

# “What the Picture Tells Me Is Itself”: The Reflexivity of Knowledge between Brandom and Wittgenstein

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## §1. Introduction

**T**HE SAYING “WHAT THE PICTURE TELLS ME is itself” appears repeatedly in Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Grammar* (1974, pp. 165, 169), particularly with respect to the matters of *re*-presentation and *re*-cognition. Arguably, this happens as a part of the re-evaluation of Wittgenstein’s earlier model of knowledge in which a sentence, described as a picture, re-presents some pre-given part of the world, the empirical fact. Wittgenstein’s change of view is accompanied by examples from art, such as the genre-picture that typically “tells me something even though I do not believe [...] for a moment that the people I see in it really exist, or that there have been people in that situation” (Wittgenstein 1974, p. 164). Transposed to other domains of experience, such as music, in which the representational model of experience is even more suppressed, this ends up by replacing the original *picture metaphor* with another, more suitable one —namely, the *language game*.

The main objective of my paper is to focus on this transfer from the picture metaphor to the game metaphor within Wittgensteinian thinking, including its significant elaboration by Brandom, and read it, rather than as a mere replacement, as a continuous transformation of the *representational* model of knowledge that stands for something else —such as facts of the world— into the *reflexive* model which stresses the self-standing and closed nature of knowledge or human experience in general. In the end, the *picture metaphor* shall appear as a suitable label for a single project that both Brandom and Wittgenstein work on together by going back to the very idealist concept of *reflexive* philosophy, i.e. philosophy that

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puts reflexivity at the centre of dealing with human knowledge. The motto “What the picture tells me is itself” represents then the standpoint of the linguistically interpreted “absolute Spirit”, i.e. the community of language users that in their communications do not have any goals outside of the community itself.

## § 2. Silenced Picture

### § 2.1. *Differenzschrift*

Let me start with the very idea of reflexive philosophy. This paradigm of knowledge is phrased in a particularly perspicuous way within Hegel’s *Differenzschrift* (1977) in which the goal of philosophy is set as a transformation of the *subject–object difference* (S–O) into the *subject–subject identity* (S–S) and the corresponding models of human experience. The arch of Hegel’s narrative is stretched between two piers: The first is the moment in which the “natural consciousness” finds out that its opposition towards the external world (S–O) is made within consciousness itself (S–S). The second is the observation that this opposition can still be kept, as a relative and self–developing difference, between what this world is for consciousness and what it is in itself which, though, is meaningful and articulable only for consciousness. The important twist to come later is that this latter consciousness is the consciousness of another person. That transposes the private S–S difference into the social space of two different subjects (S–S’).

In Wittgenstein, notably, the same evolutionary pattern from the S–O to the S–S model of knowledge is anticipated in *Tractatus* (1922), and then with its S–S’ recalibration in *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) within the so–called private language argument. I will come to this social aspect of Wittgenstein’s philosophy later, in section 5, but will focus now on the *Tractatus*.

As is well known, *Tractatus’* explanatory frame heavily builds upon the S–O difference between *my* language and the corresponding world. The rest is as follows: First, as Wittgenstein says, the given correspondence must be guaranteed by something shared by both sides of the difference, and this is the *pictorial form* or the *form of representation* (Wittgenstein 1922, § 2.17). Second, this form makes the sides of the difference quite homogenous (S = O), as expressed in Wittgenstein’s claim that the picture of fact differs from a mere thing by being the fact itself and *vice versa*: the depicted fact is the picture of the original picture conceived as a fact (Wittgenstein 1922, § 3.14). Between these two pillars, now, the Hegelian arch can be built.

The corresponding reflective turn to the S–S difference comes forward in the following quote concerning the analysis of sentences dealing with the S–O difference

itself, such as "A believes that  $p$ ", etc.:

It is clear, however, that "A believes that  $p$ ", "A has the thought  $p$ ", and "A says  $p$ " are of the form " $p$  says  $p$ ": and this does not involve a correlation of a fact with an object, but rather the correlation of facts by means of the correlation of their objects. (Wittgenstein 1922, § 5.542)

Taking into account that to picture reality one must compare two facts, the picture itself and what is depicted by that, one has the Hegelian in-itself as knowledge's own measure as compared with what the knowledge is for itself. In Hegel's words:

Consciousness in its own self provides its own standard, and the investigation will thereby be a comparison of it with itself, for the difference which has just been made falls within consciousness. (Hegel 2018, § 84)

Combined with the previous remarks, a similar idea might be found in *Tractatus* and its dictum that the picture "is laid against reality like a measure" (Wittgenstein 1922, §§ 2.1512–2.15121).

## § 2.2. *Tractatus*

In the *Tractatus*, of course, the given comparison is something that cannot be talked about but only shown by way of suitable S–O relations. These are captured exclusively by claims about empirical facts since the only meaningful thing one can do is to talk about the world. In this talk, though, the reflexive dimension is present all the time because it is the subject that is talking and provides for the comparison of linguistic with empirical facts. That's why the limits of my language mean the limits of my world (Wittgenstein 1922, § 5.6). Wittgenstein's later talk about philosophical grammar is another way of illustrating the same point: though being a necessary constituent of every speech, the grammar is not its object, that which this speech is about, but something which is simply presupposed in it.

