

# **Wittgenstein against 'Positivist' Approaches to International Relations: Replacing the Anti-Representationalist Objection**

---

Jessica Woolley

**PHD THESIS**

**University of East Anglia**

School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies

**August 2015**

This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright rests with the author and that use of any information derived there from must be in accordance with current UK Copyright Law. In addition, any quotation or extract must include full attribution.

## **Abstract**

Over the past few decades, a number of prominent scholars have attempted to apply Wittgenstein's philosophy to the study of International Relations (IR). These applications have taken diverse forms and directions; nevertheless, many involve using Wittgenstein's philosophy to criticise certain purportedly 'scientific' approaches to studying IR that have conventionally been labelled as 'positivist' within the discipline. One popular line of objection that is pursued in this context argues that 'positivist' approaches to IR are committed to a problematic representational view of language – called the 'mirror' or 'picture' view – which Wittgenstein decisively criticised in his later work. While many IR scholars and interpreters of Wittgenstein's later philosophy would be sympathetic to the overall aim and direction of this line of argument, I contend that there are some problems with it which have the result that it does not support the conclusions that it is meant to. I therefore use the identification of these problems as the starting point for developing an alternative application of the relevant aspects of Wittgenstein's later philosophy to IR, which can replace the anti-representationalist objection and provide a more sophisticated way to criticise 'positivist' IR scholars that overcomes the problems identified.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to everyone who has helped me to get through the struggle of writing it. Especial thanks go to my supervisor, Dr Rupert Read, whose constant positivity and encouragement spurred me on; to my mother, Susan Woolley, who was always on hand with translation advice and homely anecdotes; and to my fiancé, Jamie Dollman, whose unfailing support and affection has sustained me throughout the past four years.

## Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Survey of Existing Applications of Wittgenstein’s Philosophy to IR .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Types of Application	9
Wittgenstein and the Anti-Representationalist Objection	13
<b>CHAPTER 1 SUMMARISING THE ANTI-REPRESENTATIONALIST OBJECTION TO ‘POSITIVIST’ APPROACHES TO IR.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>1.1 Concise Statements of the Anti-Representationalist Objection.....</b>	<b>20</b>
Outline of the Anti-Representationalist Objection	25
<b>1.2 What are the ‘Positivist’ Approaches to IR targeted by the ARO? .....</b>	<b>25</b>
Outline of ‘Positivist’ Approaches to IR	27
<b>1.3 What is the ‘Representational’ View of Language that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke associate with ‘Positivist’ Approaches to IR? .....</b>	<b>29</b>
Outline of the Representational View of Language	35
<b>1.4 How do Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke link the ‘Representational View of Language’ with ‘Positivist’ Approaches to IR? .....</b>	<b>36</b>
Connection 1: Historical Influence	36
Connection 2: Implicit Commitment	38
Connection 3: Common Association	40
Connection 4: Similarities	40
Outline of the Connections	42
A Note on Consistency	42
<b>1.5 What are the Criticisms that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke Use Later Wittgenstein to make on this Basis? .....</b>	<b>43</b>
Criticism 1: The ‘Propositional’ Model is Inadequate	44
Criticism 2: Words do not refer to ‘Objects’	48
Criticism 3: Linguistic Meaning is ‘Socially Constructed’	54
Criticism 4: Our Perception is Shaped by Language	61
Outline of the Criticisms	64
The Applicability of the Criticisms	65
<b>CHAPTER 2 EVALUATING THE ANTI-REPRESENTATIONALIST OBJECTION .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>2.1 Strengths and Promising Features of the ARO in its Current Form .....</b>	<b>68</b>
(i) It Highlights the Importance of Language for IR	68

(ii) It Foregrounds Linguistic Features that are Relevant for IR	69
(iii) It is Similar to Successful 'Anti-Positivist' Arguments Made in Other Disciplines	73
<b>2.2 Problematic Aspects of the Anti-Representationalist Objection.....</b>	<b>74</b>
Problem 1: Ambivalence Concerning the Nature of the RVL	74
Problem 2: Ambiguity Surrounding the Most General Conception of the RVL	83
Problem 3: Ambiguities Concerning the Specific Claims Attributed to the RVL	88
Problem 4: Insufficient Justification for Appealing to 'Ordinary Language'	92
Problem 5: Endorsement of Universal Claims	94
Problem 6: Inconsistent Stance towards Everyday Linguistic Practices	97
Problem 7: Inadequate Treatment of Objective Realism	99
<b>CHAPTER 3 REVISITING WITTGENSTEIN'S LATER PHILOSOPHY .....</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>3.1 Wittgenstein's Target in the Opening Remarks of the <i>PI</i>.....</b>	<b>104</b>
Précis of <i>PI</i> §§1-5	106
Interpretation of <i>PI</i> §§1-5	108
Preliminary Implications of <i>PI</i> §§1-5 for the ARO	119
Remaining Questions	122
<b>3.2 Wittgenstein's Use of the term 'Picture' in Remarks like <i>PI</i> §1.....</b>	<b>123</b>
Kuusela's Interpretation	124
Clarifications and Additions	128
<b>3.3 The Methodological Justification of Appeals to 'Ordinary' Language .....</b>	<b>139</b>
Baker and Hacker's Interpretation	140
Kuusela's Objection	141
A Different Approach	143
<b>CHAPTER 4 MODIFYING THE ANTI-REPRESENTATIONALIST OBJECTION .....</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>4.1 Recommendations .....</b>	<b>157</b>
Suggestion 1. From 'Anti-Representationalist' to Anti-Bias	157
Suggestion 2. From 'In Principle' Objections to Specific Critical Observations	158
Suggestion 3. Broaden the Scope of Criticism	158
Suggestion 4. Qualify Critical Observations and Invite Acknowledgement	159
<b>4.2 Reflections on the Recommendations .....</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>4.3 How the Recommendations can be Implemented .....</b>	<b>161</b>
Patterns of Bias in Waltz and Wendt	162
<b>4.3 An Alternative Wittgensteinian Approach to Criticising Wendt.....</b>	<b>195</b>

<b>4.4 Potential Relevance for More Recent and Future Work in IR .....</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>Directions for Further Research .....</b>	<b>218</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>219</b>

## Introduction

In this thesis I will critically evaluate, and attempt to replace, a particular line of argument that Wittgenstein's philosophy has been used to make against so-called 'positivist' approaches to the study of International Relations (IR).<sup>1</sup> The rough shape of this line of argument is that 'positivist' approaches to IR are committed to a problematic 'representational' view of language that was discredited by Wittgenstein in his later philosophy, and that such approaches should therefore accordingly be abandoned. I will call this line of argument the 'anti-representationalist objection' (or 'ARO' for short). The relevant line of argument is found principally in the work of Friedrich Kratochwil (Kratochwil, 1989; 2001; 2009), Veronique Pin-Fat (Pin-Fat, 1997; 2010) and Karin Fierke (Fierke, 2002; 2003; 2010a), who are arguably the most prolific and sustained appliers of Wittgenstein's philosophy to IR.

The ARO is an apparently promising line of argument towards which many scholars and interpreters of Wittgenstein's philosophy would be sympathetic. However, as I will explain, there are some problems and gaps with this line of argument as it stands, which have the consequence that it does not fully support the conclusions that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke seek to draw from it. My aim in this thesis is therefore to come to these scholars' aid as a critical fellow traveller, to spell out clearly what the difficulties with the ARO are, and to provide an alternative way of applying the relevant aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy to IR that overcomes these difficulties. I will base my modifications on a novel interpretation of relevant remarks from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, which I will develop through a close reading of the text informed by previous scholarship. By taking this approach I do not mean to suggest that a re-interpretation of Wittgenstein's later philosophy is the *only* way to overcome the problems faced by the ARO; nor that in order to be successful, applications of Wittgenstein's philosophy must employ faithful interpretations of his work. My rationale is simply that in my informed opinion as an interpreter of later Wittgenstein, a more textually sensitive reading of

---

<sup>1</sup> The meaning of the terms 'positivist' and 'representational' in this context will be explained in Chapter 1.

his work can yield applications that not only avoid the problems discussed, but also provide more subtle and sophisticated ways to criticise 'positivist' approaches to IR.

