modes of which are defined. That are the systems' virtues. For a critical discussion, in contrast to a critical derivation, though, closed system adequacy is not a good standard to adopt. And that is so *a fortiori* as closed system adequacy can only be understood as the result of an idealization from an otherwise open discursive praxis.

The requirement, then, that *key-terms only* be defined in a critical discussion is what it takes to stay *right on the critical edge*. *All terms* reaches above the edge, is hyper-critical. *No terms or arbitrarily many* stays hypo-critical. Thus, we reach the critical boundary by defining it, at least here and for the purpose of the thesis, as a function of the definiteness of the meaning of key-terms.

To construe this definiteness numerically seems, at the outset already, less apt. I say that the definiteness of the meaning of the key-terms is an co-operatively manifestable state in which the participants of the discussion, in the usual sense of the word, can co-exist as full subjects. However, the state is not reachable individually or subjectively, but, as stated, only in co-operation. The state ceases to be reachable at the very moment one of the participant ceases to intentionally contribute to that state.<sup>29</sup>

For two persons it would mean that they can always inform each other about the meaning of their terms if needed and insofar it is in their interest to reach a resolution of the issue and not some preferred settlement, strictly in their favour. For more than two people it may get increasingly difficult to reach understanding about the key-terms. Due to pragmatic factors, then, some terms may intentionally be excluded from discussion, so that a reduced issue is being debated.

The success of settling these reduced issues however, would at the same time point to the contingency of the excluded terms. Insofar as their exclusion allowed a settlement, they cannot strictly speaking have constituted key-terms to the issue. In like vein, the long standing discussions in both international relations and the social-sphere of individuals, in contrast to those that *de facto* are resolved, point to the presence of

key-terms the meaning of which is perceived to differ. And, as we saw, along with a failed understanding about the meaning of a key-term comes a failed agreement on how to handle what the key-term means materially.

Thus, the absence of understanding on some key-terms may indicated the absence of agreement on the praxis that the terms denote. Every absence of agreement on the praxis will result most likely in an absence of understanding the meaning of key-terms. And in this respect, the repeated subjective failure to understand how someone uses his terms is a *good indicator* for objective material differences in belief or taste. Only which?

What we have in place now is that term-meaning relations differ as a function of who speaks and that argumentative critical discussions need stable term-meaning relations to proceed, yet would hardly arise, were there not a material difference that surfaces as a divergence in meaning. This opens an avenue to look for the material aspects of the etymological argument and balance it with the true meaning claim.

### 3. Etymology in Argumentation. From historical Meaning to lived Praxis

Fearnside and Holther (1959), a work that is listed in Hamblin's bibliography, offers an entry called *misuse of etymology* under the heading *Logical Fallacies* (possibly in reference to Fraunce whom Hamblin referenced).<sup>30</sup> It is an entry worth quoting in full, as it serves well to use first the distinction *term's meaning vs. term's referent* and that between the *intensional vs. extensional* mode of specifying a term's meaning a good while later.

The example below appears as the 50th net-entry followed only by: '51 Idiosyncratic Language'. The numbers 50 and 51 receive a one page write-up and are significantly shorter than the rest (about 3 pages on average). Here is part of that page:

If context and definition are desirable ways to control the range of senses of ambiguous words, it does not follow that all ways which attempt to control the range lead to happy results. Some, indeed, lead to further confusion. Speakers have been known to insist on insisting that 'education' comes from 'educere', a Latin word meaning 'to draw out'. From this etymology they argue that education should be a matter of drawing out the student in the sense of coaxing rather than compelling. Maybe it should, but aside from the fact that the word comes from 'educere' meaning 'to educate', the derivation remains irrelevant to the argument. *This fallacy is a form of circularity*, since the audience is asked to subscribe to the conclusion because of the meaning of some terms used in the premise. But simple circularity is hardly apt to deceive, whereas the assumption that words *should* stick close to *etymological sense* is a *limit on the conventional meaning of words and an unwarranted restriction* on the growth of language.

Fearnside and Holther (1959:168), *last four are my italics*

The rejection of the *normative* assumption above (words should stick close to their etymological senses) which is regarded to result in an unwarranted restriction of the conventional meaning of words corresponds in motivation, one may presume, to Popper's claim for pluralism and against essentialism (of meaning).

Before clarifying exactly what is essential or restricting about the example in the quote, we should come to realize that the issue here extends not only to the *meaning of the term* (education) but also to the *facticity of that which the term is conventionally used to refer to* (the way we educate). The argumentation and in particular the standpoint extends to more than the meaning of terms. Something is to follow from the mere or, rather, *from* the true meaning. It is here where etymology is employed for a distinct purpose, namely to construe an argument for a material standpoint.

The author's example is one that reaches from the etymological meaning of the term *education* to the procedural part of organizing the praxis of education. The entire point of the thesis is to raise awareness for this *material import* of the etymological

argument. It is based on meanings of terms, but its force pertains to the *referents* of these terms. It is true, as the author's say, that the conclusion rests on the meaning of the terms that are used in the premises. Explicating a missing *deductively necessary* sub-standpoint, though, shows that the argument does not rest on the meaning of the terms used in the premise *only*.

I propose the following standpoint below to be the adequate propositional form of what is needed to have a valid reconstruction of the argument. Its defence, the forwarding of arguments in support of the standpoint below, then, will constitute the *necessary dialectical obligation* for those who forward the argument presented by Fearnside and Holter under critical standards:

The characteristics of our praxis of education *are of good quality* when they stay close to the etymological sense of the term denoting that praxis.

With this statement, it is claimed that the referent, *the praxis of education*, should stand in an informed relation to the *etymological meaning of the term education* that the gloss 'to draw out' makes available.<sup>31</sup> This statement, as the finally specified and critically central thesis in the argument, became available by employing the *referent vs. meaning of a term* distinction. And that was a helpful distinction, as it allowed to specify what Fearnside and Holter seemed to have missed. They prefer to call it a form of circularity and one would simply like to know what that means.

Just like the authors, we ignored the claim that *educate* does not even derive from Latin *educere*, but, supposedly, from *educare*, meaning to educate, as our authors suggest. That be as it may. Once the sub-standpoint is in place as a necessary missing element in the argumentation, which Latin term the modern English term *education* ultimately derives from *ceases* to be immediately interesting to know. It is by far more interesting to know *why* the sub-standpoint above should be acceptable, at all. Why think it could be so, even if *educate* indeed did derive from Latin *educare* the original meaning of which we represent with the gloss 'to draw out'. What if?

Structuring the argumentation by allocating the descriptive vocabulary of Pragmatics in comparison to that of Stephen Toulmin (1958) and the traditional Premise-Premise-Conclusion pattern of classical logic, we reach the following:

Structured Linguistic Form in Theory-Vocabulary				
Function	Notation	Linguistic Surface	Pragma-Dialectics 1992	PPC 1958
Thesis	1.	Education should be a matter of drawing out the student in the sense of coaxing rather than compelling	Standpoint	Claim
	1.1	Modern English, educate > Latin educate 'to draw out'	Reason	Data
Justification	1.2'	The meaning of words should stick close to their etymological sense.	Implicit Premise	Warrant
	1.2.1"	The characteristics of our praxis of education are of good quality when they stick close to the etymological sense of the term denoting that praxis.	Implicit Sub-standpoint	Backing
				Conclusion

Table 2. Comparative overview -- Pragma-Dialectics, Toulmin, PPC

The problematic part, as we saw, is 1.2.1". In 1.2.1" the 'when' can be read for the type of underlying reasoning that interests us. 'When', I claim, points to a relation of symptomaticity. Specifically, and most generally, the *contlation* of the etymological sense or meaning of a term with the characteristics of the referent is said to be a *symptom* of a good quality state. The form of 1.2.1" is, of course, my reconstruction, my phrasing. But it would be the necessarily so-phrased statement.

### 3.1 An Illicit Reasoning-Scheme for the Etymological Argument

To represent the reasoning that can be identified in the use of etymology for argumentative purposes, a scheme is proposed in the following that captures the generalizable features of what is, thus, treated as an instantiation of a reasoning structure. By means of that structure, the critically interesting fallacious move in all employments of the etymological meaning of terms in argumentation can be isolated. Once it is, the *de facto* occurrence of an etymological argument that maps onto the scheme, thus exemplifies the structure, can be classified as fallacious.

Using the general argumentation scheme for a symptomatic relation (in contrast to the analogy or causal scheme, which complete the Pragma-Dialectic typology), then, the reasoning scheme that underlies the etymological argument is the *prima facie* odd, because two-thirds trivial looking arrangement below:

- 1 Y is true of X, [y The referent's characteristics] are true of [x the term's referent],
- 2 because Z is true of X, [z The etymological meaning of a term] is true of [x the term],
- 3 and Z is symptomatic of Y. [z The etymological meaning of a term] is symptomatic of [y the referent's characteristics].

Table 3: Symptomatic Argumentation-Scheme from van Eemeren, et.al (2000)

1 and 2 are very clean, one would even say: logically true statements. One could debate about 2, maybe. But if you translate *etymological meaning*, as we have by now seen scholars do, into *true meaning*, you do end in a tautology. The statements 1 and 2 amount to analytic statements in the semantics of a truth-conditionally framed discourse about the relations between terms, referents, meanings and truth. 3 is the critical part.

Note, right away, that the X in the scheme comes out as 'term's referent' in 1 and just 'term' in 2. Thus, insofar as the symptomatic scheme is the right one to use -- which it seems to be, as the causal and the analogical scheme, to my eyes, fit even less -- we do not even reach the abstracted form of the symptomatic reasoning scheme. We would reach it by treating 'term's referent' in the x-position of 1 as equivalent to 'term' in the x-position of 2.

That the term is not the term's referent, on the other hand, amounts to a distinction that Heidegger, for one, termed the *ontological divide*.<sup>32</sup> This divide is what someone who uses the etymological argument ultimately attempts to bridge. But, the term is not identical with the referent. And this, in turn, seems a most basic statement about both language and the real world, analytically separated. As such, it is a basic presupposition of modern linguistics pragmatically needed for any critical rationalist semantics over theory statements. The acceptance of the presupposition is motivated by the intuitive validity of an epistemological distinction between the real or objective world of referents and the linguistic world of meaning, which always comes with a flavour of subjectivity and culture.

Yet an identical X is what we need to fill the scheme well and I will not try to propose an ad-hoc introduction of a *somewhat similar* scheme. Instead of opening a foundational discourse (to deal with this equivocation of term and referent that we stumbled into in the reconstruction of the etymological argument's scheme) which, to be a dialectically adequate discourse, will be a debate about totality, I propose the following solution: Let us, not for the sake of the argument, but for the sake of dealing with the argument critically at this point, assume that term and referent *are the same*, what ever that might mean specifically.

Instead, let us focus on 3. Later, let us remember that our criticism of 3 is facilitated by treating term and referent as the same, to begin with. Let us see where we end, then look back what ignoring the discrepancy did facilitate. In this way, we can relativise the final opinion and, thereby, spell out at least some of the conditions under which we know that our final opinion would have to be rejected.

First, to meet the most pressing objection that 3 be a ridiculous formulation to begin with, consider, as a real life example, the naming praxis that led to the term for the recently re-popularised liquor *Absinth*. A French immigrant distilling in 1700 Switzerland with local ingredients used, amongst others, *wormwood* to produce what some claim caused (if not mono-causally) van Gogh's ear-stunt. And he named the drink after the Latin term for wormwood: *arborita absinthia*. Some people claim Coca-Cola, or Coke, was termed after one its ingredients, namely cocaine. And some regret that praxis was changed. Both the Coke and the Absinth inventor were apothecaries (modern: pharmacists), by the way.