The transformation of Wittgenstein I into Wittgenstein II consists in the insight that this *implicit*, transcendental concept of knowledge is inadequate according to its own S–O measure. When talking about the objective world, one cannot avoid talking about oneself (or the talk's grammar) as a part of this world, thus arriving at various kinds of paradoxes, such as those of Zeno, Kant or Russell. The simplest one is as follows: in saying that "the predicate cannot occur as a subject in a sentence", I am violating the given principle in its very wording.

It is not difficult to see that these antinomies stem from the mixture of two different roles adopted by the subject within the S–S difference, namely the subjective (S–S) one and the objective (S–S) one —named the empirical and the transcendental ego after Kant. The late Wittgenstein’s standpoint on this situation corresponds to the absolute idealism of Hegel, namely that there is no sense in treating this ambiguity as a mere mistake or systematic delusion of our reason or language to be solved, e.g., by assigning the given ego to the disjoint orders of experience —the empirical and transcendental ones— and by an additional banning of the explicit treatment of the S–S difference from the meaningful speech.

This prohibitive approach was, quite literally, adopted by Kant in his transcendental dialectics and by Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* with its quietist moral of unspeakability. According to Hegel and the late Wittgenstein, what one has to do, on the contrary, is to give up this prohibitional strategy as unsustainable (in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein is obviously forced to talk about things that, as he says, cannot be talked about) and accept the *explicit* version of the S–S model.

This model is based, first, on the re–evaluation of the roles adopted by the subject, to be seen now as relative rather than absolute differences —i.e. the subjective one (for itself) and the objective one (in itself)— that dwell in a constant and mutual exchange. In the second step, this exchange is phrased as based on joining these differences into one, in–and–for–itself, in which, as Brandom (2007) describes it, someone’s self–conception, what he is for himself, becomes part of what he is in itself thus providing for the possibility of “Bildung”, i.e. edification and cultivation by its own resources. This self–creating and self–sustaining property of the human condition is a particularly important part of “What the picture tells me is itself” motto that I will deal with in the next section.

### § 3. Genre–Picture

#### § 3.1. Intransitivity

Let me abandon for a moment this relatively abstract level of thought and illustrate what it is that the “What the picture tells me is itself” dictum might mean in some specific situations. Wittgenstein quite explicitly provides us with such situations when talking about art and, specifically, musical experience. It is no coincidence that, in his late philosophy, music also serves as a rather canonical example for language games.

The reason for this is fairly obvious. Though not pictorial by itself, music is something that one can understand and thus belongs in the broader realm of cognition. At the same time, music also might be thought of as having a certain

representational dimension if taken as an expression of extra-musical emotions. Wittgenstein simply rejects this frequently found idea as follows:

It has sometimes been said that what music conveys to us are feelings of joyfulness, melancholy, triumph etc., etc., and what repels us in this account is that it seems to say that music is an instrument for producing in us sequences of feelings. And from this one might gather that any other means of producing such feelings would do for us instead of music. —To such an account we are tempted to reply "Music conveys to us *itself!*" (Wittgenstein 1958, p. 178)

Here, obviously, "Music conveys to us itself!" is an instantiation of our motto. Its message is also relatively clear, namely that by treating music as merely mediating something pre-existing and extra-musical one makes it replaceable by any cognitive activity achieving the same goal. That is not to say that music does not also refer to something extra-musical, as in symphonic poems or programmatic music in general or in expressing and evoking basic emotions such as sadness or joy. If understood as a phenomenon of its own, however, it can be neither exhausted nor defined by such a reference.

In the paragraphs following the one just quoted, Wittgenstein adds that one can use words such as "express" or "refers" *intransitively*, as opposed to transitive usage such as "the whole face expresses bewilderment". The form is, again, the same: the face's expression is the very expression itself. Transposed to music, this means that one can, besides the basic pre-musical emotions, arrive at emotions *sui generis*, connected essentially to music as a self-standing cognitive form. I will come to music's intransitivity again in section 7 of this paper. What interests me now is that the same, *mutatis mutandis* applies to language in its relation to the extra-linguistic reality.

### § 3.2. Creativity

Let us take, as one often does, language as a mere means of arriving at some independently given goals, such as communication or picturing reality. Brandom criticizes such an instrumental conception of language as follows:

Though linguistic practice does, to be sure, help us in pursuing our ends, the vast majority of those ends are ones we could not so much as *entertain*, never mind secure, apart from our participation in linguistic practice. Most of the things we want to do we can only even *want* to do because we can talk. The very intelligibility of the ends depends on our linguistic capacities. (Brandom 2011, p. 80)

Thus, he stresses not only the intransitivity and reflexivity of language, as Wittgenstein does, but interlinks them with the language's productive powers of achieving new goals by its very means. That brings us back to Wittgenstein's example of the genre-picture (Wittgenstein 1974, p. 164) in which what is depicted does not have to be real—at least not in some direct, typically causal sense of the word. What one has here, on the other hand, is an extension of a directly defined concept of reality that can be called, for lack of a better word, *intentional*.