The structure of the thesis will be as follows: In the second part of the introduction I will provide a survey of existing applications of Wittgenstein's philosophy to the study of International Relations, and offer a justification for my focus on the ARO as it appears in the work of Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke. In Chapter 1, I will provide a detailed summary of the ARO as it appears in the work of Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke. In Chapter 2, I will undertake a critical evaluation of this line of argument in which I will identify and explain which aspects of the ARO are problematic. In Chapter 3, I will engage in a close textual reading of passages in Wittgenstein's *PI* from which the ARO takes its lead, and highlight relevant points of contrast with the interpretation employed by the ARO. In Chapter 4, I will explain how these passages of Wittgenstein's later philosophy can be used to develop an alternative application that overcomes the problems I identified in Chapter 2, and demonstrate the relevance of this application for past and current work in IR. In Chapter 5, I will sum up what has been achieved, draw some final conclusions concerning the usefulness of Wittgenstein's philosophy for IR scholars, and suggest some future directions for research.

The thesis is original on a number of fronts. First of all, in evaluating the anti-representationalist objection I will be making novel observations and suggestions about a line of argument that has popularly been employed in IR, which will hopefully be of interest and use to a broad range of IR scholars. Secondly, by developing an alternative way of applying the relevant aspects of Wittgenstein's later philosophy to criticise 'positivist' approaches to IR, I will be making an original contribution to the methodological debates in the context of which the ARO has previously been advanced. Thirdly, by using a re-interpretation of Wittgenstein's later philosophy to accomplish this, I will also be making an original contribution to Wittgenstein scholarship – most notably concerning the exegesis of Wittgenstein's aims and methods in the opening passages of the *Philosophical Investigations*.



## Survey of Existing Applications of Wittgenstein's Philosophy to IR

### Types of Application

So far, IR scholars have appealed to Wittgenstein's philosophy in a variety of ways. These appeals can be divided roughly into three categories based on their level of engagement with Wittgenstein's philosophy:

- Passing mentions
- Limited applications
- Substantial applications

### *Passing Mentions*

Many appeals to Wittgenstein's philosophy in IR fall into the category of what I call 'passing mentions'. These are where IR scholars have alluded in passing to Wittgenstein's philosophy, but have not engaged in in-depth discussions of his work in terms of its implications for IR. In such cases there is a reliance on secondary literature with little or no explicit consideration of specific passages from Wittgenstein's texts. Passing mentions in this sense are found in Kratochwil (1978; 1981; 1989: p.28; 1993: p.65 & 75; 2001: p.19-20; 2008: p.85; 2009: p.144; 2013; 2014: pp. 11, 20, 53 & 58; 2016: p.288), Frost (1986: p.18; 1996: p.24), George (1989), Neufeld (1993), Ruggie (1993: p.145), Edkins and Pin-Fat (1995: p.49-50; 1997: p.295-6), Wind (1997: p.283, fn. 32), Duffy, Frederking and Tucker (1998), Byers (1999: p.148), Fierke and Wiener (1999), Pin-Fat (2000: p.664; 2005: p.219), Wight (2002: p.42, 2006: p.236), Debrix (2002), Zehfuss (2002: p.96), Welch (2003), Inayatullah and Blaney (2004: p.128), Fierke (2007), Edkins and Zehfuss (2008: p.16), Lebow (2008: p.35-6), Wiener (2007: p.55; 2009: p.189), Aalberts and van Munster (2008), Kratochwil and Friedrichs (2009: p.703, fn. 704 & p.717), Ish-Shalom (2011), Kessler (2012), Kessler and Guillaume (2012), and Torsten (2012). Some of these passing mentions are short paraphrases of claims or arguments that are allegedly

found in Wittgenstein's work,<sup>2</sup> while others are potted intellectual histories situating Wittgenstein in the context of a broader cultural movement or network of academic influences linking philosophy to the social and political 'sciences'.<sup>3</sup> Some are primarily references to the work of other scholars who have applied Wittgenstein to the study of IR,<sup>4</sup> and some are so brief that they can practically be regarded as name-dropping.<sup>5</sup>

Although many passing mentions are superficial references rather than fully worked out interpretative arguments, it is important to be aware that the level of explicit engagement with primary texts does not necessarily indicate the importance of the role that Wittgenstein's philosophy plays in the relevant IR scholar's work. So, for example, although most of Kratochwil's appeals to Wittgenstein take the form of brief paraphrases of Wittgenstein's philosophy, Kratochwil relies upon these passing mentions of Wittgenstein and other related philosophers to support some of the main arguments that he makes against 'positivist' approaches to IR.

### ***Limited Applications***

In contrast to passing mentions, some IR scholars have dedicated an extended section of a paper or book to discussing Wittgenstein's philosophy and its application to the study of IR. Aside from the increased amount of space dedicated to discussing

---

<sup>2</sup> For example Kratochwil 1993: p.65 fn.10, 2001: p.20, 2009: p.205; Wind, 2001: p.65; and Fierke, 2007: p.207.

<sup>3</sup> Such as Kratochwil, 1989: p.6, 2001: p.19; Gould, 2003: p.51; and Wight, 2002: p.42. Such potted histories are also found in textbooks on International Relations – for example, Anthony Burke writes in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* that "Postmodern writing in international relations has arguably developed an epistemology (and a sociological analysis of power) that synthesises key insights from the literature that developed and critiqued the semiology of Charles Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure, the language games of Ludwig Wittgenstein, and the structuralism of Claude Levi-Strauss, Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser, and the early Michel Foucault" (Reus-Smit and Snidal, 2008: p.362).

<sup>4</sup> For example, Wind, 1997, 2001: p.67, 98; Zehfuss, 2002; Debrix, 2002: p.206-7; Wiener, 2007: p.55, 2009: p.189; Aalberts and van Munster, 2008: p.729; and Neufeld, 1993: p.56. Debrix (2002: p.206-7), Wiener (2007: p.55, 2009: p.189), and Aalberts and van Munster (2008: p.729) base their comments on Fierke's applications of Wittgenstein to IR – in particular Fierke's articles from 1996, 1998 and 2002 respectively; while Neufeld (1993: p.56) concentrates on the reading of Wittgenstein presented by Hollis and Smith (1990). Meanwhile Wind (1997) discusses Onuf's application of Wittgenstein (1989), and Zehfuss (2002) refers to Kratochwil (Wind, 1997: p.96).

<sup>5</sup> Frost, 1986: p.17-18; George, 1989: p.273; Ruggie, 1993: p.145; Frost, 1996: p.24; Shaw, 1999: p.79; Fierke, 1999: p.405; Welch, 2003: p.312; Inayatullah and Blaney, 2004: p.128; Ish-Shalom, 2011: p.480; and Torsten, 2012: p.219.

Wittgenstein, the main difference from passing mentions is that there tends to be more of an attempt to ground summaries of Wittgenstein's philosophy with references to primary texts as well as secondary literature.<sup>6</sup> Limited applications in this sense are present in Spegele (1982), Onuf (1989, Chapter 1), Hollis and Smith (1990, Chapter 8),<sup>7</sup> Wendt (1999, Chapter 4),<sup>8</sup> Farrands (2001), Fierke and Nicholson (2001), Wight (2006),<sup>9</sup> Kessler (2007), Fierke (2001, 2004, 2010b),<sup>10</sup> Navari (2011), Aalberts (2012, Chapter 5) and Pin-Fat (2013: p.242-250).