Less real-life but particularly pertaining to scientific praxis, 3 is an instantiated symptomatic relation, for the referent-term relation of taxonomic systems in the sciences. And these taxonomic systems reflect the cataloguing approach of a 18th to 19th century European encyclopaedic knowledge organization, paired with the historic fact that Latin was the language of medieval Scholasticism, not Greek.

And that this would be so is explained by the Romans organizing the Greek cultural knowledge. Thus, the intelligent sphere of the classical age turning dark speaks Latin which is why the European church speaks it in their scriptures.<sup>33</sup> The church, again, is mainly responsible for the organization of scholarly knowledge, those days. The feudal structure lets them, and later, with modernity, pays their first scientific authors. Declaring yourself to be a devoted servant when publishing in the name of the king may have been cynical, but economically necessary, nevertheless.

Citing the revival of Ancient thought and culture in Europe (16th century) that, with the rise of economic wealth through trade and intellectual development (17th and

18th century) into industrialisation (19th century) weakens the feudal structure into citizenship-agreements and eventually into that of the modern nation-state (20th century), what do we have on the linguistic surface?

For all I can see, there is in 2002 A.C. a historically developed *de facto* naming praxis that perpetuates what 3 spells out: The motivated use of terms or term-constituents (morphemes) whose etymological senses do stand in an informative relation to the characteristics of the referents of those terms.

For example, the praxis of performing a *sub-cutan* injection amounts to injecting a medical substance (chemically functional or placebo) into the tissue *below* the skin. And that is, for what you see, found to be the same bound prefix *sub* of *submarine*, where the medical tissue, in *analogy*, is the liquid body *below* the water line. What we find, then, are not only the *analogically discoverable* workings of a naming praxis, but also an explanation for the tempingness of etymological reasoning, in general.

Synchronically speaking, there are to be found instantiated cases and, reachable from the observation of these cases, there is naming praxis to the effect that the etymological meaning of certain terms is symptomatic of the referent's characteristics. This praxis is not to be argued away. Instead, in critical posture, the claim in 3 is to be judged as a false, maybe hastily performed, in any case unwarranted generalization from some to all term-meaning-relations.

The critical objection, then, is: The cases that are comprised (should we say *forced?*) into this symptomaticity are not relevantly similar enough. The 'natural' origin of this objection is our subjective experience of talking that, objectively, feeds the meaning is use *view*. The intellectual origins that motivate and back not this particular but a related objection are, in historical order, Saussure and Popper. This is not to say that they are the only ones that count, but they do so in a special way. By referring to them, we do, in a sense, naturalize our intuition about the etymological fallacy.

#### 4. Evaluation of the etymological argument

I will first sketch exactly how Popper and Saussure come to be relevant sources. I then formulate the final evaluation of the etymological argument and state why its detection is especially relevant in the construal of the definitions of key-terms and, critically, the justification of the quality of these definitions.

##### 4.1 The modern status of etymology after Saussure

Saussure is regarded the founder of modern linguistics in virtue of distinguishing the diachronic from the synchronic study of language. The distinction separates language (and society qua language in use) from its history and, thereby, facilitates the liberation of the formally independently identifiable linguistic surface-form from its historically conventionalised ties to specific referents or senses into a discursively open semantic future. This, in turn, is motivated by the high esteem that structural thought enjoyed at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century in European intellectual praxis.

It is not for no reason that genealogy-vocabulary is found in (Darwinian) evolutionary biology and in etymology (new or old).<sup>34</sup> The ancients liked family terms for a reason. Modern man rediscovered just that and applied them methodically where they work: in taxonomic hierarchies of knowledge build on principles of generalizability and pertaining to (objective) scientific description as much as to the law.<sup>35</sup>

Saussure's postulate of the *principled* (not only *de facto*) arbitrariness of the linguistic sign gave us the arbitrariness or non-meaningfulness or non-informativeness of the term-meaning-relation in general. And this postulate, read as a descriptive statement about the *de facto* possible uses of terms in conversations, is right on.

On the *common sense level* and the above exceptions of a historically learned and primarily scientifically relevant naming praxis in view as exceptions, terms do appear unrelated to both their referents and their meanings or senses, highly flexible in their range of referents, too. Meaning, except in those thick conventionalised forms, is bent under speaker intention or, more radical, constituted by speaker intention. Understanding is the skilled reconstruction, communication the skilled construction, together it adds up to meaning.

Saussure's postulate can then be naturalized, and that means brought to its rational motivation *today*. To do this, we first assume that a scientifically organized and critically performed reconstruction of the *de facto* etymological derivations of all or most of all term-meaning-relations of a language is not a conceptual impossibility, say 95% as a target definition and count disagreement among scholars as an indicator for critical thought. Then, we come to regard etymological knowledge as a product of scientific

methods the availability of which requires, first, extensive study, secondly, by virtue of the work-load exhausts the cognitive resources of a single final mind, and lastly, will overall always, for the second reason, be the product of *expert agreement*. What does this imply?

Qualitatively and ideologically relevant: Knowledge of the historical derivations of terms is *expert knowledge* the availability of a propositional form of which minimally requires agreement on methods and, eventually, facilitates agreement on the *de facto* results of the application of these methods. Compare, one last time, Malkiel above: '(...) the experienced etymologist's prime commitment remaining that of establishing an equilibrium of the separate forces invoked'.<sup>36</sup> Quantitatively and sober: Etymological knowledge is not at the disposal of the average speaker. Compare the real world. You find folk etymology or arbitrary quality.<sup>37</sup>

With these assumptions in place, however, we have not yet reached a claim such as presented in Fearnside and Holter. And that is because it is not possible under the assumptions just made. From the *de facto* symptomatology judgement of some term-meaning relations, it is still a deadly stretch to the *de jure* quality judgement of a praxis that not only informs itself by etymological inquiry -- nothing wrong with that -- but aims in particular at a state (and that means society, too) in which the etymological sense of a particular term shall conflate with the characteristics of the praxis that is referenced with the term *because* this, now, as a *generally applicable rule* would be a symptom of a good quality state.

So, it is obviously stupid to employ the etymological sense or meaning of any old term as a justification for any new policy proposal. That is to say that the justification must feature other elements but the etymological meaning to be acceptable. That justification is conditionally relevant at the moment of arguing for the standpoint. If nothing is forwarded in justification, then, there is nothing.

However, what exactly that, what is not there, would (have to) be, is besides if not beyond the point of this thesis. The point is to say what does not go. We are looking for negatively excluding criteria. Thus, what you find in the bracketed part of a good dictionary entry may maximally serve as inspiration but may minimally not serve as the sole justification for the correctness, tenability or quality of whatever conceptual stretch one may be smart or foolish enough to come up with. On surface-level, many things work and, subjectively speaking, some stretches even suggest themselves.

#### 4.2 Popper's Criticism of ontological Platonic Epistemology

As etymological arguments tend to go back to the meaning of a key-term in its original language -- this being Greek and Latin respectively for our own culture -- Popper enters next as the most widely received and distinctly modern critic of classical ontological thought as a 20th century scientific method. Thus, we cite his work in respect of the architectural boldness of the ontological bridge that we built ourselves further up in the text.

His criticism will be used to show why the etymological argument can be seen to suggest and eventually presuppose an essentialistic stance. We reach, after due respect for Popper, to the employment of etymological meaning reconstructions that serve as justifications for the tenability of essential definitions in discussions.

In doing this, we can point to the historic conditions under which the theoretic notion of an essential definition is motivated. Thus, we situate *essences* and *the method of giving an essential definition* into their historical background against which to sketch Popper's critique. Although mitigating Popper's rejection of the essential definition slightly and relative to his own assumptions, his critique is nevertheless used to spell out the criteria by means of which the etymological argument may be evaluated when found in discourse -- if or not this may practically only serve as starters for a good conversation.

Popper's criticism of essentialism as a general feature of thinkers and their theories is based on a criticism of Platonic essences as metaphysical elements. It leads Popper to a subsequent rejection of the essence-assumption in scientific theory *tout cours* on the grounds of the epistemological undesirability of the essences' principled non-perceivability.<sup>38</sup> In the canonical modern reading of Platonic epistemology, men perceive things that *conform only* to forms or ideas, but they are not identical with those things. Instead, forms or essences belong to a separate sphere -- here is the ontological divide -- to which man has no direct cognitive access. Ancient man sees things, hears sounds and reality is a constantly changing flux. Platonic essences are found when looking for the stability behind it all beyond it all. Simple as that, in Poppers terms.

In the likewise canonical reading of Plato's cave-metaphor that stood model for Bacons *idola cavus*, the idol of the cave -- an enlightenment-restraining prejudice, in modern terms -- the shadows that appear to those tied facing inwardly and away from the sunlit exit, the shadows on the cave's wall are things. The shapes, attached to sticks which real metaphorically employed men carry in front of the light source, namely

a burning fire, are what the shadows represent, are the forms or ideas, that which is behind or beyond the forms.

But that is the true forms and this is its shadows, its ontologically related representation. Greek thought is ontological thought and the above is, in rough, Plato's description of man's epistemological situation. It is, in being a metaphor, an example of analogical reasoning employed not to find out but to communicate what modern thought calls an epistemological theory about men, the world and its limits.

This ontological essentialism, if employed as a methodological tool, as Popper shows that Plato has done in reaching a definition of the human soul, is what Popper rejects. Plato needed a definition of the soul for a definition of his perfect state. Popper rather situates the definition of the human soul into the scientific objectivity of the social sciences to only find their methods of reaching objectivity problematic for their employment of precisely the same essentialistic method, namely that of an essential definition.

Popper, having emigrated from Nazi-Germany to New Zealand, reads Plato and other classical sources as looking for a 'scientific method' (1972:58) to capture what is constant in or rather behind the flux of things that populate the ancient real world.<sup>39</sup> Judging both from the structure and the genesis of his book, published 1944, he does it out of an interest in finding a non-political basis for his political criticism of Platonic descriptive sociology, that he analyses as the epistemological underpinnings of Plato's description of the ideal state which, by modern standards, is totalitarian.

Plato was the son of a king. Athens was on the cultural decline. And the then king-less but order-habituated Germany is with the wrong but, some say, unavoidable absolutist, at that time: Hitler and the NSDAP party on a sick and Europe-wide revival into racially framed Roman ethno-centricity. A comparable situation, in some sense.

Textually speaking, from this basis and in the second volume, Popper criticizes totalitarian political systems as dogmatic (read: resting on essential or foundational beliefs). 'It is the totalitarian tendency in Plato's political philosophy that I attempt to analyse and criticise' (1977:63).<sup>40</sup> All along, though, he criticizes specifically the Humanities for what Popper must regard their preference for what he terms *methodological essentialism*.

He terms against that *methodological nominalism*, which he prefers and explicitly says there be indication 'that a discussion of the Platonic methods in the social sciences can still be relevant today'. The ensuing discussion is know as the Historicism or Methods debate of the 1960s, most prominently, to my eyes, held between Popper with Albert against the Frankfurt School members Adorno and Habermas. The Marxists,

as a third party, did not even stand a chance. Habermas follows primarily Adorno's, not so much Horkheimer's, heritage as an internationally recognized philosopher.