The important difference between art and the (positive) sciences suggests itself as being modelled on this opposition, in accord with the presupposed descriptive nature of the sciences as opposed to the imaginative power of the arts. Scruton (1988, p. 149) violates this simple division by using the same distinction within art itself as a means to separate "true" art (or its form) from what he believes is only its "parasitic" forms that are causally dependent on the depicted subjects, such as photography and cinema.

I am mentioning this neither because I want to say that photography cannot be art, nor that in the positive sciences one does not have to be creative. My aim is to deconstruct the simplistic idea of experience as directly picturing what is already there. This insight, obviously, is easier to achieve in art than in the natural sciences or everyday life because art is, by its very form, difficult to understand relying on what it causally represents or stands for. One can even say that true art must be conceived in a way which purposefully avoids such a simplistic understanding, though—to give a rather drastic example—one can never exclude situations such as that of the Russian officer who shot Iago during a stage production of Othello because he could not stand his evil plotting any more.

## § 4. Perspectival Picture

### § 4.1. Intentionality

Let us now embed the difference between causal and intentional explanations into the more general problem of relations between S–O and S–S concepts of knowledge. One can start with the insight that the intentional structure of art does not contradict its causal features but adjusts them in a specific way. By painting some bucolic scenery or a portrait of a man, I am, of course, always building on my previous and contingent acquaintance with various kinds of landscapes and people. But if these paintings aspire to be art then what I am doing is more than their representation to my consciousness. Let me roughly identify this additional value of art with the

subjective point of view that is needed to interpret the picture as a picture, i.e. with the intentionality of the whole plan.

It is the very fact that for a thing to *be* a picture I must *see* it as a picture, i.e. that there is the underlying intention, that seems to be responsible for the picture’s ability to loosen the previous causal connection to reality to an arbitrary extent. Even in one of its extremes, to be identified with conceptual or absolute art, the given loosening is only a relative one because no matter how abstract they are, the pieces of art must necessarily manifest themselves in the empirical world (or sensuously shine, as Hegel would say). Thus, one can only differentiate between the higher or lesser adequacy of the given form to the given purpose, as Hegel does in his *Aesthetics* on a scale leading from architecture through sculpture and paintings to music and poetry.

As for the problem of transforming the S–O model of knowledge into the S–S one, one might easily be tempted to start with the idea of picturing something and ask the Tractarian question: What must the picture have in common with the depicted thing? Is it the projective form which somehow always presupposes the subject’s point of view, or can it be captured precisely as it is? As Kvasz (2008, p. 119) pointed out, this

counter–perspectival approach does not work even for the abstract objects of mathematics. Let us think about that.

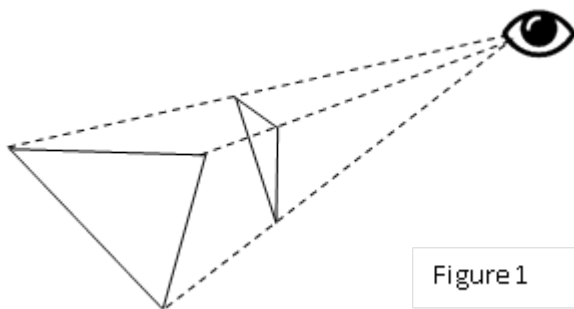


Figure 1

All of the problems with Euclid’s Parallel Postulate, e.g., consist exactly in the tension between such an abstract or conceptual treatment of the

mathematical concepts, such as parallels, and their situatedness in the complex environment, such as the specific plane. If such a plane is seen from a certain angle, the parallels might turn out to be intersecting on the horizon or in the “infinity” defined by the position of the spectator’s view. Consequently, the identity of forms is not to be defined only “in itself”, as they are, but with respect to some common point of view from which they might be seen as identical or overlapping (see Figure 1). This allows us to bring forward the fact that already the original concept of geometrical similarity was by no means direct but based on rather complex and situated operations such as rescaling, repositioning and reflecting.

## § 4.2. Linear Perspective

This point is quite general. Long before the invention of projective geometry, the phenomenon of linear perspective in visual art and the discussion linked to it, from Alberti to Leonardo and Dürer, dealt not only with the problem of the difference between what things are in itself and how they appear to us, but also with the relativity of this difference. Let us take Leonardo's famous problem of the row of columns: If depicted from a certain point of view according to the perspectival laws, the distant columns are depicted by larger segments than those that are closer to the eye (see Figure 2). But to the given eye, they still appear to be smaller. Obviously, the picture of columns is playing a dual role here. (1) As a projection plane, it belongs to the eye observing the columns and, as such, should respect the laws of the perspective, of how things are for us. (2) At the same time, the picture is also an object to the eye and, as such, represents the world as it is in itself.