There are various ways in which limited applications employ Wittgenstein's philosophy. Some summarise a specific part of Wittgenstein's work and use it to challenge other scholars' approaches to studying IR. For example, Spegele uses the so-called 'anti-private-language argument' from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations (PI)* to argue against the empiricist conceptions of 'meaning' and 'mind' espoused by systems theorists like Kaplan and Laszlo (Spegele, 1982: pp. 569-571).<sup>11</sup> Other limited applications use one or more aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy as the starting point for developing a new approach to thinking about International Relations. The most famous example is Onuf's employment of later Wittgenstein's emphasis on language-use and remarks on rules and rule-following as the starting point for recommending a 'constructivist' approach to the study of IR (Onuf, 1989: p.35, p.46).<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, some limited applications try to reconcile other scholars' Wittgenstein-inspired approaches to the study of IR with more conventional approaches such as systems analysis and rational choice theory (For

---

<sup>6</sup> Although not in all cases, see e.g. Navari, 2011: p.615-6 for an exception.

<sup>7</sup> Hollis and Smith, 1990: pp.8, 82-4, 170, 176-81, 184 f., 193 f., 200, 204 ff., 220

<sup>8</sup> Wendt, 1999: pp.172, 176, 179, 183

<sup>9</sup> Wight, 2006: pp.137, 142, 148, 177, 208, 236, 263, 276, 278

<sup>10</sup> Fierke, 2010b: p.187

<sup>11</sup> For the relevant passages in Kaplan and Laszlo see Kaplan, 1969: p.20-1, and Laszlo, 1970: p.72. Other examples are found in Fierke (2001, 2005 and 2010b).

<sup>12</sup> Other examples are Hollis and Smith, 1990; Kessler, 2007; Farrands, 2000; Navari, 2011; Aalberts, 2012 and Pin-Fat, 2013. Kessler appeals to Wittgenstein's remarks on rules and rule-following to support a 'radical constructivist' attempt to rethink intersubjectivity and get around the so-called 'agent-structure problem' in IR (Kessler, 2007: p.264-5), while Navari argues that Wittgenstein's later work contains a "meta-theory of knowledge" and a "social theory of concept formation" that can ground an approach to IR focused on practices as the basic constituents of social life (Navari, 2011). In her 2013 article Pin-Fat uses Cavell's interpretation of later Wittgenstein to underpin a so-called 'grammatical' approach to developing a particular understanding of 'cosmopolitanism', which she also defends in her later article on 'Cosmopolitanism Without Foundations' (Pin-Fat, 2015).

example, Wendt, 1999: p.179 and 182; Fierke and Nicholson, 2001).<sup>13</sup> In some cases, a combination of these strategies is employed (Fierke and Nicholson, 2001).

### ***Substantial applications***

Finally, some IR scholars have dedicated whole articles or books to applying Wittgenstein's philosophy to the study of IR. Substantial applications in this sense include Pin-Fat (1997; 2010; 2015), Fierke (2002, 2003, 2010a), Farrands (2000) and Gunnell (2011). In terms of strategy there is no significant distinction between limited applications and substantial applications, and the different ways of applying Wittgenstein's philosophy identified in the last subsection also apply here. For example, Pin-Fat (1997, 2010), Fierke (2002, 2003, 2010a) and Gunnell (2011)<sup>14</sup> use elements of Wittgenstein's philosophy to criticise the work of other IR scholars; Pin-Fat (1997, 2010, 2013, 2015), Fierke (2002, 2003, 2010a) and Farrands (2000) use Wittgenstein to ground new approaches to the study of IR; and Fierke (2002, 2003, 2010a) and Pin-Fat (2010) try to reconcile Wittgensteinian approaches to studying IR with elements of other approaches derived from Structuralism, Speech-Act Theory and Postmodernism. There is also some overlap between limited and substantial applications in cases where the same scholar has produced works that fall into both categories (e.g. Fierke and Pin-Fat). In these cases, limited applications can with caution be treated as extrapolations of substantial applications by the same author, and vice versa.

---

<sup>13</sup> Wendt tries to synthesize the 'public' conception of meaning arrived at by "post-Wittgensteinian philosophers of action" with some form of individualism to allow for agentive explanations (Wendt, 1999: p.179), and suggests a compatibility between Hollis and Smith's Wittgenstein-inspired approach to understanding IR in terms of 'games,' and alternative approaches based on von Neumann-Morgenstern "game theory" (Wendt, 1999: p.182). In their 2001 article Fierke and Nicholson take up Wendt's suggestion and explore the ways in which the two approaches to thinking about IR in terms of games compliment one another (Fierke and Nicholson, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> Gunnell is distinct from other scholars who use Wittgenstein's philosophy to criticise certain approaches to the study of IR, in that Gunnell criticises IR scholars for appealing to philosophy to ground their methodologies – and therefore his criticisms also apply to scholars such as Onuf, Kratochwil, Fierke and Pin-Fat who try to use Wittgenstein's philosophy as the basis for a new approach to IR.

## Wittgenstein and the Anti-Representationalist Objection

As can be seen from the last sub-section, applications of Wittgenstein's philosophy to IR have taken various forms and directions. Nevertheless, despite this diversity, there are some common themes and lines of argument that emerge from surveying these applications. One such theme is that IR scholars who appeal to Wittgenstein's philosophy often do so in order to support their objection to certain purportedly scientific approaches to the study of IR that have conventionally been labelled as 'positivist' within the discipline.<sup>15</sup> This anti-positivist implementation of Wittgenstein's philosophy is used or mentioned by a range of IR scholars, but is most fully developed in the work of Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke, who are arguably the three most prolific appliers of Wittgenstein's philosophy to IR in terms of the comparative frequency and longevity of their applications.<sup>16</sup>

Thus in *Rules, Norms and Decisions*, we find Kratochwil appealing to Wittgenstein's later philosophy to support his campaign against a "positivist epistemology" in IR that "treats norms as 'causes'" (Kratochwil, 1989: p.5-6). This strategy is maintained by Kratochwil throughout subsequent work, where he cites Wittgenstein in opposing

---

<sup>15</sup> A full discussion and outline of what 'positivism' means in this context will be provided in Section 1.2 of the next Chapter.

<sup>16</sup> Kratochwil appeals to Wittgenstein's philosophy in at least seven different works spanning the course of his career, while Fierke appeals to Wittgenstein in eight of hers (see works referenced in the preceding subsection). Meanwhile, as Pin-Fat writes, "Wittgenstein's contribution appears in all my previous work" (Pin-Fat, 2013: p.242, fn. 4). This is contrasted with other appliers of Wittgenstein to IR, who cite Wittgenstein in at most four works and do not demonstrate such a sustained engagement with his thought. In addition to this, it is clear from peer references that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke are regarded within IR as pre-eminent appliers of Wittgenstein's philosophy, since they are cited in various introductory texts and surveys as representatives of Wittgenstein-inspired approaches to the subject. For example, in *Global Politics: A New Introduction*, Fierke's 2002 article is picked out as "an introduction to the relevance of Wittgenstein for global politics" (Edlkins and Zehfuss, 2008: p.37); while Kratochwil's 1989 book is cited in the *Handbook of International Relations* as the primary work instantiating the "modernist linguistic or rule-oriented" branch of 'constructivism' based on Wittgenstein's philosophy (Carlsnaes, Risse & Simmons, 2002: p.116). Both Kratochwil and Fierke are also cited by Kessler as the main Constructivist IR scholars who have used "the linguistic turn" in IR (Kessler, 2007: p.261). Moreover, Kratochwil is also among the most influential IR scholars to have applied Wittgenstein's philosophy to IR, since his Wittgenstein-inspired book *Rules, Norms and Decisions* (1989) is widely acknowledged as a seminal work which was instrumental in the establishment of 'constructivism' as an alternative framework or tradition for studying IR. For example, Jan Klabbers writes that "When *Rules, Norms, and Decisions* appeared, it almost single-handedly changed the study of international relations, drawing inspiration from Wittgenstein, speech act theory and both the communicative theorizing of Habermas and the legal theory of Hart" (2015: p.1196).