The debate, it is safe to say, ended in bilateral accusations of totalitarian tendencies. Adorno and Popper remained enemies, the first died 1969, the other 1994. The issue has been sent to the relevant experts for further study, is for short settled, not resolved. On the surface, Popper's science-theoretic falsification principle is accepted. Born 1902, his recent anniversary had gloriously many write-ups. If and where, particularly in the Humanities and the Social Sciences scholars do *de facto* falsify their theories as a distinct and planned step in the theory evolution is difficult to say. It would not matter at this point. We stop, so to speak, at the methods-debate and see, what it was centrally about in respect to the ontological bridge.

Popper launches his essentialism-critique explicitly directed at the society's critics, namely the post-World War 1 European Social Sciences, specifically their empirical part, in the wake of World War Two. The book is titled *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, the first volume of which is subtitled: *The Spell of Plato*.<sup>41</sup> The beginning of chapter three, titled *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, concludes the epistemological onset of an otherwise political book, and reads as follows:

I use the name methodological essentialism (or ontology), to characterize a view held by Plato and other predecessors. According to this view, the task of pure knowledge or science consists in the discovery and description of the true nature of things, that means in the discovery and description of their hidden reality or essence. For Plato a view is characteristic according to which the ontological status of perceivable things are to be found in other and to a higher degree real things, in their ancestors or forms. Many of the later methodological essentialists, for example Aristotle, do not follow him entirely; but they all agree with him insofar as they make the discovery of the hidden nature or form or essence the task of pure science. Likewise, all methodological essentialists follow him in the assumption that it be possible to recognize and distinguish these essences by means of intellectual intuition, as well as in the assumption that these essences bear an individual name, the name according to which the perceivable things are named, and that they can be described in words. And they all term the description of an essence a definition.

Popper (1977:59f.)<sup>42</sup>

Leaving out 11 lines I quote Popper citing Plato as giving the method of giving an essential definition of an even in contrast to an odd number. We see, at the end, the political criticism indicated.

<sup>41</sup>[Plato., FZ] (...) And if we receive the name and ask for the definition, or if we receive the definition and are then asked for the name, then we speak in both cases of one and the same ontological

status, if we term it *even* or *dividable into the same parts*. According to this example, Plato goes about to employ this method for a proof of the true nature of the soul (...)

Popper (1970:60)<sup>43</sup>

We can call this, in modern terms, an unwarranted methodological transposition. So the term *even* has as its essence what is defined by *dividable into the same parts*. We later call this *definiendum* (even) and *definiens* (the rest). More on this below.

First, most relevantly for our purposes, and directly following the above, *methodological nominalism* is introduced and used as a contrast against which the criticism of ontological essentialism, Plato's descriptive sociology and his totalitarian social system are to be understood and criticized.

The passage is critical because it contains a description of what has come, I claim, to be the pragmatic rationale for accepting the *meaning is use* (for a purpose) view that we came to see as the modern view upon the dynamics of the term-meaning-relation. It is the general acceptance of signs of a language as employable and, overall, fully controllable tools for descriptions.

Methodological essentialism, that is the theory that it be the aim of the sciences to uncover and describe essences by means of definitions, may be better understood if we contrast it with its counterpart, methodological nominalism. Methodological nominalism does not set itself the task to find and define the true nature of a thing; rather its aim is the description of a thing's behaviour under different conditions and to state, in particular, if this behaviour shows any regularities whatsoever. In other words, methodological nominalism sees the aim of science in the description of the objects and events of our experience and in an explanation of these events, that means in a description by means of universal laws. Our language, and in particular those of its rules that distinguish well formed sentences and derivations from a mere collection of values, it regards as the glorious instruments of scientific description<sup>44</sup>; the words it takes to be tools for the performance of the task and not to be names and essences.

Popper (1977:60f.)<sup>45</sup>

There is a distinct contrast here: While the value of old etymology lay in its informativeness for the praxis of sign-use (in a speech for example, as Cicero, Topica §35 put it), new epistemology takes the value of sign-use to lie in its employability to reach a better praxis, particularly and primarily: better scientific descriptions of the real world.<sup>46</sup>

Calling the methodological nominalist justified in preferring accurate measurements over the methodological essentialist's 'pretentious nonsense' [prätentiosen Wirrwarr], Popper goes on to state that

(...) in the natural sciences, methodological nominalism is presently rather generally accepted. On the other hand, the problems of the social sciences are in large parts still treated under an essentialistic methodology. In my opinion, this is one of the main reasons for their lacking behind. But many thinkers who noticed this situation, come to a different verdict. They believe the difference in methodology to be necessary and they believe that it reflects an ontological difference between the natures of both fields of inquiry.

Popper (1977:61)<sup>47</sup>

And this is where etymology as a *de facto employed method* used for the purpose of giving an essential definition comes in. Popper's words are clear and I have left them without much comment. The long quote makes clear what goes, or rather would go, into a dialectically appropriate answer to the issue of essentialism. It would amount, in large part, to a review of the concrete results or failures of the 1960 Methods-Debate and constitute a tracing of the intellectual development and *de facto* change in methodology in the Social Sciences and the Humanities as well as developments in the Natural Sciences.

For what the author knows, critical rationalist methods of measuring and attempted falsification of theory predictions are currently employed in the social sciences and the humanities. Only a detailed study, however, could give an overview and critical evaluation of the *de facto* employed methods of the social sciences. One may assume, however, that other than the critical rationalist methods are employed and that methodological pluralism is the *de jure* term for the *de facto* state of affairs.

What is to say, then, about the essential definition as a scientific tool? Popper notes its ubiquity in early 20th century Social Science. Pointing to the Humanities, specifically to Philosophy, Crawshay-Williams (1947:99) even says "The belief that words have a true meaning is the first and necessary step towards the metaphysical attitude and towards the idealist type of philosophy".

Crawshay-Williams describes the underlying fault as one of *hypostatization*. 'Metaphysical systems always end up, even if they do not begin, with hypostatization of abstract words' (1947:106). You have a word and, *therefore*, believe a thing would correspond to it. To capture all metaphysical thought, this is certainly under-described and over-generalized.<sup>48</sup>

Popper, using the term 'personification' (1977:58f.), cites Aristotle's Metaphysics (1078b23) and explicitly names Plato to have developed the Socratic method of an essential definition into a method of determining the real nature:

There is no need for the assumption that Socrates personified those concepts in his search for a unchangeable or essential meaning or that he treated them like things. At least, the Aristotelian report suggests, that he did not proceed in this way and that it was Plato who developed Socrates' method of searching for a determination of the real nature into a method of determining the real nature, the form or idea of a thing.

Popper (1977:57),<sup>49</sup>

At the most, then, and by presupposing what Plato would have to presuppose in terms of possibility, the following is true: *One can specify essence linguistically*. You can talk about the essence of being, the ontological totality, and you are well advised to bring a lot of time and ask for guidance from someone who knows the languages of both modern and ancients. You can likewise talk about the essence of a thing, but in Crawshay-Williams terms you are hypostatizing a methodological tool into a thing, just like Popper claims Plato did with Socrates' method of determining the real nature by giving an essential definition. A method of determining, read: defining, versus the reality status that is or is not implied at the same time.

Thus, you can specify nature, but not via an essential definition, because that would presuppose your intalibility. Or you give an essential definition, but mitigate its scope so that the ontological bridge stays folded. That is the essential method as a tool without the ontological situatedness. We will meet it below in the Aristotelian category specification as the basis of Syllogistic Logic which we know today as Class Logic or Set-Theory.

#### 4.3 Implications: Key-Terms, Meanings and Definitions

The statement from way above that key-terms be defined only is what Robinson (1972, 1954') at the beginning of his 200 page standard work titled *Definition*, though not explicitly, suggest as the *best conduct* in discussions.

It does not follow, and it is not true, that all words should be defined before they are used; and the blanket command to 'define your terms' would do far more harm than good if anyone tried. On the contrary, we should try to arrange our discourses so that we do not have to interrupt ourselves in order to define how we are using our terms.

Robinson (1972, 1954':33)

This is, again, the *pragmatic impossibility* of defining what is identified numerically. Note that Robinson's characterisation of a good arrangement of discourse amounts to stating

a negatively defined procedure: '(...) so that we do not have to interrupt ourselves (...) ... and still arrive at definite meanings of terms.

Directly following, Robinson speaks not about *what* terms to define, but about *if* to use words in different senses:

Furthermore, it is not true that we should always use a word in the same sense. To do so would often hamper and complicate the discourse very much, while using a word in more than one sense often leads to error. For example, there are vast areas of study in which no error arises from our using the word 'knowledge' now to mean a mental state and now to mean a body of facts known.

Robinson (1972, 1954:331)

As in the first quote, when Robinson writes '(...) it is not true that we should (...) ' he is saying that what ever we should not do that we should not do because it would not be good to do just that. This is a normative statement, although using 'is true' makes it sound more like a descriptive statement.

Both quotes, then, amount to prescriptive statements. And I suggest, as I do of Robinson's entire approach, that his normative statement is acceptable only in the exact same sense that it is acceptable to say that '(...) there are vast areas of study in which no error arises from using the word *knowledge* now'; yes now: not mean but refer! now to a mental state and now to a body of facts known!.

The contrast between a mental state and a body of facts is not there for no reason. His is not a contingently cited example. Rather, it mentions an epistemologically relevant contrast that remains beyond the linguistic surface, if you like, as long as the term 'mean' is not replaced by 'refer'. Why?

One can, by virtue of having interest and time for it, distinguish at length and throughout the recorded history of occidental (and that would historically be metaphysical) thought between a *subjective* mental state the content of which represents knowledge, on the one *hand*, and an *objective* world of facts, the constellation of which represents that which is to be represented adequately in my subjective mental state if the content of that state may be said to match the facts on the other *hand*.<sup>50</sup> In rough words, this is the correspondence theory of truth. The adequation of the intellect with the matter, as Thomas Aquinas termed it.<sup>51</sup>

Compare Popper's (1976:98) statement that the 'much maligned correspondence theory of truth [...] is and always has been the commonsense idea of truth'.<sup>52</sup>

That is certainly so and, as most engineers for example will tell you, a referentially specific definition, in other words: a definition giving an ontological status of the

referent(s) of the term *knowledge*, is *pragmatically uncalled for* when you build a house, a ship or an airplane. One may use the terms 'not needed', though, to tell you.

Yet, and here agreement with Robinson is mitigated critically: There is *in the ontological sense of 'to be'* (the use of 'be' with existential import, as the logician would say), a discourse about the *definition of the referent of the term knowledge*. This is the case in philosophically situated and epistemologically oriented discourses. These discourses pertain practically, that is: in the reflexion of their *justificatory problems*, at least from the applicability of forensic methods in criminal law to the critical standards of falsification in the revision phase of an (empirical) research report.

The justifiedness *with which* both the forensic and the critical standards are put to work is, I suggest, representable as a function of the dialectical problematicity of the philosophical discourse about the definition of the meaning of the term *knowledge*. While this may not be the only way of representing this *justifiedness of employed standards*, it is the one that matters here.