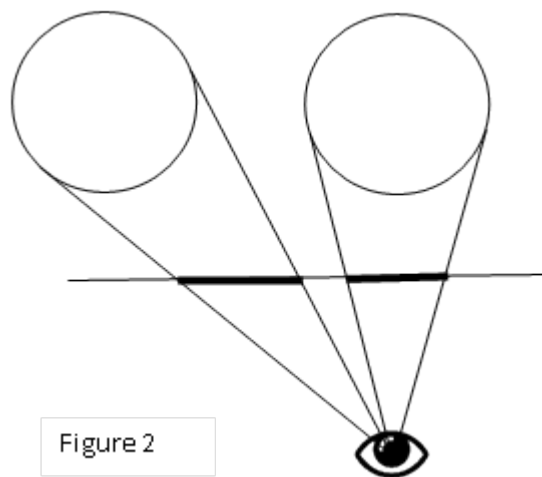


Figure 2

As a result, the subject becomes part of the observed object and *vice versa*, making the S–O difference depend on the S–S model of knowledge. The perspectival painting, however, contains this turn from the very beginning. Take its basic concepts such as the *vanishing point* and the *horizon line*. As Kvasz (2008, p. 118) repeatedly points out, they are never part of the picture in the same way in which the trees or houses might be—in other words, they are not to be drawn. But they must be identified if you want to see the picture correctly. As such, they are often drawn before the proper work begins, as a kind of Wittgensteinian scaffolding, thus making the subject enter the picture unnoticed as a reminder of the adopted worldview. The subject can also make his entrance explicitly, as in Dürer's perspectival paintings about perspectival paintings. But even here, the original intention of treating the picture as a picture, not its pictorial manifestation, is what matters here, since the painted subject must be recognized as such by the painting subject.

In the end, the cognitive importance of art might be seen precisely in this ability to show how the subject is always entering the picture as a picture, and how this entry is cognitively more relevant than the picture's occasional descriptive features that might and even must be banned from the mind to appreciate the picture's qualities. To this perspectival moment of art belongs, of course, its further



development, including various dislocations and violations, such as the famous anamorphic intrusions. Referring to one of them, represented by *Holbein's Ambassadors*, Karsten Harries (2001, p. 100) captured quite aptly the complexity of the whole situation:

Anamorphic composition is art that by playing one perspective off against another, proclaims the insufficiency of the eye and thus of art. It resembles a theatrical performance in which the illusion is broken by an actor addressing us, reminding us that what we are watching is only theater; and yet that address too, is part of the theatrical performance.

In my reading, this is to say that by using the pictures' reflexivity against these pictures themselves, art manifests not only the intentional dimension of knowledge, i.e. its basic S–S shape, but also the mutual interdependency of the intentional plan with the causal one, and thus the interdependency of the S–O model with the S–S model of knowledge.

## § 5. Social Picture

### § 5.1. Master and Slave

In the transfer from the S–S difference to its S–S' specification, the above-mentioned situation in which a theatre actor starts, at once, addressing the spectator is of particular importance. Not only does it point to the split of the cognizing subject into two, previously called the transcendental and the empirical ego, but it transposes this split into the social dimension. Leonardo in his column problem, in fact, purposefully aims at such a deconstruction of the perspectival worldview. According to him, the linear perspective not only inadequately reduces the real binocular vision to one specific point but makes this point fixed, contrary to the actual circumstances of human cognition which is inseparable from a permanent movement of the embodied mind within time and space.

As Lyle Massey (2007) argues in great detail, the linear perspective depends on the Cartesian "ocularcentrism" to be replaced —also with the help of the anamorphic visions of Holbein or complex reversal and displacements of the observing subject in Velázquez's *Las Meninas*— by a more nuanced concept of the socially embodied space. As far as the social basis of knowledge is concerned, though, the lesson taken so far seems to be rather modest. By making what is (in itself) and what only appears to be (for consciousness) to be played off against each other, one roughly follows Hegel's goal to explain the function of art as making the S–S model of knowledge

explicit and intrinsic to the experience as such. The next step, however, is more decisive, namely to fully realize that this S–S model is not specific for art.

If looking, e.g., at the coin lying on the table, it has an oval shape for me. But I know that it is circular in itself, though not in an absolute way. The circularity is, again, something defined relying on a specific perspective, namely by using circularity as a measure of what the things really are. The social reinterpretation of the S–S difference is set off by the re–appreciation of its relation to the S–O difference, particularly with regard of the role played by the objective pole O. What matters here is the relative independence, or objectivity, of knowledge from the cognizing subject S. Wittgenstein arrives at this point later within the so–called *private language argument*.