the idea “of a science of international relations ... along the lines of the hypothetical-deductive model” (Kratochwil, 2011 [1981]: p.28), and contrasts the traditional “epistemological project” of IR with the approaches of IR scholars who have been “influenced by Wittgenstein and language philosophy” (Kratochwil, 2011 [2009]: p.203 & 205). Similarly, in her 1997 article and 2010 book, Pin-Fat uses her interpretation of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy to challenge the assumptions of Kenneth Waltz whose “neo-Realist” methodology she identifies as epitomising “positivist approaches to IR” (Pin-Fat, 1997; 2010: p.34), and pits later Wittgenstein against an “empiricist-positivist approach” which seeks to apply “scientific method” to international politics (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.12-13). Although this anti-positivist focus does not feature so heavily in Pin-Fat’s more recent work, Pin-Fat clearly still sets store in the anti-positivist focus of her previous application of Wittgenstein’s philosophy to IR. This can be seen from her continued recommendation of her 2010 book as “the full account of what constitutes a grammatical reading, its elaboration of key themes in the later philosophy of Wittgenstein, and its significance for global politics” (Pin-Fat, 2013: p.243, fn.7), and also from the fact that Pin-Fat continues to repeat some of the main interpretive and philosophical claims she used previously to argue against ‘positivist’ approaches to IR (e.g. Pin-Fat, 2013: p.250; 2015: p.87-88). Finally, Fierke – like Pin-Fat – identifies Waltz’s *Theory of international Politics* as “the most prominent expression of ‘positivist’ international relations” (Fierke, 2003: p.336), and uses Wittgenstein’s later philosophy to criticise this and other “explanatory theories” in IR (Fierke, 2010a: p.84). This anti-positivist presentation of the relevance of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy for IR runs through the majority of Fierke’s books and articles (e.g. Fierke, 1998: p.12 & 17; 2002: p.332; 2003; 2010a; 2010b: p.173-4; 2013: p.24-26; 2016a: p.72-3 and 2016b: p.220).

While Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke are the most consistent and prolific appliers of later Wittgenstein’s philosophy to argue against ‘positivist’ approaches to IR, there are also other IR scholars and commentators who associate Wittgenstein’s later philosophy with an ‘anti-positivist’ stance. Some base their comments on the influence of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy on Peter Winch, who in *The Idea of a Social Science* famously argued against the application of methods from the so-called

'natural sciences' to social affairs (Winch, 1958: p.1). Thus Mervyn Frost, having attributed the 'backwardness' of IR to a "positivist bias", notes that Winch "combined the insights" of "Max Weber and Wilhelm Dilthey ... with some of the implications of the philosophical work done by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his later period", resulting in "a rejection of the positivist assumptions about the nature of social reality" (Frost, 1986: p.18). Meanwhile others simply note the popularity of later Wittgenstein among IR scholars who are opposed to 'positivist' approaches within the discipline. So, for example, Jim George refers to IR scholars' "renewed interest in Wittgenstein and elements of the analytical philosophy school and their dissent against the hegemony of logical positivism" (George, 1989: p.273, fn. 4). Finally, Aalberts and van Munster cite Wittgenstein's *PI* in objecting to some IR scholars' endorsement of a "positivist notion of a 'correspondence theory of truth'" (2008: p.729). This demonstrates how Wittgenstein's philosophy has become widely associated with anti-positivism within IR, partly due to the efforts of Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke.

Again, there are various lines of objection that are pursued by scholars who use Wittgenstein's philosophy to argue against what they regard as 'positivist' approaches to IR. However, one line of objection that appears to be particularly popular in this context is one that I am calling the 'anti-representationalist objection' (ARO). I will provide a fully fleshed-out summary of this line of argument in the next chapter, but for introductory purposes this line of argument runs as follows:

- (1) 'Positivist' approaches to IR are committed to a 'representational' view of language (commonly referred to as a 'picture' or 'mirror' view of language);
- (2) This view of language has been decisively criticised by later Wittgenstein;
- (3) 'Positivist' approaches to IR should therefore be avoided.

The above line of argument features prominently in the work of Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke, who I have argued are three of the most prolific and sustained appliers of Wittgenstein's philosophy to IR. This specific line of argument is found, among other places, in Kratochwil (1989: p.5-6), Fierke (2010a: p.93-4), and Pin-Fat (2010: p.8-9

and 12-13), and I will discuss the details of these scholars' renditions of the ARO at length in the next chapter. This line of argument is also presented and referred to by other IR scholars who cite Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke as its proponents, such as when Aalberts and van Munster articulate this line of argument with reference to Fierke in discussing the problem that so-called 'conventional constructivists' such as Wendt have in taking inter-subjectivity and the interpretive aspects of social life seriously.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Justification for Focusing on the ARO***

As I indicated in the first part of the introduction, it is this 'anti-representationalist' line of objection (ARO) to 'positivist' approaches to IR that I will be focusing on in the thesis. There are several reasons for my choice of topic:

- Firstly, the ARO is obviously an attractive prospect for IR scholars who want to apply Wittgenstein's philosophy, as is demonstrated by the fact that it is employed in the main works of the three most prolific and sustained appliers of Wittgenstein's philosophy to IR.
- Secondly, the ARO has clearly been quite influential within IR, having been identified by commentators as a strong suit of those who have used Wittgenstein to argue against so-called 'positivist' approaches to the discipline (e.g. Debrix, 2002: p.202 & p.206; Aalberts and van Munster, 2008: p.728). In addition, the two main ideas that motivate the ARO (i.e. that Wittgenstein's later philosophy is 'anti-positivist', and that it is directed fundamentally against a 'representational' view of language) are common

---

<sup>17</sup> "The fact that conventional constructivists have a hard time dealing with this is a direct consequence of a positivist notion of a 'correspondence theory of truth.' That is, they assume truth to be out there in the world, and it is the job of scholars to discover theories that correspond with that world. As such these statements are to be tested against reality. This is of course problematic when that reality is socially constructed and reconstructed by our very practices and language. Facts do *not* speak for themselves, but are construed within our theoretical and discursive frameworks, as reflectivists and critical constructivists have convincingly claimed, and language is not a neutral medium to mirror the independent reality (cf. Fierke, 2002, see Wittgenstein, 1952; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985)." (Aalberts and van Munster, 2008: p.728, my emphasis).



assumptions that crop up when Wittgenstein's philosophy is mentioned or utilised by IR scholars more generally.<sup>18</sup>

- Thirdly, out of the various 'anti-positivist' arguments that Wittgenstein's philosophy has been used to make in IR, the ARO is in my eyes the most problematic (at least in its current formulations by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke). Hence it would benefit from a critical intervention.
- Fourthly, although I can see some problems with the ARO as a line of argument, I am (as I have mentioned previously) sympathetic to its overall aims in challenging the sorts of approaches to IR that are identified as 'positivist' within the discipline. Therefore, I would like to help to strengthen the case against 'positivist' approaches in IR by critically examining and replacing the ARO.