When we see, as an example, the definition of the referent of the term *knowledge* to constitute the issue of a factually preceding debate (reaching over more than one generation, too) we grasp why it does matter, exactly how it is, that a term under the use of a person refers to what it is, that is referred to.<sup>53</sup>

In seeing this, we reach, at the same time, understanding about how the form of the etymological argument, when analysed critically, is not adequately represented as an argument about terms only, but about things, to begin with. I claim that the referential aspect is to be regarded as primary if the best purpose of the exercise is to remain the detection and ruling-out of fallacious reasoning in discussion. Fully specified for the purpose of critical judgement, the referential function of terms and of language, in general, in contrast to the poetic function, is not an add-on feature.<sup>54</sup>

#### 4.4 The Use of Etymology for the Purpose of Giving a Definition

A definition, as hinted to above, consists traditionally of two parts, a *definiendum* (that which is to be defined) and a *definiens* (that which defines the definiendum). Its classical form is the Aristotelian *genus proximum plus differentia specifica* scheme. Thus, his definition of the extension of the CATEGORY MAN as [+biped, -animal] locates the universal features of man as conflating with those of animals. Animal is the closest genus. Then, man is set off from animal, the next highest genus in a taxonomy by virtue of being biped.

You see already that birds become a problem, as they are obviously biped and animals too. And, though maybe not for that reason, some people wish to equip the flees on a cat with quasi-person rights, for principles sake even. What, then is the situation of a definition?

Dubislav (1931<sup>5</sup>) distinguishes four main *aims* behind the historical uses of definitions: (i) determination of a thing's *ontological status* (Plato, Aristotle, Scholasticism), (ii) Determination of a *concept* (Kant), (iii) Description of the *use of a symbol* (descriptive lexicography) and (iv) *stipulation* (modern logic). And this shows that definitions serve always some end but not always the same end.<sup>55</sup>

Robinson (1954), assuming most basically the word-thing relation, just like we do with the term-meaning relation, argues implicitly for a view on definitions that retains the pragmatic *situatedness of defining* in a discussion for the end of *making intersubjectively available* a description of a thing.

The adequacy of an intersubjectively available description is always at least also is a function of the needs of the discussion at hand and always only not just a mere function of our epistemological powers. Robinson lists 12 distinct activities that all go by the same name: definition. Simply put: an essential definition, then, is simply one given in a discourse where essences are assumed in contrast to a critical-rationalist discourse, in which minimally no essences feature. See what this does to the bird exception.

Looking at the ultimately Aristotelian method of identifying category members, you notice that no ontological import takes place. The category, the member (and the prototypical member even) are abstract entities. My neighbour and the guy at the door of the building are entities that instantiate the type *MAN*. I and the guy at the door partake in the type by instantiating it, but the type does not therefore become anything but a mental tool, a representation.

Thus, relative to your purpose, needs and tastes, all men can be located by looking for bi-ped animals. You will find some animals also, but you can next bring it down by excluding [feathers or fur not worn for decoration]. As a procedure, that works just fine, as long as you do not forget that some men live happily with one or no leg.

Eventually one reaches rich accumulation of features and will want to generalize, find a term to put what you have under. This way you build a taxonomy. By virtue of where in the taxonomy you de facto start out from and by virtue of what you can reach semantically from which point, to begin with, you will have a taxonomic representation of the inventory of, now, not *MAN* or men, but of the methodological side of your quite binary conceptual structure, by means of which you can, then, indeed

identify and separate me, the guy at the door and other men from animals and airplanes.<sup>56</sup> That's good to know how to do, given you could, say, only save two of the three and have to identify very precisely after you decided what to save.

Robinson distinguishes further and centrally a *nominal* from a *real definition*, a distinction that can be traced through Leibniz (17th century A.C.) back to William van Ockham (13th Century A.C.). The distinction facilitates control of the scope of what is referenced in the definition, namely the meaning of the term (Nominal) and the referent of the term (Real). That is, then, a restriction of the ontological import of my definition.

To the real versus nominal distinction, which specifies the outcome of a definition, corresponds that of the two methods of meaning specification known in present day logic. In the *extensional* mode, I refer to the referents of the term to specify the meaning of the term. This amounts to an enumerative method. In the intensional mode, the meaning of a term is specified by means of other terms or statements.

The *intensional* mode is basically the one employed in the tradition following Tarski and Carnap. It finds its application in the theoretic meta-language statements about the object language. Thus, you can define the meaning of the English term *dog* by stating that it corresponds to the meaning of the German term *Hund*. Insofar as the meaning of German *Hund* is known, the person who knows it will subsequently also know the meaning of the term *dog*.

Taken together, nominal and real describe the referent in the definiendum (a real thing or a term) while extensional and intensional describe my mode of building the definiens (by enumeration or by explication). To this, finally, corresponds the *mention* versus *use* distinction that specifies exactly what is done with a sign in discourse. Thus, in: 'Absinth was termed after the Latin name for wormwood' I use all terms in their meanings to say what motivated the choice of the name Absinth. In '*Absinth* has seven letters', though, I do not use the meaning of Absinth, as I did above, but instead refer to the linguistic sign, the Noun Phrase Absinth. That is about it, in terms of the methodology of definitions. And of course, the methods alone do not guarantee good definitions, which would always be situationally well-formed definitions.

With the sketch of Popper's Plato critique in the back, the claim is simple: The etymological argument, when used for the purpose of defining the meaning of a term in a discussion evaluated according to the Pragma-dialectical model, amounts -- in the most critical reading -- to methodological essentialism in exactly the way that Popper phrases his critique. It would amount, for the argument's ontological import, to the postulation of essences.

Look now what else essence can do for us. Remember, we tricked ourselves out of the problem with the symptomatic argumentation scheme above. Back then, the X would just not come out right after we had employed the term vs. referent distinction. Here is the scheme again:

- 1 Y is true of X. [v. The referent's characteristics] are true of [x. the term's referent].
- 2 because Z is true of X. [z. The etymological meaning of a term] is true of [x. the term].
- 3 and Z is symptomatic of Y. [z. The etymological meaning of a term] is symptomatic of [v. the referent's characteristics].

Table 3: Symptomatic Argumentation-Scheme

And here is the symptomatic scheme once more. But now we use *essence* in place of the X that troubled us and modify both Y and Z to include the ontological assumption.

- 1 Y is true of X. [v. The referent's essential characteristic(s) are true of [x. the term's essence].
- 2 because Z is true of X. [z. The etymological meaning of a term] is true of [x. the essence].
- 3 and Z is symptomatic of Y. [z. The etymological meaning of a term] is symptomatic of [v. the referent's essential characteristics].

Table 3: Symptomatic Argumentation-Scheme, essentialised

Situating essences as that which relates situated names to situated things, we reach the conditions under which the etymological meaning would be informative of the referent's characteristics, namely if both the *term* (name) and the *referent* (thing), as Plato put it above, are *connected to the essence*. The thing by partaking qualitatively in the essence, the term by being the essence's name. That is how *referent* (thing) and term (*name*) come to represent the form equally well in Platonic thought.

Thing and name are an integral part of what would be an *essence scheme*. Just as *genus* and *differentia specifica* are part of the Aristotelian categorical *scheme*. And they do their work just there. Plato's works ontologically, Aristotle's in universal abstraction. Both distinguish, that is make determinate a specific part of what is otherwise an undifferentiated and contradictory totality of experience: reality in its most general description.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, we have reached the worst case scenario of giving a definition according to the critical rationalist tradition, namely: (i) the definition of a referent (real-definition) by means of the etymological meaning of the term that denotes the referent. Less severe, but not good either, (ii) the definition of the meaning of a term (nominal-definition) may be given as the etymological sense of the term.

While the real-definition is rejected on the basis of the hypo-criticality of assuming essences after Popper, the nominal-definition may be criticized for its address. But given the meaning-is-use principle (which is based on the Saussurean arbitrariness postulate, and which secures, descriptively adequate, that speakers may use their terms in the meanings they please), there is no other objection than what is to be objected critically to the material content of the nominal definition.

A principled reason for excluding a nominal definition based on etymology is found no sooner than that the speaker, in turn, declares his nominal definition to be the essentially true one. But this would be so for any definition. Pragma-dialectics, situated in the critical rationalist tradition, accepts no dogmatic definitions, no matter what method they are based on.

On to the last task, the explication of fallacy criteria.

#### 4.5 Fallacy criteria for the Etymological Argument

For all stages of the Pragma-Dialectic Model, the fallacy criteria of the etymological argument are finally and relative to all assumptions made, explained and justified above as follows:

If Etymology functions	as Mention	as Use
in any stage of a Critical Discussion, then this is	Meaning-Explication Heuristic Tool	Nominal Definition/ Real Definition Fallacious if justified by recourse to etymology

Table 4: Fallacy-Matrix

Note that the matrix gives, in the mention column, an advice how best to treat an etymological argument, if it surfaces in a discussion. Critically speaking, the language

user has made available to the participants an explication of how he would like a certain term understood, namely in their etymological sense. And that is so, no matter if that person, as the Fearnside and Holther example showed, used the generally accepted etymology or not.

This, in turn, is so as we reach our criteria not via the *de facto* reached results of scientific etymological research, but via the presence of an additional step of justification that would either provide a principled reason on etymology and praxis or a reason why a specific etymological argument would be acceptable. Insofar as this specific reasons is an acceptable reason, there is no etymological argument anymore, but a proposal that builds on etymology yet does not justify via etymology.

So, etymology can be a tool in what Popper terms the discovery phase of my research, where I look for sources, distinctions and build hypothesis. In the justification phase, though, it does no work for me in 2002 A.C. And it certainly does not relieve me of finding extra justification for the policy statement, the central measure of which is, how odd, termed exactly the way the Ancients seem to have used the term and maybe even understood the referent. But that is just not good enough.

## 5. Conclusion & Outlook

Having shown how etymology is not a good method to arrive at and then justify a definition according to Pragma-Dialectic standards, we saw the following:

Based on the Saussurean diachronic versus synchronic distinction, we came to realize that etymological knowledge is expert knowledge the quality of which is indicated by disagreement and presupposes methodological agreement. Based on Popper's Plato criticism, though, we rejected etymology out of essence-suspicion and showed that indeed the essence assumption is what connects names to things in Plato's thought.

We discerned two interesting uses of etymology and, remembering that we framed definitions as situationally adequate and not only epistemologically adequate methods, said that:

- A *Real Definition*, specifying referents of terms in their etymological senses, may minimally not involve the assumption of a metaphysical realm of essences.
- A *Nominal Definition*, specifying the meaning of a term, may be reached by etymology but not justified solely by etymology. The same applies for the real definition.

Comparing the essential method with the Aristotelian *genus proximum plus differentia specifica* scheme, we saw eventually that:

- If the *ontological import* of an essential definition is controlled, we reach the Aristotelian *genus plus specifica scheme* which is not ontological.
- A *mitigated essentialism*, thus, is possible. *Non-ontological essentialism* is taxonomic (binary) knowledge-representation for the sake of ordering reality flexibly.

While it is a pressing question what could justify the use of etymology for the purpose of giving an essential definition, it is clear that an answer requires nothing less but a criticism of Popper's Plato criticism paired with an very good argument why, even assuming that the worst would follow for Popper, which I think it will not, etymology is a good method.

In particular, a study of the methods of those scholars is indicated who use etymology in their field, for example, to spell out the conceptual history of European (or any region's) cultural thought. This would also, as I indicated above, involve a study of the proceedings of the Methods-Debate and an evaluation of the methodological reality

in the Humanities, the Social and the Natural Science. Obviously, that is a little too big for a single mind, but a pilot study is worth the while.

This would be so for the stronger reason as Europeans are de facto discussing the meanings of key-terms in their referential meanings. A common Europe is not exclusively, but at a central institutional point, namely the European law and its exercise, crucially dependent on the univocal interpretation of terms and an open attitude to both different speakers and different preferences what to argue for, and how to do it.