My claim, which I am presenting in more detail elsewhere (see Kolman, forthcoming), is that here Wittgenstein mimics Hegel’s more detailed argument known as a master–slave parable. It is no coincidence that this argument represents the exact spot on which the transformation of the S–O difference into the S–S happens within the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, showing how the “fight” of two consciousnesses is necessary for achieving knowledge in the proper sense of the word. The crucial moment in this narrative is the very decision of the fighting subjects to risk their biological life, or, more generally, the certainty of their own mind in favour of the fallibility of social interaction.

The interlude in which one of these subjects succumbs to the lordship of the other in order to save his own life shows the instability of the asymmetrical relations in the working community. In Wittgenstein’s private language argument, this is illustrated by the more mundane situation of the student who —in the process of learning how to follow some rule such as that of mathematical addition— is at first totally dependent on the authority of the teacher. This situation, however, must gradually change if the student is to learn something.

## § 5.2. Private Language Argument

As just told, Wittgenstein’s proper argument is phrased against the rule–following phenomena, and this happens for a simple reason: rule–following seems to be a specific basis of every language game. As such —and this is in fact how the private language argument goes— rule–following is also a socially acquired practice that cannot be conducted on a purely private basis in somebody’s mind: the fact that I am following some rule would not be distinguishable from the fact that I think I am following this rule. And this is at variance with the very concept of knowledge: that

knowledge is something normatively charged, i.e. differentiating what is right from what is wrong.

The measure of what is right and wrong, or what is objectively true, cannot however be found merely in the external object which is always, as we know, an object for consciousness. Since it cannot be found in the cognizing subject either, the solution must be—as both Hegel and Wittgenstein concur—truly dialectical: it consists in the “*Aufhebung*” of both, the internal subject and the external object within the external subject which stands for a mutually shared form of life. Though independent of me, the given subject, the prospective measure of things, is treated as “one of us”, i.e. as a physically *different* subject that is socially *identical* with me.

Following Wittgenstein’s approach, including the use of the game metaphor, Brandom fills out the given social frame with significant details by describing it as a *game of giving and asking for reasons*. The rules to be followed are, in the first place, rules governing inferences between the claim and the reasons one can give or ask for. The finer structure is achieved by a mutual distribution of the commitments and entitlements to the presented claims among the participants of the game. Against this background, knowledge is not a property of a subject’s single mind, but instead his or her complex social status.

## § 6. Making–It–Explicit Picture

### § 6.1. Gettier

The motivating idea behind Brandom’s elaboration of the S–S’ model of knowledge might be traced back to the so-called Gettier’s counterexamples, designed to put Plato’s classical definition of knowledge to the test. See Brandom (2000, chap. 3) for details. Typically, a situation is construed in which all these conditions are fulfilled but in a rather arbitrary way, e.g., as follows: The farmer has evidence that his favourite cow is standing in a particular meadow because he saw the familiar brown and white markings against the bushes. And the cow really is in the meadow, which makes the farmer’s belief not only justified but also true. But the cow is not at the place at which the farmer believes he sees it, the marking, in fact, being an illusion caused by a leaf in front of him. Thus, he has a true and justified belief, yet arguably not a case of knowledge.

The most immediate idea to rectify this mishap might be to adjust the concept of justification by some additional conditions, such as direct causal—be it visual or haptic—contact with the cow. But any such justification can be contested in a similar manner simply because there always is and will be the gap between the subject’s

mind and the objective world. In light of this, a Brandomian twist might be phrased like this: The story, as well as the traditional concept of knowledge, seems to be based on the S–O difference rooted in the attitude of the farmer to the surrounding world including the meadow and the cow. The structure of the story, though, is different.

The crucial question is this: How do we know that the cow really is on the meadow as was claimed in the story? And this leads to the following revelation: besides the farmer, there is another person present who knows exactly how things stand —namely, the story’s *narrator*. That makes the real structure of the story and the respective concept of knowledge explicit along the following lines:

In calling what someone has “knowledge”, one is doing three things: *attributing a commitment* that is capable of serving both as premise and as conclusion of inferences relating it to other commitments, *attributing entitlement* to that commitment, and *undertaking* that same commitment oneself. (Brandom 2000, p. 119)

The first act of attributing the commitment corresponds to the belief part of the definition in which I take somebody as believing that there is a cow on the meadow. In the second act of attributing the entitlement, I take the given person justified to have such a belief. I know, e.g., that he or she is not blind, that he or she is generally trustworthy, etc. That provides for the justification part of the definition. And finally, by undertaking the commitment myself, I am adopting the role of the narrator of the story, saying how things really are. In this sense, the third act amounts to the truth part of the definition.

## § 6.2. From Reasoning to Representing

In Brandom’s threefold model, knowledge arises not from a direct insight, as in the traditional concept of intuition, but as a result of social interaction. In accord with this, somebody’s belief, what only seems to be, does not precede cognition, what is, but is parasitic on it because it ignores the third part of the definition: if I am about to ascribe a knowledge, I must reflect on the beliefs of another subject and take them for mine. In the resulting model, as given in the story of the farmer and his cow, the picture, again, tells me itself in the sense that it does not consist primarily in its relation to the world but in a confrontation of the narrator’s view (or that of the picture’s interpretant) with the view of the farmer.