To summarise: the ARO is a distinctive and influential line of argument which Wittgenstein's philosophy has been used to make in IR. While it is not the only way in which Wittgenstein's philosophy has been employed in IR, nor the only way in which Wittgenstein's philosophy has been used to argue against 'positivist' approaches to IR, it is notable because it appears in the work of the three IR scholars who are most prolific and sustained in their application of Wittgenstein's philosophy to IR: namely, Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke. Other scholars commentating on Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke's applications of Wittgenstein's philosophy have identified the ARO as a strong suit and, in addition, there are key elements of this line of argument that are commonly assumed by IR scholars who write about Wittgenstein's relevance for IR more generally. Given the above considerations, the ARO stands out as a specific aspect of applying Wittgenstein's philosophy in IR that would particularly benefit from critical examination.

---

<sup>18</sup> For example, Farrands writes that Wittgenstein's later philosophy "takes the rejection" of a 'correspondence' view of linguistic truth and meaning "as its starting point", and "requires a non-positivist account of language" (Farrands, 2000: p. 83 & 93); meanwhile, Ruggie presents Wittgenstein as one of a host of intellectuals who were responsible for 'shattering' the aspiration of modernity "to develop objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art, according to their inner logic" (Ruggie, 1993: p.145; Habermas, 1981: p.9).

That is not to say that it would not also be useful to critically examine the various other arguments and approaches that Wittgenstein's philosophy has been used to support in IR. Rather: given the necessity of selecting a more specific focus within the broad and varied topic of Wittgenstein's application to IR, the ARO is a deserving case on which to home in. As such, this thesis does not strive to offer a general verdict on existing applications of Wittgenstein's philosophy to IR, but to offer a judgement on a particularly influential and popular strand thereof, and thereby accomplish one part of a larger body of work that would be necessary to arrive at a thorough general assessment of existing applications of Wittgenstein to IR. As stated in the introduction, this is not the only contribution that the thesis will make, since the critical assessment of the ARO will be used in the second half of the thesis as a basis for developing an alternative and more fruitful application of the relevant remarks from Wittgenstein's later philosophy to IR.

The main focus of the first half of the thesis will thus be on the ARO as it appears in the works of Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke. As such, my summary and critical evaluation of this line of argument in the first two chapters will be based on selected passages by these three scholars, in which the ARO is most clearly expressed and elaborated. This selective approach may give rise to some suspicions of 'cherry-picking', which I should like to take the opportunity to allay at this point. Firstly, it is of course true that the ARO does not appear in every piece of writing by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke. These scholars do not mention or employ the ARO every time they apply Wittgenstein's philosophy, and they also draw on Wittgenstein's philosophy in other ways that are unconnected with the ARO. However, the ARO nevertheless forms an important and influential part of the way in which these scholars have employed Wittgenstein's philosophy to argue against 'positivist' approaches to IR, and is a line of argument that they all continue to stand by as an authoritative component of their Wittgenstein-inspired contribution to their discipline.<sup>19</sup> Therefore

---

<sup>19</sup> For example, Kratochwil puts forward or alludes to the ARO in books and articles spanning his whole career, including 1989 (p.28), 1993 (p.76), 2001 (p.19-20), 2009, 2013 (p.2), 2014 (pp.11, 20, 53 & 58) and 2016 (p.288). In Pin-Fat's case, although the ARO does not appear explicitly or in its entirety in her more recent work, it does appear in the 2010 book that Pin-Fat continues to cite as her definitive

it is not unjustified to extract this line of argument from these scholars' wider efforts in order to subject it to a thorough critical examination.

Secondly, although my critical summary and evaluation of the ARO will involve concentrating on certain aspects and passages of Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke's writings at the exclusion of others, the primary reason for this strategy is not to dwell unfairly on the 'weaker' parts of these scholars' work, but to bring out the most representative expressions of the ARO in order to undertake the fullest and fairest examination of this line of argument as these scholars understand it. This may involve leaving substantial tracts of Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke's work out of the discussion. However, it is not that this material has been ignored or overlooked, but that, having been read and taken into account, it has been found either not to contain references to the particular line of argument being examined, or to contain references to the ARO that are inferior in length or detail to the paraphrases of this line of argument that these scholars offer elsewhere.

Having provided a broad-brush survey of applications of Wittgenstein's philosophy to IR, and explained the rationale for my focus on the ARO, I will proceed to the next chapter where I will provide a detailed outline of the ARO as it appears in the work of Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke. The purpose of providing this outline is to facilitate the subsequent identification and explanation of certain problems with the ARO that I will undertake in Chapter 2, which in turn will enable these problems to be addressed and repaired with the appropriate clarity and precision in Chapters 3-4.

---

statement of "what constitutes a grammatical reading, its elaboration of key themes in the later philosophy of Wittgenstein, and its significance for global politics" (Pin-Fat, 2013: p.243, fn.7); in addition to which she continues to repeat some of the main claims she used previously to argue against 'positivist' approaches to IR in the context of the ARO (Pin-Fat, 2013: p.250; 2015: p.87-88). Similarly, the ARO is repeatedly put forward by Fierke in various books and articles up to 2010, and although it does not appear so often after that, Fierke does not publicly disavow this line of argument and refers to it again in a 2016 article (2016: p.72), as well as continuing to affirm elements of it in other recent work (e.g. Fierke, 2013: p.24-5, 46).

## **Chapter 1 Summarising the Anti-Representationalist Objection to ‘Positivist’ Approaches to IR**

In this Chapter I will summarise the anti-representationalist objection (ARO), which is a line of argument that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke use Wittgenstein’s philosophy to make against ‘positivist’ approaches to IR. I will start in Section 1.1 by quoting and briefly analysing some key passages from Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke’s work where this line of argument is best expressed. In Section 1.2 I will give a fuller explanation of what the ‘positivist’ approaches to IR are that this line of argument is meant to target, drawing on textual evidence from throughout Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke’s writings. In Section 1.3 I will provide a more in-depth summary of the ‘representational’ view of language that these scholars associate with ‘positivist’ approaches to IR, which they take to have been rejected by later Wittgenstein. In Section 1.4 I will explain how Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke link this ‘representational’ view of language with ‘positivist’ approaches to IR. Finally in Section 1.5 I will spell out the particular criticisms that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke use Wittgenstein to make on this basis.

### **1.1 Concise Statements of the Anti-Representationalist Objection**

An explicit statement of the ARO is found early on in Kratochwil’s 1989 book entitled *Rules, Norms and Decisions*. There, in the introduction, Kratochwil writes:

“I shall argue that our conventional understanding of social action and of the norms governing them is defective because of a fundamental misunderstanding of the function of language in social interaction, and because of a positivist epistemology that treats norms as ‘causes.’ Communication is therefore reduced to issues of describing ‘facts’, properly, i.e. to the ‘match’ of concepts and objects, and to the ascertainment of nomological regularities. Important aspects of *social* action such as advising, demanding, apologizing, asserting, promising, etc., cannot be adequately understood thereby. Although the philosophy of ordinary language has abandoned the ‘mirror’ image of language since the later Wittgenstein, the research programs developed within the confines of logical positivism are, nevertheless, still indebted to the old conception. I shall argue in this book

that only a fundamental reorientation of the research program is likely to overcome these difficulties.” (Kratochwil, 1989: p.5-6)

In this passage Kratochwil identifies his target as ‘conventional’ approaches to IR which were “developed within the confines of logical positivism”, and allegedly employ “a positivist epistemology that treats norms as ‘causes’” and reduce communication to the ‘description of facts’ and “the ascertainment of nomological regularities”. Kratochwil argues that the relevant approaches to IR are indebted to an old conception or ‘image’ of language as a ‘mirror’, which he claims was long ago abandoned by ordinary language philosophers in the wake of later Wittgenstein. The suggested conclusion is that the historical abandonment of the mirror image of language within philosophy, and the criticisms that led to this abandonment, should lead IR scholars to fundamentally reorient their research programmes away from ‘positivist’ approaches to IR. It is worth noting that although the above passage was written in 1989, Kratochwil has asserted as recently as 2001 that ‘positivism’ is “the orthodox understanding of science among IR specialists” (Kratochwil, 2001: p.14), and has continued in his contemporary work to warn against ‘theories’ of IR “in the fashion of ‘science’” (Kratochwil, 2016: p.291). Less detailed expressions of the above line of argument are also found in Kratochwil’s 2001 and 2013 essays respectively (2001: p.29 & 34; 2013: p.2).