Presupposing that the nations had grown together far enough to not face a more than minor problem in settling their terms would be one of the stupidest things to do at this moment. Certainly, the historical reflexion of the meaning of the terms over which we differ, may not be required -- absolutism could solve the muddle in a swing -- but under democratic standards, it seems the best way to reaching and maintaining critical edge by knowing where the terms come from and why we like the meaning we give them best.

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## 7. Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The bracketed statement says that *parliament* is a term that dates back to period of the English language that is known as Middle English (ME 1600 A.C.) in the meaning following thereafter (meaning of national concern). This meaning explanation is also called a gloss by the lexicographer. Further, it is stated that the term entered the English language from Old French (**WHEN**) where *parlement* and *parler* are described by the same gloss, namely *to talk*.
- <sup>2</sup> The argument is *linked* to the standpoint by appearing in close vicinity to the standpoint, at a conditionally relevant moment in the turn. It is reconstructed as an argument in support of the standpoint since it appears as justification for the standpoint. Exactly if and how an etymology can support what standpoint is, of course, the central question of this thesis.
- <sup>3</sup> His 1963 *Conjectures and Refutations* is the standard reference for the science-theoretic falsification principle. His rejection of the attempt to justify theories instead of falsifying them, that is proving them to be wrong, though, is an 1959 Postscript addition to the original (Compare Popper 1976:149). The 1944 *Open Society and its Enemies* (cited in my translation of the German edition from 1977) contains what Bertrand Russell regards an unorthodox but entirely justified criticism of Platonic ideas and his essence vs. appearance distinction.
- The 1974 autobiography of Popper (cited as 1976) is especially relevant for the centrality of the notion of *essentialism* in Poppers criticism. The 14 page 'Long digression concerning essentialism' (pp. 17-31) sets the stage for the entire book and is sub-titled: 'What still divides me from most contemporary Philosophers'. And that would be the following: Popper rejects essences as a metaphysical category *tout cours*.
- <sup>4</sup> *Critically potential* is understood as solving the problem. This is a situational phrasing and I centrally assume that all *de facto* definitions in argumentative contexts are reducible to their situated circumstances.
- <sup>5</sup> Saussure uses chess as an *analogy* by means of which to explain the distinction between diachronic and synchronic. Chess can be analysed, like language, as a rule-governed system that is, again, like language, sufficiently unrestricted to allow for individuality in the choice of moves or choice of linguistic expression, respectively.
- Studying the sum of the individual moves of a particular chess-match, from the moment the game started until now, corresponds to studying the sum of individual changes of a particular language. This is the diachronic perspective.
- Studying the constellation of the figures on the chess-board at a given moment - to evaluate not what *process* brought the constellation about but to evaluate the *constellation* from the directions in which the game may possibly continue -- corresponds to the synchronic perspective.
- Like every analogy, there are discrepancies between the carrier (chess) and the target (language). The gravest discrepancy is: The rules of chess are known beforehand. The rules of language, on the other hand, are to be described or found still.
- <sup>6</sup> Surface level is what the conversation-analyst codes in a transcript. A discourse analytic perspective is already less that surface level. Surface level is the level of ethno-methodological description, practically informed by coding conventions that, in the strict ethno-methodological approach aligned to speakers' categories.

Ethno-methodology is what makes Erwing Goffman appear a man of letters, rather than a scholar, although he is, in my eyes. His ethno-methodological observations are falsifiable. It is worth to keep this in mind, when Popper's criticism of the essential methods of social sciences is introduced later. Ethno-Methodology would not be essentialistic in the Popperian sense. On the contrary, it is the most situational you can get.

<sup>7</sup> We will come back to this definition of old etymology later. Note, right away, though that I chose 'accordingly' to translate the German original term 'daher'. The author seems to mean the following: The activity of old etymology corroborates with the Greek meaning.

*Ältere, d. h. antike, mittelalterliche und barocke Etymologie bewegt sich im Synchronen. Indem sie das zu betrachtende Wort von einem andern anstrahlen lässt, will sie den wahren Inhalt, το ετυμόν, erkennen. Danach heisst sie ετυμο-λογία (Streben nach dem wahren und ewigen Wortinhalt). Nicht die Entwicklung des Wortes zu erkennen ist ihr Ziel, sondern die Aufdeckung eines universalisierbaren Kerns. Von etymologischer Überlegung verspricht man Hilfe bei der Suche nach dem richtigen Wort in der Rede, Steigerung der Tiefe, Kraft und Durchsichtigkeit des Sprechens. Etymologie rechtfertigt sich aus ihrer rhetorischen und philosophischen Nutzbarkeit.*

<sup>8</sup> Die neuere Etymologie ist diachronisch. Sie ruht auf den Entdeckungen der historischen Lautlehre des 19. Jhd. Sie hat keine Hoffnungen mehr, der Stilistik der Rhetorik, der Philosophie nutzen zu können. Sie sieht ihren Zweck in sich selbst. Allenfalls hilft sie, eine germanische und indogermanische Altertumskunde aufzubauen.

Note that in 1972 it seems to have been still acceptable to use the word *indogermanic* as a descriptive term. Today, *indo-european* is the word of choice and while being a descriptive term, the motivation for using the latter rather than the first not be explained without recourse to linguistic ideology. Saying *indo-germanic* rather than *indo-european* results in criticism for the suspected racial distinction behind the term *Germanic*.

<sup>9</sup> Sound changes are described by generalizations over sets of terms and stages of linguistic history. For example, the following set is subsumable under a law stating that Old English (OE) *ā* changed into Middle-English (ME) *ō* and again into Modern English (MnE) *o* or *ou*: OE *ā* < ME *ō* < MnE *o*, *ou*.

<b>OE</b>	<i>stān</i>	<i>rād</i>	<i>bāt</i>	<i>hām</i> ...
<b>ME</b>	<i>stōn</i>	<i>rōd</i>	<i>bōt</i>	<i>hōm</i> ...
<b>MnE</b>	<i>stone</i>	<i>road</i>	<i>boat</i>	<i>home</i> ...

Table 4. Sound Change

The table is adopted from Ross (1969, 1958': 31).

He says the historical part *presupposes* the descriptive as a method to build on. Thus, theory formulation sees the descriptive as basics, the statements made on the historical part, then, is falsified *automatically* when the descriptive method is falsified. Hence, the two parts are dependent, they must corroborate to make for a good description of, first, language and, then, its historically manifested change or development -- its flux, in ancient terms.

Compare Nehlich (1992) who subtitles her *Semantic Theories in Europe 1890-1930* thus: From *Etymology to Contextuality*. Out of the work, in Hutton's (1998) terms,

'etymology arises as the central villain of the story'. She researches the French, English and German semantic traditions in a valuable overview.

<sup>10</sup> Darwin's (1859) family terminology matches the modern etymological vocabulary: The terms for the historical stages of a language are terms for family relations: parents, children and so on. Compare Ross 1969, 1958': 27 for the same terms.

The systematicity of most notably Bühler's sound changes are the regularities that functionally match Darwin's law of natural selection. However, it is false to say that Darwin's genealogical model of the species would be a model for Bühler's genealogical model of language. Rather, the biological and the linguistic model are both models of an approach to *natural* evolution.

Linguistic evolution, then, is modelled on the family, where the generations correspond to socio-historical stages of cultural development. The linguistic data from these historical stages constitute the surface expressions of that development. Family terminology employed for theoretic purposes is what the Greeks employed in taxonomic systems already.

<sup>11</sup> In this respect, Hutton's (1998:190) thesis is misleading: 'The argument will be that whenever we debate, reflect on or argue about the meaning of words we are involved in a form of etymologising.' And that is well said if this 'form of etymologising' is taken to be what was called old etymology. Hutton does not seem to distinguish between old and new etymology, though.

Overall, his conclusions are: Present-day [...] linguistics, with its vernacular nationalism, can offer only a caricature of the socio-historical and political philosophies that make use of etymology' (p.200). To rephrase: Contemporary descriptive linguistics has no take on the use of etymology in debates about the meaning of terms. And since it is descriptive, it cannot have. If a term comes to be used to have a certain meaning, for whatever reason, the criteria for recording that use (as standard or deviant) are fulfilled. The facticity of the term-to-meaning relation is its *recordability*.

<sup>12</sup> *Der Fall der historischen Semantik ist aufs engste mit der Rezeption und dem Einfluss von Saussures Course de Linguistique general verknüpft. Die strukturalistische und poststrukturalistische Semantik ist die Semantik einer Sprache, die von ihrer Geschichte abgeschnitten ist.*

<sup>13</sup> Cited after Hutton (1998:199). Hutton's is a very good article to start with and I owe much of the overview that I eventually gained from the leads he provided.

<sup>14</sup> Rather, a descriptive dictionary, like the one we used above, will give you the generally accepted (list of) term-to-meaning relation(s), the potential of a term to be used in specific meaning. And with these options at hand, the analyst or lay-speaker is still in no position to say with certainty in which specific meaning a term is used in a specific speech situation.

Disambiguation, the reduction of vagueness in discourse, it happens as a cooperatively managed process between speaker's (Compare van Flees 1992, being a conversation analytic approach). The linguist, understanding his field as a modern descriptive science, is concerned with the *semantic boundaries* of a given term by describing speaker's behaviour (and making sense of it).

To use *bank* in the sense of 'automobile' will require special agreement among speakers. To use *bank* in the meaning 'financial institution' and not as 'side of the river', on the other hand, requires that the term be used in one sense only -- in other words: it

is necessarily required that the term signify, in a specific situation, one particular meaning, not several options. This particular meaning is termed *speaker meaning*, *meaning in use* or *intended meaning* and is put to use on both word, sentence and higher textual levels.

<sup>15</sup> On the opposite, with regard to the attempts of a *semantic componential analysis* following Katz and Postal (1964) -- who explicitly suggest their theory as a move to integrate meaning into (generative) syntactic structure by describing the generation of meaning from determined semantic components and their mode of combination -- Lyons (1977, II: 553) is quite explicit: 'But it is fair to say, without prejudice to the possibility that this approach to the question will ultimately prove viable, that all such attempts have failed'.

The Katz and Postal approach is a 100% notational variant of the Aristotelian essential definition consisting in a postulation of the term's referent's genus plus its specific difference from its neighbour in the taxonomy. The categorical taxonomy, again, is a required presupposition for syllogistic logic. It is what gave us the essential definition of the *categorical class* Man as biped animal to which the members belong by virtue of belonging to the class of animals and exemplifying the property biped. Compare Taylor (1989).

Note, too, that the assigning of the genus and the differentia as the *shortest two-* feature description is what makes the definition essential. The relevance of all this is clearer below.

It is likewise worthwhile to note that the method of treating the semantic aspect of language in a compositional way (finite parts plus specified mode of combination, usually addition in the mathematical sense) goes back to Frege (1892), who in turn is inspired by Brentano. The Philosophy of Logical Atomism (Russel), a universalism, is based on semantic compositionality and (the late) Wittgenstein is the severest critic thereof.

<sup>16</sup> *Handy* may just be germanized English, *Denglish*, the product of a brain-storming session that pleased the corporate customer, then the public. Then again, German *handlich* 'handy' is structurally a compositum of the free derivational morpheme (read: content) *hand* and the bound inflexional morpheme (read: grammatical form) *-lich*, a suffix the meaning of which one would gloss functionally by coming up with something like 'ADEJECTIVIZING'.