In what Brandom calls the “route from reasoning to representing”, the referential

role of language is reconstructed by way of explicitation of the individual perspectives that the individual speakers play in the process of knowledge. In its tripartite structure, there are two interpersonal commitments to the same sentence, e.g., that “There is a cow in the meadow”. Now, if you take something, such as a leaf, for something that I believe it is not, let us say a cow, I might not only make your commitment explicit in the sentence “You believe that what you see before you is a cow”, but I may express the difference of our opinions in the sentence “You believe of this leaf that it is a cow”. By this, I contrast the sentence “You believe that this leaf is a cow” which, as an ascription of a commitment to the sentence “This leaf is a cow” is probably not true.

According to Brandom, this differentiation between *de re* and *de dicto* ascriptions allows us to make claims of other people available for use as premises in our own inferences in order “to be able to tell what their beliefs would be true of if they were true” (Brandom 2000, p. 182). In this way, one grasps the representational content of claims, and the original game gains new representational or pictorial quality. This quality is, from the beginning, of a reflexive nature since it was achieved by making explicit the previously existing discursive practice. What is more, Brandom (2000, chap. 5) claims that the very decomposition of the sentences into non-sentential parts, and thus the ontological differentiation between the objects and their properties, is of a reflexive origin, conditioned by our ability to make the inferential structure of the game of giving and asking for reason explicit. I will not go into detail here, pointing out only the intransitive and reflexive nature of the resulting picture.

## § 7. Musical Picture

### § 7.1. Picture vs. Pictures

Does all this give us a license to claim that Brandom and Wittgenstein have both worked on the same project, one that can be summarized under the label of picture and, what is more, of a picture that stands for itself? In a sense, this might look rather like a difficult task since Brandom clearly proceeds in a different, or even opposite, way than Wittgenstein. Not only in that he starts where Wittgenstein ends, with the metaphor of the (language) game, but he insists that within the plurality of language games —which also represents the non-existence of the single and pre-given goal—, there is a designated one, namely the *game of giving and asking for reasons*. In Brandom’s (2000, p. 14) words, the city of language does have a *downtown*, namely the class of assertoric sentences for which one can give and demand reasons.

As Price (2011) and others have already mentioned, this step might even look

regressive as far as Wittgenstein's original intentions are concerned, particularly if one takes into account the cognitive significance of the different forms of human experience such as art or religion. In *Philosophical Investigations*, they are treated as language games despite —and, at the same time, because of— the fact that they seem to be independent of asserting that something is so and so, i.e. independent of being true and being true about something. But these conclusions are far from being justified. First of all, to assert something, according to Brandom, does not primarily amount to saying that something is true but rather to make some inferential commitments toward other users of language. Second, the other non-discursive realms of significance, though not reducible to the game of giving and asking for reasons, might be shown at least as depending on it. I have indicated elsewhere how to do this, especially concerning music (see Kolman 2014a). But my point is quite general.

Even though one does not explicitly assert or commit oneself to anything in art, the cognitive part of this experience, i.e. the part responsible for the fact that it is something one can understand, depends on such assertions or commitments in a substantial way. In music, e.g., it makes particularly for the difference between hearing some tone, let us say A, as a false one, i.e. as something that is and is not A at the same time. That obviously cannot be reducible to a mere positivist explanation, as based, e.g., on a frequency of the given tone, which simply is as it is. What must be factored in is, first, the listener's ability, if only an implicit one, to hear the given tone as A rather than B. Second, to hear it as violating the acoustical norm, according to which there are some points —picked out conventionally— in the acoustical continuum, defined by their position against each other —as in the Western scales— with respect to which the given tone is obviously out of tune, but in a way which still allows it to be classified as a sharper A rather than a flatter B. In all these steps, the commitments to hear the tone in this rather than that way is present in a similar way in which I can commit to the sentence that there is a cow on the meadow rather than a deer.

## 7.2. Expectations

As the mentioned case of the false A, to hear something means to hear it with respect to other acoustical phenomena and to be corrected by other listeners under the threat of falling into the sphere of mere physical reactions. That brings us directly to the S–S and S–S' model of experience. Adjusting the musical listening by an active production of musical sounds completes the picture of it as a complex enterprise that sufficiently meets the broad concept of a language game. In all this, though, I have

limited myself basically just to the acoustical level, leaving the aesthetical dimension of music virtually intact. The question is in what the musical surplus value consists.

My suggestion, as described in greater detail in Kolman (2014b), is to closely follow Leonard Meyer’s (1953) pragmatist account of musical meaning as based on the discursive concept of expectations. Meyer adopts in this Peirce’s consequential theory of meaning, according to which the meaning of the event consists of the sum of the evoked consequences, such as expecting the tonic after hearing the dominant. The non-discursive features of music, on the other hand, are identified with their emotional quality.