A similar statement of the ARO is found in the following passages taken from Fierke’s 2010 article entitled ‘Wittgenstein and International Relations Theory’:

“Wittgenstein’s early work, in the *Tractatus*, informed the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle. While logical positivism per se is no longer in fashion, the picture theory of language continues to underpin assumptions about hypothesis testing within the social sciences. At the other end of the spectrum, Wittgenstein’s U-turn in the *Philosophical Investigations* (1958) gave impetus to the postmodern critique of the autonomous rational agent (Honneth 1995). In the middle of this spectrum, his argument that language use is action has influenced social theory more broadly (e.g. Austin 1963; Searle 1969; Berger and Luckman 1967). ... The transition in [Wittgenstein’s] thought from a picture theory to a more constitutive notion of language is precisely the transition that has been underway within IR debates for the last

twenty years, from the unquestioned assumption, best articulated by Waltz (1979), that theory mirrors the logic of the international system across time, to the ‘constructivist turn’, and the greater attention to cultural difference, meaning, context and processes of constitution and change (Fierke 2002).” (Fierke, 2010a: p.83-4)

“Wittgenstein cannot be ‘applied’ in the way you would, for instance, apply realist or institutionalist theory. The latter are explanatory models. Wittgenstein, in his later work, provided a critique of the picture theory of language, which is often assumed in explanatory theories. Hypothesis testing rests on a picture theory of language and the idea that we can compare scientific categories with the world to see whether they correspond.” (Fierke, 2010a: p.84)

In these passages, Fierke echoes Kratochwil’s argument that approaches to IR that were developed under the influence of ‘logical positivism’ are beholden to an outdated philosophical conception – or, in Fierke’s stronger terminology, a ‘theory’ – of language that was criticised by later Wittgenstein, according to which language supposedly “pictures” or “mirrors” reality.<sup>20</sup> While Kratochwil characterised such approaches to IR as focusing on the identification of “causes”, the description of “facts” and the ascertainment of “nomological regularities” (Kratochwil, 1989: p.5-6), Fierke characterises them as “explanatory theories” or “models” which employ “hypothesis testing” (Fierke, 2010a: p.84). Like Kratochwil, Fierke suggests that these sorts of approaches involve making the assumption that one can ‘match up’ theoretical concepts with objective entities or features of reality. Fierke acknowledges that contemporary social and political scholars have largely moved on from endorsing ‘logical positivism’ *per se*, although she argues that explanatory theoretical approaches to IR nevertheless continue largely to be underpinned by the ‘picture theory’ of language.

Before moving on to look at the ARO as it is expressed by Pin-Fat, I should note the distinctiveness of Pin-Fat’s overall impetus and aim compared to that of Kratochwil and Fierke. Kratochwil and Fierke are both IR scholars who seek to develop and

---

<sup>20</sup> As we shall see later, Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke use words like ‘picturing’ and ‘mirroring’ interchangeably in this context.

popularise 'constructivist' approaches to studying IR and, as such, the ARO appears in the context of their wider attempts to discredit rival approaches and to demonstrate the superiority of 'constructivism' as a methodological framework. Pin-Fat, meanwhile, is concerned primarily with developing what she calls a 'grammatical' approach for analysing the assumptions of IR theories, and with challenging the exclusion of ethical issues and questions from mainstream IR theory. Despite this difference in focus, however, Pin-Fat still argues against the employment of 'positivist' approaches to IR along the same lines as Kratochwil and Fierke. This can be seen most clearly in the following passages from Pin-Fat's 2010 book on *Universality, Ethics and International Relations*:

"What captivates us into reading accounts of ethics in world politics as representations of international political reality? Primarily, it is that we think that theorists are outlining the 'thing's nature': the nature of the international, the nature of the ethical, the nature of anarchy, the nature of states, the nature of theory, and so on. According to Wittgenstein, this kind of captivity arises because traditional philosophers (and, as I will show in subsequent chapters, some IR theorists) are seduced by a metaphysical notion of what makes a philosophical or theoretical inquiry profound (deep), namely, the search for *essences* ...

For Wittgenstein, we think we are outlining a 'thing's nature' and are captivated by it, because of the view that language and thought *represent* reality. In other words, that the role of language and thought is representational or a 'mirror of nature' (Rorty 1980). ...

Wittgenstein's philosophical 'sketches' [in the *Philosophical Investigations*] can be construed as an investigation into the assumptions (the pictures that hold us captive) which inform the notion of language and thought as representation." (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.8-9)

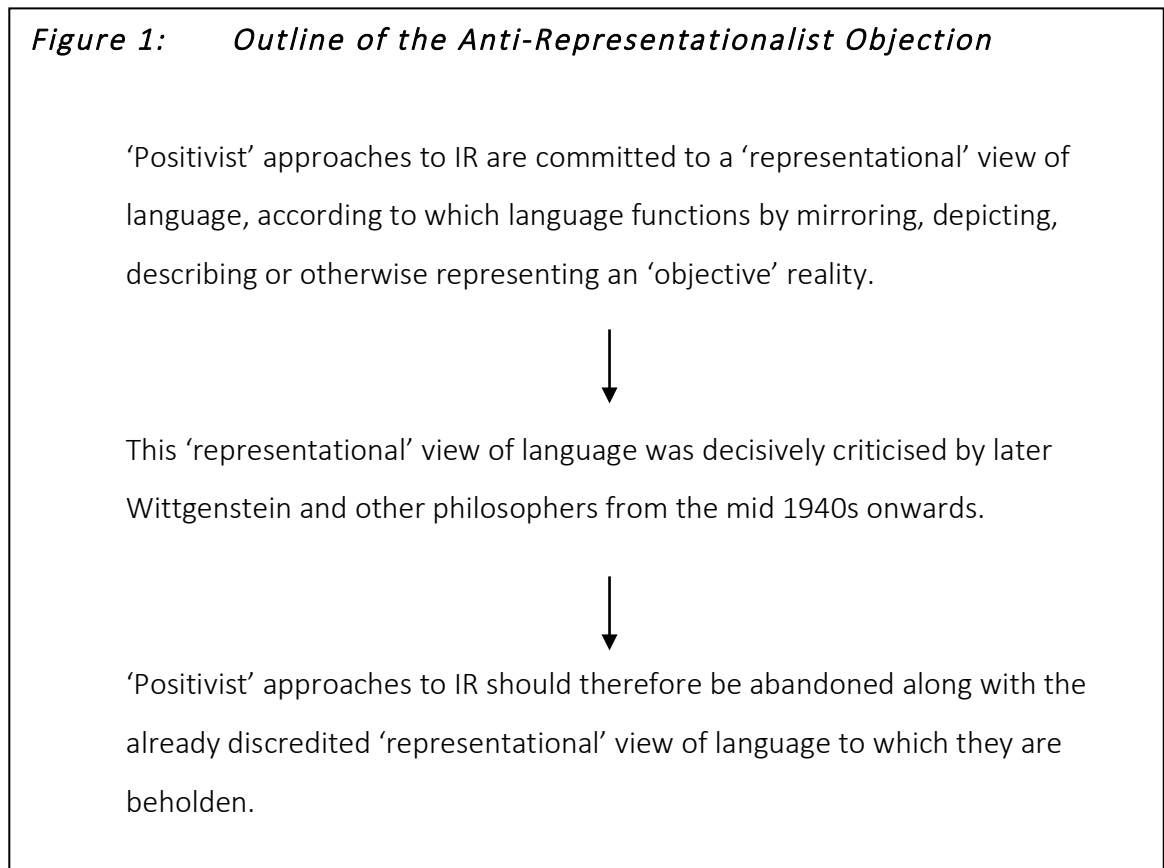
"The ideal of pointing to an object and naming it (an ostensive definition), is the equivalent of 'looking' at history and saying 'this is a condition of international politics' and therefore, directly relevant to methods of explanation employed in IR. Indeed, one could say that an ostensive definition is the 'unimpeachable model of the relation between language and 'reality' (Staten 1985: 69). In the social sciences (in which one can include IR) it is, broadly speaking, an empiricist-positivist approach that 'applies scientific method to human affairs conceived as belonging to a natural order open to objective enquiry' (Hollis 1994: 41). But [later] Wittgenstein makes us think about this otherwise ... ." (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.12-13)