So, *handlich* becomes consumer-culture *handy*? Or is it the English adjective *handy* that gives us the German Noun *Handy*? Or both at the same time?

<sup>17</sup> Compare Franck (1981:231) who, in her criticism of Speech Act Theory, points to the problem of context-dependency of meaning as a *function of the applied theoretical apparatus*:

'The failure to approach the problem of context-sensitivity in a differentiated way is intricately linked to another quite fundamental question: the linguistic theory, especially the theory of semantics, on which speech act theory is (more implicitly than explicitly) based, is a *semantics modelled in many respects after logical semantics*. It is true that speech act theory showed that propositional (truthfunctionally described) meaning is not the only kind of meaning expressed in natural language. But on the other hand the way in which propositional and illocutionary meaning *combine* remain to a large extent unclassified' (*my italics*).

Thus, on the level of semantically specified logical form 'Paul met the woman of his life and married' vs. 'Paul married and met the woman of his life' are semantically equivalent. They have the same logical form. And this is the problem of the compositionality of meaning that Franck finds in trying to explain sufficiently how 'It is cold in here' can come to be a *request* rather than an *assertion*.

Note also that the 'virtutes elocutionis' (among them: *aptum* as the most general norm of situational and contextual dependency; *latinitas* as linguistic correctness; *perspicuitas* as clarity or intelligibility for the hearer) which Franck (1981:234) takes from classical Roman rhetoric (to show their closeness to what is postulated in Grice's Co-Operative Principle) would, on the word level, be pretty much what an old style etymology tries to secure. It is here that Cicero's remark from his *Topica* (§35) fits in. He states that the etymology of a term may be of help to the orator in finding ideas about the topic at hand. Cited after Ochs (1995).

<sup>18</sup> FZ.I translate the German 'Geist' as 'collective consciousness'. 'Geist' refers here to an intersubjective mentality, not a subjective mentality that one would refer to by choosing 'mind' or simply 'consciousness'.

*Es gibt indes eine aus der philologischen Tradition der historischen Semantik hervorgegangene geistesgeschichtliche Form der Bedeutungsgeschichte, die bis heute einen eigenen Platz zwischen Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft einnimmt. Die Arbeiten aus dieser Richtung sind oft eher essayistisch als streng methodisch ausgerichtet, erfassen aber gerade in dieser offenen Form die Phänomene des Sprachwandels oft subtil und genau. Als Ausgangspunkt dieser ganzen Richtung kann der idealistische Neuphilologe Karl Vossler (1913) gelten, der die Sprache als Ausdruck des Geistes einer Nation und einer Epoche begriff.*

<sup>19</sup> Jay's quote is from Williams (1976:13). To balance the picture, there is also a French tradition (centrally: Foucault), of which both Stierle (Germany) and Jay (U.S.A.) are aware. However, it seems fair to say that Stierle in 1978 is not aware of Williams, yet.

<sup>20</sup> Three constituents give you a finite number of combinations if binary features (OK, NO) are applied and the order treated as irrelevant, as is the case in mere structural addition. The long version of the matrix is this (Pragma-Dialectical standards):

Situational Features			Minimum Quality of Result
Presence of:			
Etymology	Definition	Criticality	
OK	OK	OK	<i>Bad by standards</i>
<b>OK</b>	<b>OK</b>	<b>NO</b>	Lived-praxis
OK	NO	OK	Not bad in principle
OK	NO	NO	Amusement
<b>NO</b>	<b>OK</b>	<b>OK</b>	<i>Good by standards</i>
NO	OK	NO	Amusement
NO	NO	OK	Self-deception
NO	NO	NO	?

<sup>21</sup> Hamblin lists *etymology* in the book's index, references the page above and the index-entry 'Figure of Speech' (p.320). Figure of Speech then refers you to 11 single pages distributed across a 300 page book.

<sup>22</sup> Cited after Hutton (1998), same as the following quote from Lyons.

<sup>23</sup> Please take a second to look at Chrystal's last sentence that I separate into the relevant parts of speech and endow with agreement-features after the relevant terms:

[SENTENCE The common belief that [NP the etymology of a lexeme (UNSPECIFIED FOR NUMBER, ) can be determined by investigating [NP ANAPHORIC PRONOUN their] origins (MARKED FOR PLURAL)].

Thus, the backward-referring anaphoric pronoun remains without a proper noun-phrase to agree with. And this is either a typo (he meant to write 'lexemes' or 'its origin') or Chrystal (somehow and implicitly) understands either etymology or lexeme (or etymology of a lexeme) to be a plural(istic) term, to begin with. Since this is not central, I suggest we take it to be a typo.

<sup>24</sup> Right away, the objection is the following: French *liberté* is English *liberty* and German *Liberalität* and not English *freedom* and German *Freiheit*. But here, you are only looking at the surface form and state what is similar on the linguistic surface. Yet, what meanings the terms have and, in distinct (nation-cultural) developments have come to have, requires the sort of study that finds relatedness by coming from the side of the meaning and not from the side of the terms.

Note also, that a common European tradition of understanding the term *freedom* in contrast to an American tradition as I describe it here (free individual choice versus individual burden) contrasts distinctly with an Eastern or oriental tradition in which subjects comprehend their *freedom* as their contingency. Compare Northrop (1959, 1947) *The Logic of the Sciences and the Humanities*, especially the last four chapters, pp.328-399 and Northrop (1946), titled *The Meeting of East and West*.

Given the historic and substantial overlap of Popper's and Northrop's work, it seems worthwhile to compare their standpoints to eventually integrate what Popper offers in criticism of the Social Sciences and the Humanities with the solutions that Northrop offers. Northrop, and that seems crucial, has the cultural knowledge about the Orient that Popper lacks.

<sup>25</sup> When Kaptein speaks of 'just using the terms' we would technically translate that into 'just mentioning the terms' and retain 'use' for the referentially employed language use, although Kaptein is, of course, pointing to material changes in the body of particular laws and particular applications of these laws that simply do not change if the terms, in which the laws are phrased, were replaced.

But then, how is change brought about if not by enacting what the used term means, or shall we say demands?

<sup>26</sup> Neologisms, the outcomes of the coining of new terms, are both creative expression and need-based product: A term for aeroplanes becomes necessary when aeroplanes become possible, at which point the term airplane, Greek *aero* 'air' + Latin(?) *planus* 'flat' (or French *avion*, German *Flugzeug*) becomes conditionally relevant. It is a

conditionally relevant form against the background of a naming-praxis that uses Greek and Latin forms to label the artefacts of man's knowledge.

<sup>27</sup> The lack of restraint on the dynamics of the term-meaning relation may very well be regarded as an indicator for the informal character of my present discourse. How to enjoy the Friday post-colloq discussion, or any better party at that, if I was to use my terms and understand theirs in a static term-to-meaning relation?

<sup>28</sup> I borrow *luxation* from medicine where it denotes the over-stretching of a band, say the crossband over your knee-plates. *Distorsion* is the name for the state in which a band is torn. In the metaphor, then, the distorsion is the pathological case. A luxation reminds you of what the pathological case can be like.

<sup>29</sup> Construing some such thing as 'definiteness of the meaning of key-terms' and then claiming that, because we have a grammatical noun-phrase, there would be a state with such characteristics is, of course, Hypostatization on the dangers of which Crawshaw-Williams (1947) spends, I believe, too many pages.

He also extends the reach of the concept Hypostatization by far too wide and misses the crucial insight that logic involves hypostatization at a very basic level. Without generalising over things to then hypostatize the class over these things *into* a manipulatable and rule-abiding second-order-thing, I would have no take on what I hypostatized *from* anymore.

Then, logic would literally be a purely symbolic system with no take on anything non-symbolic. If so, either every thing is symbolic or the application of logic in, say, computer-technology or hypothetical reasoning in the course of falsifying results or method of an empirical investigation would seem awkwardly inappropriate and only contingently relevant.

And this is not the criticism of a view that has logic work pragmatically, if you like. If it works, fine. Who wants to know why? It is a criticism of a transposition from a valid criticism in regard to the ends and possibilities of the conceptual exercise of hypostatization to metaphysical thought per se.

<sup>30</sup> Their tripartite classification has the following headings: *Material Fallacies* (Trouble with Propositions vs. Trouble with Constructions), *Psychological Fallacies* (Emotional Coloration; Misusing Authority; Stirring Up Prejudice; Rationalizations and Lip Service; Biased Misconstructions; Diversions) and *Logical Fallacies*.

Interestingly, the logical fallacies are not further distinguished. Rather they are preceded by a seven page introduction (Logical Truth vs. Validity) and then ordered from '41. The undistributed middle term (...) 43. Non sequitur; (...) 45 Ambiguous Terms; (...) 47. Ambiguous Accent; (...) 49. Circular Definitions and question begging. From the specific to the unspecified, so to speak.

The title page bears a quote from Schopenhauer: 'it would be a very good thing if every trick could receive some short and obvious name, so that when a man used this or that particular trick, he could at once be reproved for it.' The quote, as well as other named sources, are not referenced. Only Plato and Aristotle, it seems, are cited by name and that of their works. It is a book without a bibliography.

<sup>31</sup> I use informative in a strictly defined technical sense. Something is informative for whatever purpose when it can be used to reduce uncertainty. This is a definition borrowed from computer-science and ultimately from information-theory.

<sup>32</sup> Cited after Gadamer (1997, 1989<sup>1</sup>) *Hermeneutic and Ontological Difference*.

<sup>33</sup> The first bible translation (from Latin into German) and recorded printing stems from Luther and Gutenberg in the 15th century. The first authoritative texts were the copies of the bible, at least in terms of semantics, if not in terms of law. Etymology as bible interpretation is situated right there. To know the meaning of the ancient texts and to communicated the relevance of what was back then to what is today is a shared task between the priest and the idealized historically and socially informed scientist, that Bacon advocated as the model for a new natural science. Compare Pökelharing (in press).

Where the media evolved shows McLuhan (1972). The critical modern stance is found centrally in Bagdikian (2000, 1983<sup>1</sup>) who locates the 1990s European media-mergers in the, then, *de facto* already performed 1980s American family buy-out, that left only one of roughly 100 family owned businesses (Newhouse Corp.) in what shrank from a 7 player American to by now a 3, maximally 5 player corporate share-holder valued global media-market.

<sup>34</sup> Exactly where that structural thought came from is just as difficult as answering what came from means *here*. I have, at this point, no good explanation, only hunches, which is why this is a footnote and not body text:

It is not for no reason that it is a structural language that makes a computer work. Can we imagine a primarily non-structurally organized sign-manipulation system? The 'essential' morphological rule in both contemporary linguistics and the computer-science, which is a mathematical system, is *addition*.

In computer science, a processor adds and simulates all other functions as products of additions, that is the reductive binary strategy of classical logic, only less open. The processor speed, measured in Hertz (being the unit for identifying the conditions under which macro-level measurement of physical time becomes possible) is the index for the number of additions in a second.

In Linguistics, particularly Syntactic Theory, the Noun-Phrase still attaches, in semantic magic, to the VP (X-Bar theory does the same and is only less semantically interested than Generative Syntax -- Chomsky's New Testament being that which X-Bar Theory replaced). Semantically, word meaning still *adds* to sentence meaning. This is why practical applications of computerized natural language processing models currently can reside at no higher interactional level than that of making a business appointment.

Translation programs *prove* dogmatically inflexible or conventional-meaning biased in their result, but never right on, qualitatively speaking. (Compare the popular translation service running technology from a company called Systran in Bavaria, Germany, BabelFish on [www.altavista.com](http://www.altavista.com)).