Drawing on Dewey’s conflict theory of emotions, Meyer skilfully combines both cognitive and affective aspects of his theory by describing the musical emotions as arising from the conflict of expectations evoked by musical events and their

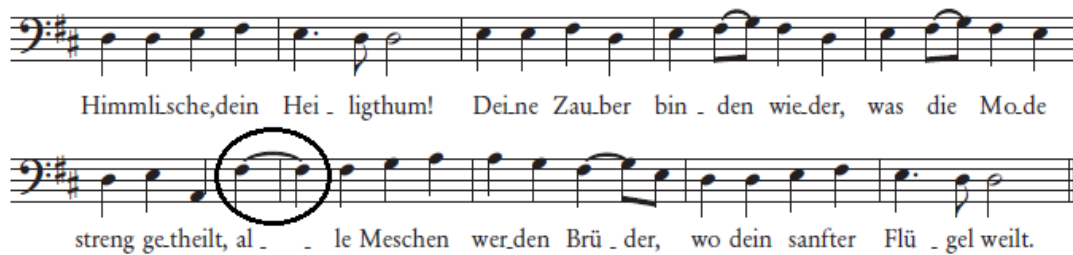


Figure 3

fulfilment. The strong emotional reaction, e.g., results from the conflict between the expected regular succession of strong and weak beats and its inhibition using syncopation or by the inhibition of the expected key by an unexpected modulation. The easily recallable example of the former, mentioned by Philip Ball (2010, p. 287), is that of Beethoven’s Ode to Joy where many listeners have pointed to the pleasure evoked by a moment when one of the phrases abruptly begins half a beat early (see Figure 3).

What one has here, then, is not only the already known interchange of what the music is for us with what it is in itself but also highly significant case-study of how the meaning intransitively connected to music arises from the relatively basic, pre-musical phenomena. So, the simple joy of following the pattern of the regular beat can be amplified by its inhibition by syncopation or cross-rhythm and their internalization along the lines of Hegelian “Aufhebung”. Followed further, this leads us to the more complex, culturally conditioned phenomena such as modulation, deceptive cadence or, consequently, Wagner’s indefinite postponing of a cadence as known from the Prelude to the *Tristan and Isolde* and its effect of unfulfilled love. That can serve us as an example of emotion evoked by purely musical means.

## § 8. Reflexive Picture

### § 8.1. Picture vs. Game

Music provided us with some details concerning the possible transition from the S–O model of experience to its S–S or S–S' version in the field that does not primarily stand under the representational paradigm. But there is more to this example: namely, the role of reflexion in the whole enterprise that significantly exceeds the persuasiveness of the case–study devoted to the linear perspective. Taking Meyer's theory of musical meaning for granted, it is obvious that it is the intentional act of the composer to evoke some expectations to be inhibited later that leads to the complex musical experience along the route of what Meyer calls *hypothetical meaning* to its *determined version*. Put otherwise, it seems that one cannot understand a musical piece without a continuous reflection on what one has heard (in itself) and its revision in a direction suggested later (for itself) until the piece is “timeless in memory” (Meyer 1953, p. 38).

The subject's entrance into the “picture” now adopts a more transparent form, demonstrated, e.g., by the urge to accompany musical understanding by a physical display, not untypically in the company of people who are doing the same. One does not have to concur with Nietzsche that we listen to music with our muscles rather than our ears to still agree that its meaning clearly is not only intellectual or purely “intuitive” but also an embodied one. But does this not make the picture metaphor inadequate as opposed to the metaphor of the game? Not necessarily, as long as it is not read in a realistic and detached way, but rather as underlining the aforementioned subjectivity of knowledge, including its intersubjective specification.

Let us go back to the example of the farmer and his cow. One can read it as a dialogue of two people, the narrator and the farmer, rather than a mere picturing of the reality in which the farmer only plays an accidental role. On the other hand, the narrator does not just behave in this or that way, but —by telling us a certain story— pictures by means of a sentence how it is, according to him, that things really are. The catch is that he does not do it in a detached, objective way but actively and self–reflectively: he is a part of the whole story, adopting some views and confronting them with the views ascribed to the farmer. But still, the picture metaphor works if enlarged in this cooperative way and explained in Brandom's way going his route from reasoning to representing.

### § 8.2. Absolute Spirit



The talk about the intersubjectivity of experience does not change this basic situation since, by thinking about me in terms of the one among many, not only am I not out of the picture that is drawn but, being the one who draws it, I am still a designated part of it. Primarily, this consists in my self-conscious and deliberate adoption of the “one–among–many” attitude. Wittgenstein’s remarks concerning the use of the word “I” following the paragraphs devoted to the private language argument express this quite well without subscribing to the Cartesian epistemology (see particularly Wittgenstein 1953, § 409). Rather than the epistemic primacy, what the “I” adopts in the cognitive process is a specific epistemic responsibility of which I cannot be relieved by others because the recognition of others as a community to which I belong is the only thing that I have fully under control.