In the first passage, Pin-Fat enquires critically into an assumption that she alleges is made by various IR scholars (not just 'positivist' ones) that theoretical accounts of IR represent the 'nature' or 'reality' of world politics. Pin-Fat suggests that the reason why people make this assumption is because they have bought into a "view that language and thought *represent* reality," which Pin-Fat identifies as a view that Wittgenstein criticised in his later philosophy. In the second passage, Pin-Fat adapts this argument to work more specifically against what she calls "an empiricist-positivist approach" to IR. There Pin-Fat refers to a 'model' of the relationship between language and reality as essentially a kind of 'naming' – which, incidentally, she equates earlier with the view that language and thought represent reality (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.9) – and suggests that this model is manifest in IR by 'positivist' approaches which seek to apply 'scientific' methods to international politics (see above). Like Kratochwil and Fierke, Pin-Fat suggests that Wittgenstein's later philosophy provides strong motivations for not only giving up a representational view or 'model' of language, but also 'positivist' approaches to IR which allegedly involve a commitment to this view. This opinion is expressed particularly clearly by Pin-Fat in the third passage quoted above.



## Outline of the Anti-Representationalist Objection

On the basis of the passages quoted above, we can provide the following general outline of the ARO as it appears in the work of Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke:



As we saw in the last section, Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke all use the term 'positivism' to characterise approaches to IR that they are using Wittgenstein's later philosophy to argue against. In this section, I will try to explain in a bit more detail what these scholars mean by the term 'positivism' in this context, and what they understand a 'positivist' approach to IR to be.

In *Rules, Norms and Decisions*, Kratochwil associates 'positivism' with a general "world-image" according to which the world consists of observable "brute facts" or "givens", and scientific 'progress' "depends upon an exhaustive description of these facts and upon the establishment of certain regularities among them" (Kratochwil, 1989: p.21). This is a view which Kratochwil takes to be common to both Comte's

'positivist' sociology and Bentham's 'empiricist' approach to morals and legislation, and it is on this basis that Kratochwil uses the term 'positivism' in a broad sense which encompasses both "logical positivism" and "empiricism" (Kratochwil, 1989: p.267, n.1).<sup>21</sup> In a later essay, Kratochwil identifies 'logical positivism' with the "scientific explanation scheme proposed by Popper, or Hempel" (Kratochwil, 2001: p.32), and refers critically to sociologists and IR scholars who "opt for a scientific explanation in the fashion of logical positivism" (Kratochwil, 2001: p.14). Here Kratochwil asserts that the "methodology of logical positivism" involves a "search for transhistorical laws" which can be arrived at via "data analysis", and a restriction of the term 'explanation' to refer only to "nomological deductive explanations and their variations" (Kratochwil, 2001, p.32).

Like Kratochwil, Fierke uses the term 'positivism' fairly loosely to refer to a range of positions or academic approaches, while acknowledging that there is a more specific historical meaning of the term. In an article from 2001, Fierke clarifies that although in her opinion the term 'positivism' strictly "refers to the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle in the 1930s", she is using the term in reference to more recent debates where it has been used to imply "a broader category of positions" which share certain priorities and assumptions (Fierke, 2001: p.133-4, n.1). According to Fierke these priorities and assumptions include "the search for causal laws and generalization, a correspondence theory of truth and language, and the division between an objective external world and subjective mental acts" (Fierke, 2001: p.133-4). In 'Links Across the Abyss', Fierke cites Nicholson in characterising 'positivism' as an approach which involves a "search for lawlike patterns and generalizations" in which there is an emphasis on "causality and hypothesis testing" (Fierke, 2002, p.332).<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> 'Logical positivism' according to Kratochwil is "[t]he idea that science concerned with the objective world had to forgo metaphysical stances and be concerned solely with 'positive' facts", while 'empiricism' involves a focus on "facts" and an "inductivist bias" (Kratochwil, 1989: p.21; p.267, n.1)

<sup>22</sup> In a later essay from 2003, Fierke criticises the simplistic use of the term 'positivism' by IR scholars to distinguish approaches to IR which focus on 'empirical' research from those which involve the analysis of language (Fierke, 2003: p.69-70) – however she herself uses the term in a similarly simplistic way in the same essay when she claims that "positivist" and "constructivist" traditions in IR "rely on opposing conceptualizations of the relationship between language and the world" (Fierke, 2003: p.73).

Finally, as we saw in the last section, Pin-Fat takes up Martin Hollis's definition of 'positivism' as "any approach which applies scientific method to human affairs conceived as belonging to a natural order open to objective enquiry" (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.12-13; Hollis, 1994: p.42). Pin-Fat clarifies in a footnote that she "follow[s] Hollis in using positivism in the wider sense to cover positive science and logical positivism" (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.134, n.6). Like Fierke, a feature of 'positivism' that Pin-Fat particularly highlights is the separation of facts from values, and the exclusion of ethics and normative questions from the remit of 'objective' social and political study (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.34, p.39).

## Outline of 'Positivist' Approaches to IR

In light of the above, we can provide the following outline of the main features that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke take to be characteristic of 'positivist' approaches to IR:

***Figure 2: Features of 'Positivist' Approaches in IR, According to Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke***

According to Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke, a 'Positivist' approach is one that:

- Makes a strict distinction between 'objective' vs. 'subjective' (or 'facts' vs. 'values'), with the latter being excluded from the realm of legitimate academic enquiry.
- Does not acknowledge an epistemologically relevant distinction between the so-called 'natural sciences' and the study of human affairs.
- Focuses on:
  - Quantitative data and data analysis.
  - Searching for general 'laws' or regularities that can be used to explain specific events or cases.
  - Formulating and testing hypotheses.
  - Establishing causality.

The main historical example of a 'positivist' approach to IR that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke all agree on is Kenneth Waltz's 1979 work *A Theory of International Politics*. Kratochwil refers to Waltz as a scholar who attempts to apply the 'hypothetical-deductive' model of scientific explanation to international politics and believes in "the promise of a purely positivistic science of politics" (Kratochwil, 1982: p.57),<sup>23</sup> while Fierke and Pin-Fat both cite Waltz as epitomising the 'positivist hegemony' in IR during the 1970s-80s.<sup>24</sup> The reason why Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke pick Waltz as their main example of a positivist IR scholar is likely due to the extent of his purported influence within the discipline. As Pin-Fat puts it: Waltz is "widely regarded as one of the most important international theorists of the post-war period" (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.82).