The language-critically most relevant outcome of structural semantics is what goes as the discrepancy between the locution and illocution in Speech-Act Theory. It is difficult not to see the same assumptions at work. This is not to say that making these assumptions is not permissible. But they are introduced almost a-historically and have severe repercussions insofar as it becomes awfully difficult to mean *exactly* what one says when I always have to presume that my opponent reconstructs my intention instead of listening to what I say. Lived-praxis in general turns into an irrationally praxis. I claim, not against that but in *addition*, that there is, of course, a distinct history to the use of structural thought in modern analyses of language. For what the author has presently researched that history still remains to be written. It would have to be

written critically out of the observations of lived praxis of 20th century scientific institutions.

It would be, in my phantasy, praxis under an ethno-methodologically inspired description (in contrast to one formulated in terms of scientific ideology about objectivity, meaning and truth) and reachable by co-operatively attempted self-reflexion of the scientist's methodological preferences, choices and (where applicable) lack of, now, not hypo-, not hyper-, but exactly critical edge justifications. It would be the self-reflexion of Academia in the 20th century, it's linguistic turn, so to speak.

<sup>35</sup> The supreme court is the institution for infallibility by being the highest institution. Its finality of judgement is its infallibility by virtue of being the last to answer. Compare Gaskin (1992).

<sup>36</sup> It is worthwhile to regard Malkiel's statement on the job-description of a 2002 A. C. etymologist through the foil provided by Habermas' (1989, 1972<sup>1</sup>) *Wahrheitstheorien* (Theories of Truth) to find an example of a scientific praxis that, upon reflexion, regards itself as *de facto* following a consensus theory of truth in regard to methodology and tenability of outcomes, yet retains the correspondence theory of truth for the object of study, namely structured linguistic surface form reconstructed linguistic meaning *composita*.

Habermas' article is *the*, some say, relevant text for the modern continental philosophical criticism of the empiricist, rationalist, and also critical-rationalist epistemological tradition, if not tradition per se. He argues for a consensus-theory of truth and rejects the correspondence theory that Popper favors.

Compare Popper's (1976:98) statement that the 'much maligned correspondence theory of truth [...] is and always has been the commonsense idea of truth'. For the locus of the correspondence theory in the critical rationalist tradition, find a footnote on meta-level semantics below, and eventually, find the motivation for staying at the term-to-meaning relation in this thesis.

<sup>37</sup> An example of folk-etymology would be this: In New Orleans, USA, the Mississippi's autumn flood of crabs are termed *crayfish* (singular and plural), or more locally, *craw-daddies*, a word rarely found in writing for its biological implications: culturally, *Dad* is singular.

Semantically, *Dad*, as the instantiation of an NP in a constituent-tree, would not go unmarked for plural, but marked for singular (Programmers say *flagged*). New Orleans is historically and trade-wise a mitigated Catholicism, watch the artefacts in the Mardi-Grass carnival-parades.

The French, now, know the small lobster-looking beast, served spicy and all red, as *crevice* (English: genus is *crab*, German *Fluss-Krabbe*). So, *crevice* becomes *crayfish*. Presently, the French are still known for their *cuisine* and the code Napoleon that the State of Louisiana retains as its primary legal code. And mistitting so too, as it features the objectively measurable second-worst public education system in the United States of America, after Arkansas.

<sup>38</sup> While my Word processor has no problems with *deceivability*, it cannot handle *non-perceivability*. Fancy a custom tailored spell-checker, were the data available, could be analysed, backwardly if you like, for what was put into the list. Imagine a comparative study between the custom-tailored spellcheckers of two departments that currently debate an issue. Do you have ethical problems to run an experiment. Why? Imagine, no, what kind of bias do we expect?

<sup>39</sup> Compare Popper (1976:113 - 120), the only chapter in italics on the contents-page, where he treads off the objection that his own translations of Plato were biased by saying: 'But there are no unbiased translations of Plato and, I suggest, there can be none. Shorey's is one of the few which has no liberal bias, because he accepted Plato's politics, in the same sense, approximately, in which I rejected them' (p.119). That is an interesting reply. It points us to the same methodologically necessitated, *naturalizable disagreement* over interpretations that we found in etymology. And it is clear why. They are the same object to which the same methodological criticism applies. Translation like etymology is semantics under man's power.

<sup>40</sup> *Die totalitäre Tendenz in Platons politischer Philosophie ist es, die Ich zu analysieren und zu kritisieren versuchen werde.*

<sup>41</sup> The Subtitle is missing from the front-cover of the 1977 German UTB-Francke edition out of which I cite and re-translate from German to English. 'Der Zauber Platons' sits on the second page, though, and German *Zauber* is English *Magic* while English *Spell* would be German *Fluch*. The second volume is, in Poppers words, a criticism mainly of Marxism. Popper is sometimes said to have shown that Marxism, in its concrete post-WW2 manifestations in the Soviet Union, is instable by virtue of being a totalitarian form of political government. The fall of the Soviet Union in the wake of 1998 is sometimes said to have confirmed him. Popper would have to reject the idea of verification, though.

The first German edition of The Open Society appears 1957. That the original English first edition appears after the WW2 is a result of failed attempts to publish the book. After completion of the manuscript in 1943 it was sent to America, Popper does not mention to whom. At least not in his autobiography. They did not react at all for many months (...). (1976:119). The book is finally published a year later with the help of Gombrich and Hayek that Popper knew from the Wiener Kreis.

The 1977 German edition is the fifth since 1957 and contains, as dedication, a memorial speech on the occasion of Immanuel Kant's 150th. decease, held by Popper on a London Radio station on the 12 February 1955. That would be the BBC, back then. Educational department, one supposes. He bases himself on Kant as the critical architect of enlightenment to point to the opposite of what Popper perceived in the 1950 foreword to the American edition, namely 'the darkness of the current world-situation'.

The open society is one of 'freedom of domination and of prejudice'. And Popper locates the troubles of enlightenment progressing into an open society thus: 'All needs and troubles (...) are the consequences of our impatient attempts of improving the fate of our citizens (...). these troubles are a corollary effect of a movement that symbolised perhaps one of the greatest moral and intellectual movements in our history, a movement that started 300 years ago' (1974:8).

*(...) alle Nöte und Schwierigkeiten (...) sind die Folge unseres ungeduldligen Bemühens, das Los unserer Mitmenschen zu verbessern (...). diese Schwierigkeiten sind eine Begleiterscheinung einer Bewegung, die vielleicht die grösste aller moralischen und geistigen Revolutionen unserer Geschichte darstellt, eine Bewegung, die vor dreihundert Jahren begann.*

So, counting 300 back from 1950, what is around 1650? 1633 -- Galileo reitues in front of the inquisition: Hardy. 1641 -- Descartes publishes his Meditations: Could be, yes. 1644 -- Chinas last Kaiser commits suicide: Certainly No! 1648 -- Spain accepts the Northern Netherlands independence: Hm... 1649 -- Karl I. of England is

massacred. England under Oliver Cromwell is the first modern republic. Could be. 1651 -- Hobbes publishes the church-critical Leviathan. Could not without the revolution: No. 1660 -- Restoration of the English Monarchy under Karl II: That quickly... No. 1666 -- Newton formulates the gravitational laws: Yes, I would think. Let's see what else. 1679 - Habes Corpus enacted in England. Good, otherwise: No. 1685 -- Louis XIV sends the Huguenots into emigration. Interesting for the Absinth case, other-wise: No. 1687 -- Newton publishes his three laws of mechanics: Yes, again. 1688 -- The glorious revolution. England is from now on Protestant under Wilhelm the III, a Dutch. 1689 -- The Zar takes power over Russia. No. It is Descartes and Newton, then. Modern scientific thought finds a reference for its young history.

<sup>42</sup> *Ich verwerde den Namen methodologischer Essentialismus (oder Wesenslehre), um eine von Platon und vielen Nachfolgern vertretene Ansicht zu charakterisieren. Nach dieser Ansicht besteht die Aufgabe des reinen Wissens oder der Wissenschaft in der Entdeckung und Beschreibung der wahren Nature der Dinge, das heisst in der Entdeckung und Beschreibung ihrer verborgenen Realität oder Essenz. Für Platon ist die Ansicht charakteristisch, dass sich das Wesen wahrnehmbarer Dinge in anderen und in höherem Grade wirklichen Dingen, in ihren Ahnherren oder Formen auffinden lasse. Viele der späteren methodologischen Essentialisten, zum Beispiel Aristoteles, folgten ihm nicht zu Gänze; aber sie alle stimmen mit ihm insofern überein, dass sie die Entdeckung der verborgenen Natur oder Form oder Essenz zur Aufgabe der reinen Wissenschaft machten. Auch folgten alle methodologischen Essentialisten Platon in der Annahme, dass es möglich sei, diese Essenzen mit Hilfe der intellektuellen Intuition zu erkennen und zu unterscheiden, sowie in der Annahme, dass jede Essenz einen ihr eigenümlichen Namen besitzt, den Namen, nach dem die wahrnehmbaren Dinge genannt werden, und dass sie sich in Worten beschreiben lasse. Und sie alle nennen die Beschreibung der Essenz eines Dinges eine Definition.*

<sup>43</sup> *(...) Und wenn wir den Namen erhalten und nach der Definition gefragt werden, oder wenn wir die Definition erhalten und nach dem Namen gefragt werden, dann sprechen wir in beiden Fällen von einem und demselben Wesen, ob wir es nun gerade oder Zahl, teilbar in gleiche Teile nennen'. Nach diesem Beispiel geht Platon daran, diese Methode auf einen Beweis der wirklichen Natur der Seele anzuwenden, von dem wir später noch mehr hören werden.*

<sup>44</sup> At this point, Popper has the following footnote 27: 'The theory hinted at here is that of semantics, as developed by A. Tarski and subsequently by R. Carnap. Compare Carnap, *Introduction to Semantics*, and Ch. 8, Note. 23.'

*Die hier angeedeutete Theorie ist die der Semantik, so wie Sie von A. Tarski und im Anschluss an ihn von R. Carnap entwickelt worden ist. Vgl. Carnap, *Introduction to Semantics*, sowie Kap. 8, Anm. 23.*

In this footnote 23, then, Popper explicitly declares himself a believer in the correspondence-theory of truth '(...)' which matches the general idea that a sentence is true if and only if it corresponds to the fact that it describes.'

*(...) die mit der allgemeinen Idee übereinstimmt, dass ein Satz dann und nur dann wahr ist, wenn er mit den Tatsachen übereinstimmt, die er beschreibt.*

Further down the footnote appears Carnaps *Introduction to Semantics* again and Russell's criticism of the pragmatic theory of truth is cited thus: 'The pragmatic theory of truth (which derives from Hegelianism) was criticized by Russell from the standpoint of an absolutist theory of truth already in 1907; and recently he pointed out

the relation between a relativistic theory of truth and fascism. Compare Russell, *Let People Think* 77 and 79.

*Die Pragmatische Theorie der Wahrheit (die sich vom Hegelianismus herleitet) wurde von Russell vom Standpunkt einer absolutistischen Wahrheitstheorie bereits im Jahre 1907 kritisiert; und jüngst hat er dem Zusammenhang zwischen einer relativistischen Wahrheitstheorie und dem Glaubensbekenntnis des Faschismus aufgeführt. Vgl. Russell, Let People Think 77 und 79.*

One can only excuse it by assuming good intentions. Popper citing Russell as having shown what he claims amounts to the drawing of arguments from a historicism that Popper rejects in principle, although the result fitted the critique, no doubt. Nazi-Germany is besieging most of central Europe by 1943. England is left, the Winter in Russia is a cold one, the U.S.A. enters the 'total war' (Quote Goebbels, the Reichs-Propaganda-Minister). 1945 is the year of the bomb.