It is precisely this personal standpoint, or its general form as given in the word “I”, that is, as I believe, responsible for the particular quality of the Absolute Spirit characterized by Brandom (1999, p. 178) as three jointly incompatible claims to which Hegel committed himself: (1) spirit is a self-conscious self, (2) self-consciousness is an essentially social achievement, requiring actual recognition of and by an other and (3) spirit has no other. I suggest reading them like this: It is true that the self needs to have another self to become a cognitive subject. But its cognition has still, simply by definition, the form of the subjectivity that cannot be explained away by a mere replacing the I with the We. The Absolute Spirit is the name for this I that became We without simply falling apart into the individual subjects.

Rather than in the game metaphor, this situation is captured in the metaphor of the picture that tells me itself, corresponding roughly to Hegel’s metaphors of the Absolute such as the circle of circles. The picture, telling me itself, is the picture of pictures, i.e. the picture that presupposes the continuous comparison with other pictures and the reflection on this very picturing without ceasing to be a picture, though possibly not in the original, S–O sense of the word.

## § 9. Conclusion

Primarily, one can read Wittgenstein’s motto “What the picture tells me is itself” as a complicated way of saying that the picture metaphor does not work and must be abandoned in favour of another one such as the language game, of which it is, at most, one of many examples. Or one can show, as Brandom does, that the picture metaphor arises later naturally after the game metaphor has been adopted and worked out in detail. But there is another option, namely to look at the picture metaphor as something that might be kept all the way down the line even while it is materializing its limits and, at the same time, showing its advantages.

These advantages are, first, of a didactical nature, articulating --in a kind of recapitulation of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*-- how the S–S' model of knowledge itself developed from the S–O one, represented by the so-called natural consciousness, on the one hand, and the "scientific" worldview on the other. The interest in this development also stems from the fact that it simultaneously recapitulates Wittgenstein's path of thinking, from the metaphysics of *Tractatus* to the *Philosophical Investigations*. From these rather didactical motifs, more substantial considerations follow, mainly the mutual interdependence of the S–O and S–S, or S–S', models of knowledge as further elaborated regarding the difference between the causal and the intentional explanations. The examples from visual art and music have been given as a kind of case–studies devoted to this point.

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### “What the Picture Tells Me Is Itself”: The Reflexivity of Knowledge between Brandom and Wittgenstein

Both Brandom and Wittgenstein base their concepts of experience on the *game* metaphor and the associated concept of *rule*. In fact, what Brandom seems to do is further refine Wittgenstein’s vocabulary by specifying the game as the *game of giving and asking for reasons* and rules as the *rules of inference*. By replacing the plurality of “games” with the one and only “game”, though, Brandom also lays the ground for a possible discord. This relates particularly to the cognitive significance of different forms of human experience, such as music or art in general, which are treated by Wittgenstein as language games despite their being rather independent of claims and commitments and despite their utterly lacking the representational dimension. In my paper, I will show that with respect to these objections (as phrased, e.g.,

by Andrew Bowie), one can argue that Brandom is in fact true to Wittgenstein’s instruction to always read his *Investigations* against his *Tractatus*. The general idea is to look at the game and picture metaphor as parts of a single concept that both philosophers work on together by going back to the very idealist concept of *reflexivity* or self-consciousness.

**Keywords:** Language Game · Self-Consciousness · Reflexivity · Game Metaphor · Hegel.

### «Lo que el retrato me relata es a sí mismo»: la reflexividad del conocimiento entre Brandom y Wittgenstein

Tanto Brandom como Wittgenstein basan sus conceptos de la experiencia en la metáfora del *juego* y el concepto asociado de la *regla*. De hecho, lo que Brandom parece hacer es refinar adicionalmente el vocabulario de Wittgenstein al especificar el juego como el *juego de dar y preguntar por razones* y las reglas como *reglas de inferencia*. Al reemplazar el plural de «juegos» con el único «juego» Brandom, sin embargo, también prepara el terreno para una posible discordancia. Esto tiene que ver en particular con la significancia cognitiva de las diferentes formas de la experiencia humana, tales como la música o el arte en general. Wittgenstein trata a estas como juegos de lenguaje, no obstante de que sean más bien independientes de afirmaciones y compromisos y no obstante de carecer totalmente de la dimensión representacional. En mi trabajo mostraré que con relación a estas objeciones (como las formuló, e.g., Andrew Bowie), se puede argüir que Brandom cumple de hecho la instrucción de Wittgenstein de siempre leer sus *Investigaciones* contra su *Tractatus*. La idea general es tomar la metáfora del juego y del retrato como partes de un único concepto en el cual ambos filósofos trabajan juntos al retornar al concepto idealista de la *reflexividad* o autoconsciencia.

**Palabras Clave:** Juego de lenguaje · Autoconsciencia · Reflexividad · Metáfora de juego · Hegel.

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