*46 Der methodologische Essentialismus, die Theorie also, dass es das Ziel der Wissenschaften sei, Wesenheiten zu enthüllen und mit Hilfe von Definitionen zu beschreiben, lässt sich besser verstehen, wenn wir ihm seinen Widerpart, den methodologischen Nominalismus gegenüberstellen. Der methodische Nominalismus stellt sich nicht die Aufgabe, die wahre Natur eines Dinges ausfindig zu machen und zu definieren; es ist vielmehr sein Ziel, das Verhalten eines Dinges unter verschiedenen Umständen zu beschreiben und insbesondere anzugeben, ob diese Verhalten irgendwelche Regelmäßigkeiten aufweist. Mit anderen Worten: der methodische Nominalismus sieht das Ziel der Wissenschaft in der Beschreibung der Gegenstände und Ereignisse unserer Erfahrung und in einer Erklärung dieser Ereignisse, das heißt in ihrer Beschreibung mit Hilfe universeller Gesetze. Unsere Sprache und insbesondere diejenige ihrer Regeln, die wohlkonstruierte Sätze und Schlüsse von einer blossen Anhäufung von Werten unterscheiden, sind für ihn das grossartige Instrument wissenschaftlicher Beschreibung; die Worte hält er für Hilfswerkzeuge zur Durchführung dieser Aufgabe und nicht für Namen und Wesenheiten.*

<sup>46</sup> Cited after Ochs (1995).

*47 (...) der methodologisch Nominalismus ist heutzutage in den Naturwissenschaften ziemlich allgemein akzeptiert. Auf der anderen Seite werde die Probleme der Sozialwissenschaften noch immer zum grossen Teil mit essentialistischen Methoden behandelt. Das ist meiner Meinung nach einer der Hauptgründe ihrer Rückständigkeit. Aber viele Denker, die diese Situation bemerkt haben, fällen ein anderes Urteil. Sie halten die Unterscheidung der Methoden für notwendig, und sie glauben, dass er eine wesentliche Verschiedenheit zwischen den Naturen dieser beiden Untersuchungsfelder widerspiegelt.*

<sup>48</sup> Crashay-Williams (1947) does not reference Popper, but instead Pareto's distinction between 'logico-experimental' and 'non-logico-experimental sciences' to differentiate between objectively and subjectively proceeding sciences. Pareto calls them the two worlds, respectively, that have nothing to do with each other' (Compare footnote 1 on page 100). Popper eventually comes to rely on a three-part distinction, adding the world of theory to mediate between the world 1 of physical states and the world 2 of psychological states as a world 3 of objective insights.

<sup>49</sup> *Es besteht kein Bedürfnis zur Annahme, dass Sokrates jene Begriffe bei der Suche nach ihrer unwandelbaren oder essentialen Bedeutung personalisiert oder dass er sie*

*wie Dinge behandelt hat. Zumindest legt es der Bericht des Aristoteles nahe, dass er nicht so vorgegangen ist und dass es Platon war, der die Methode des Sokrates, nach der Bestimmung der realen Natur zu suchen, zu einer Methode der Bestimmung der realen Natur, der Form oder Idee eines Dinges weiterentwickelte.*

<sup>50</sup> In respect to hands: G.E. Moore, at one point, rejects scepticism in respect to the reality of an outside objective world by saying 'Here is one hand and here is another hand. Therefore, the outside world exists.' And that works, it is very convincing.

In a debate, this move would obviously at least imply an ontological statement: Or is this an ontological act? What constitutes and perpetuates distinct ontological realms if not a shared belief in the usability and, therefore, the justifiedness of ontological statements. Shared ontology seems to necessarily presupposes agreement.

<sup>51</sup> *Adequatio intellectus et rei* is the Latin phrase. It is central that Thomas Aquinas termed it such, because occidental theistic religion (Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, basically, for our region, as well as Judaism and Mohammedism further East, though for Judaism the eastern location-specification is a very problematic modern invention) find their *metaphysically interested* intellectual main-thinker in Thomas. And Thomas works with what he finds in classical thought. In respect to the correspondence theory of truth, he finds it in Plato's theory of forms (in the real physical world) and metaphysical ideas (as the model for every existing forms essential nature).

It is worth keeping in mind that the term *metaphysics* was coined by medieval monks who had the task to preserve, order and arrange the inherited knowledge. In particular, the Aristotelian works that are said to have been written historically later than the works in which he writes about the physical aspects of man and nature, were termed such: *meta + physics*. What comes after the *physics* in historical chronology and what goes *beyond physical reality* content-wise. That in turn is not so much an interesting fact about the chronology of Aristotle's writings and intellectual development, but about the factual naming processes and the motivation thereof that the monks may be said to have exhibited.

Alternatively, it is an interesting fact about the construction of a reconstructed naming praxis ascribed to monks and the motivation for construing that reconstruction and not another as explanation for the fact that we still know Aristotle's *Physics* as a work and use the term *metaphysical* to refer to, contemporarily it seems, something close to 'the Fichte-end of German idealism'.

And right here you touch what Hutton calls 'etymologizing': a subjectively propelled reflexion onto language approached as a shared dialect and private idiolect in looking for the last objectivity-promising candidate after Wittgenstein. That objectivity, though, would not be found by reducing language down to addable structural descriptions and mathematical modes of composition. You could compare your structural description to it, maybe.

Habermas (1984, 1972): 'Epistemological criticism performs itself as a substantial criticism of language: [Erkenntniskritik vollzieht sich in Form einer substantiellen Sprachkritik.] His example: The tenability of an empirical research is judged in the non-empirical criticism of its claims' and methods' justifiedness.

<sup>52</sup> That level, though, is adequate to distil the criteria, because it is the level at which our criticism takes place. Popper (1976:99) is quite clear about the scope: Tarski's object vs. meta-language distinction (if Carnap called the meta-language 'Syntax' or Tarski 'Semantics') was [...] confined to formalized languages, and could not, as Tarski had

shown, be applied to ordinary language (with its *universalistic* character' (*his italics*). That means here: not applicable as a descriptively adequate model.

Directly following the above quote, Popper states: 'Nevertheless it was clear that we could learn from Tarski's analysis how to use, with a little care, the notion of truth in ordinary discourse, and to use it, moreover, in its ordinary sense -- as correspondence to facts' (*my italics*). The definiteness of the formalized language, here, is the model that can inform and, in Poppers view, guide us in the use of terms in discussions.

It is now only a small stretch to understand exactly how a term can come to have a literal or original meaning. The definite meaning that corresponds to the term *on the word-level* is the necessary presupposition for the definite description (pragmatically: Name, functionally: identified *thing*, grammatically: subject) or proposition (pragmatically: Judgement, functionally: Assertion about Subject, grammatically: object) on the *sentence-level* which corresponds or fails to correspond to the fact. But this fact, now, is extra-linguistic, yet described intensionally. It all happens on the meta-level. 'Correspondence does not involve structural similarity between a statement and a fact, or anything like the scene and the scene depicted' (p. 142). Correspondence is not structural mimesis.

Moving from object to meta-language, and back, is a move that allows you to speak of something to be true in a theory, a move that allows you to formulate hypothetical statements by stipulation or axiomatically and say what their truth conditions are: The German statement: *Grass ist grün* corresponds to the fact if and only if *Grass is green*.

And it would be foolish if it allowed you to say what would be true in the ontological region which your *object* language referenced. Thus, all meaning here is intensional. And this is fine because what *would/be* the transposed referent of an intensionally defined meta-level sign happens to be the same as its extension: you reach the meaning both ways, so to speak, and only the meaning and never the world. This is pragmatically justified methodological solipsism and it works. Look at your computer.

Finally, Popper (1976:143) on the relevance of the exercise: 'The most significant application of the correspondence theory is not to specific statements like 'Grass is red' or 'Grass is green', but to the descriptions of general logical *situations*' (*my italics*).

Thus, on the meta-level, there is a very simple and clear sense in which terms can come to have definite meanings. These meanings are intensionally specified, that is without direct reference to what they refer to ontologically in the object language. And that, again, does not imply that all terms have no referents in the object language. On the contrary, some will and some will not. But the idea seems to be that the *judgement whether I do refer to a fact* by saying 'Grass is red' must still be the result of an inquiry into grass, colour terms, perception and linguistic usage.

The fact, the object language mentioning of the fact and the meta-language intensional specification of the meaning of asserting an object language term or sentence *corroborate*. They make sense of the exercise in combination and only in combination and only for the purpose of using that combination. This is pragmatic contextualism.

<sup>55</sup> There remains to be drawn a constituent tree diagram for the sentence in generative grammar old and new. Then to be seen what you miss in terms of rules to describe the well-formedness and ponder about whether what you *de facto* have, then, put in subject position is not an entirely arbitrary result that happened to conform to the rules that, while you came up with them, fitted those you had in place already rather nicely.

<sup>54</sup> I borrow *referential* vs. *poetic* function from Ogden and Richards (1985, 1923<sup>1</sup>) and think that, if anyone ever wants to force the first binary modern distinction into language, it should be this one. Their reference model is criticised for being behaviourist and psychologizing, but they are early on among the English writers to adopt the semiotic triangle, although Saussure is not in their index.

<sup>55</sup> Cited after Menne (1974).

<sup>56</sup> In respect to natural language categorization see Taylor (1989) and Lakoff (1985). Prototypical categorization has fuzzy edges and is situational. Yet, the recognition and naming of colour terms are especially interesting because empirically backed by biological research. This research spells out implicational hierarchies over culturally varying colour-term sets. Agreement on the best instantiation (the focal colour), is claimed by speakers across cultures, if or not the native culture has a term for the color. Taylor (1989) describes it.

<sup>57</sup> There is an avenue here to understand what Frege (1892<sup>1</sup>) means in his *sense* vs. *reference* (Sinn vs. Bedeutung) distinction for proper names. The meaning (German *Bedeutung*, where *auf etwas deuten* is English *pointing to something*, while *auf etwas hindeuten* is to *indicate something*) of the proper name is the referent. No problem. Eventually, the meaning (Bedeutung) of the sentence is its truth value (true or false). The sense, now, he gives as: 'The sense of a proper name is the way of its being-given'. [*Der Sinn des Eigennamens ist die Art seines Gegebenseins*.]

If I read 'way of being-given' as *method according to which* some thing is, not named, but situationally identified -- co-operatively located in dialectical disagreement space -- I have what would be interesting to look further into. The sense vs. reference distinction was never popular in the English reception, because Frege was not clear about it, either.

It might also point to a *name* being understood not as the outcome of a *man-made* process, but rather as an arbitrarily assigned label by I forgot who it was.

For the U.S.A. in particular, that would be largely false. At the time of immigration into Ellis Island, New York, most European immigrants had their names officially Americanised and that means -- in the happy situations -- morphed into the phonetically available *next best representation* of their original names. Another, somewhat different case, of sound change.

So some names do show some traces of history. Why not say: Names are situationally assigned. And some names you can read for the method that the taxonomists employed, out of which you have one term to look at. That is measuring and fine-tuning vocabulary and the underlying method is that of correspondence. You have two only hands and these you try to put into balance.