A more recently active IR scholar whom Fierke and Kratochwil associate with a positivist approach is Alexander Wendt, in particular his 1999 *Social Theory of International Politics*. This is not surprising since Wendt explicitly identifies himself as a positivist on the basis that he is "a strong believer in science" (Wendt, 1999: p.39-40),<sup>25</sup> commits to a form of "scientific realism" which "assumes that reality exists independent of human beings ... and can be discovered through science" (Wendt, 1999: p.49), and seeks to defend "the view that constructivist social theory is compatible with a scientific approach to social inquiry" (Wendt, 1999: p.31). For her part, Fierke describes Wendt as a scholar who tries to combine 'positivism' with 'constructivism' (Fierke, 2002: p.332; 2003: p.73), and groups him together with Dessler and Katzenstein, Keohane and Krasner, as one of a number of IR scholars "who claim to be 'positivist'" and "agree on questions of methodology" (Fierke, 2003: p.69). Meanwhile, Kratochwil acknowledges Wendt's distinctiveness from "unreconstituted Waltzian realists" and "political scientists of the mainstream" (2011 [2002]: p.154), but argues that Wendt nevertheless retains some versions of their 'positivist' assumptions regarding scientific realism, "representationalism" and the unity of science (Kratochwil, 2011 [2002]: p.154). Aside from those mentioned above,

---

<sup>23</sup> Kratochwil, 2011 [1978]: p.28. He implies that Waltz's 'systemic' approach to IR is 'positivist' by summarising Waltz's position as being that "only a physicalist account – cast in the form of observational facts – can explain" (Kratochwil, 1989: p.28).

<sup>24</sup> Pin-Fat, 2010: p.34 and p.135, n.3; Fierke, 2001: p.336; 2003: p.75; 2010: p.83.

<sup>25</sup> Albeit of a "pluralistic" kind (Wendt, 1999: p.39-40)

Fierke names Inis L. Claude Jr. (1962) as another classic 'positivist' scholar of IR (Fierke, 2003: p.75); while Kratochwil identifies Kelsen and Hart as having 'positivist' approaches to international law.<sup>26</sup>

### **1.3 What is the 'Representational' View of Language that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke associate with 'Positivist' Approaches to IR?**

As we have seen, Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke all associate 'positivist' approaches to IR with a problematic 'representational' view of language which they suggest has been convincingly discredited by later Wittgenstein and other subsequent philosophers. In this section I shall undertake to explain in more detail what the relevant view of language is according to these scholars, and how they take it to be connected with 'positivist' approaches to IR.

First of all, I should mention that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke each use a variety of expressions to refer to the view of language in question. These include:

- The mirror 'image' of language (Kratochwil, 1989: p.5-6; 2001: p.29)
- An understanding of language as a 'mirror' of reality (Kratochwil, 1993: p.76)
- The mirror theory of language (Kratochwil, 2001: p.29)
- A conception of language as a mirror of reality (Kratochwil, 2001: p.7)
- A conception of language as a 'mirror of nature' (Kratochwil 2011 [2009]: p.205)
- A picture view of language (Fierke 2002: p.332, p.333)
- The picture theory of language (Fierke, 2010a: p.83)
- A mirror view of language (Fierke and Jørgensen, 2001: p.9)
- A correspondence theory of language and truth (Fierke, 2001: p.126)
- A 'picture theory' of meaning (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.79)
- A representational view of thought and language (Pin-Fat, 2011: p.7)

---

<sup>26</sup> Although whether Kelsen and Hart are appropriately thought of as scholars of IR rather than, for example, legal or political philosophers, is an open question.

A view that the role of language and thought is representational or a 'mirror of nature' (Pin-Fat, 2011: p.9)

A notion of language and thought as representation (Pin-Fat, 2011: p.9)

A representational picture of language (Pin-Fat 2011: p.10)

An understanding of language according to which language represents reality (Pin-Fat, 2013: p.250)

In light of this diversity, one might question why I have chosen to use the phrase 'representational view of language' to refer to the item in question. The reasons for my choice are that (a) Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke are not particularly careful about observing distinctions between terms like 'theory', 'view', 'picture', 'conception' and so on, and hence the term 'view' can be understood here as a neutral placeholder for whichever word these scholars happen to choose on a given occasion; and (b) all three of these scholars use words like 'represent', 'depict', 'correspond', 'reflect' and 'mirror' interchangeably when summarising this 'view' and its assumptions (in this they follow Rorty, from whom they borrow the expression 'mirror of nature'), and the word 'representational' is a convenient multi-purpose concept which can be used to sum up the connotations of these various terms. Having issued this terminological clarification, I will now move on to a more detailed exposition of what Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke understand the representational view of language to be.

Unlike Fierke and Pin-Fat, Kratochwil does not dedicate whole passages to summarising the representational view of language in detail; however, we can piece together an idea of what he takes this view to be by compiling the fragmentary paraphrases and critical references to it that are dispersed throughout Kratochwil's corpus. Recall that in the introduction to his 1989 book Kratochwil characterises the representational view of language as one which reduces communication to "issues of describing 'facts', properly, i.e. to the 'match' of concepts and objects" (Kratochwil, 1989: p.5-6). It is not immediately clear from that passage what 'reducing' communication to factual description (or the match of concepts and objects) amounts to; however in his 2001 article, Kratochwil unpacks this as the view that

language only has *meaning* “in virtue of its ability to depict accurately the things, actions, and properties of the ‘outer world.’ Thus, nouns stood for things, verbs for actions, and adjectives for properties” (Kratochwil, 2001: p.19). Later in the same essay Kratochwil equates this with the idea that “concepts meant something ... because they captured the ontological essences of ‘things’” (Kratochwil, 2001: p.20). Kratochwil subsequently criticises this view for suggesting that “‘meaning’ can be reduced to reference”, that “the meaning of a sentence is ... the sum of the correspondences of various words utilized in it” and that “the meaning of a sentence is ... contained in the reference, [or] the structure of the sentence” (Kratochwil, 2001: p.29). Meanwhile in his more recent essays Kratochwil continues to argue against the assumption that “the meaning of a concept ... is ... its reference” (Kratochwil, 2011 [2009]: p.144-5; 2013: p.2) and “the notion that ... objectively given things are mirrored by our concepts” (Kratochwil, 2006: p.187).

On the basis of such passages we can conclude that according to Kratochwil, the representational view of language is one according to which spoken or written linguistic expressions are descriptions of ‘empirical facts’, individual words refer to ‘objects’ (in the broad sense of ‘objectively given’ things, actions or properties), and the meaning of words and sentences is constituted by what they purportedly describe or refer to in reality. The manner in which Kratochwil paraphrases these assumptions also implies that according to him this view is committed to two corollaries: firstly, that the facts and objects represented by language are ‘objective’ in the sense that they exist and are a certain way independently of subjective preferences, interpretations or values (a form of objective realism); and secondly, that objects which fall under the referential scope of the same concept-word all share some ‘essential’ feature in common by virtue of which they are members of the same category (a form of essentialism).

Let us turn now to Fierke. While Kratochwil does not explicitly associate the representational view of language with the work of a particular philosopher, Fierke explicitly identifies it with a philosophical account of language that she takes to be endorsed by early Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, and accordingly uses her

interpretative paraphrases of this text to summarise the relevant view. Despite this difference in presentation, however, Fierke's summaries of the representational view of language are largely in accord with Kratochwil's. For example, in her 2001 essay, Fierke refers to the representational view of language as one according to which language is "a set of labels that either correspond or don't with a real world" such that "we can compare our statements about the world with the world to see whether they correspond" (Fierke, 2001: 126), and in her 2004 essay Fierke writes that according to the *Tractatus* "words are applied as labels, strung together in propositions which picture the logic of the world" (Fierke, 2004: p.478). Meanwhile in her 2003 essay, Fierke provides the following more extended summary:

"Propositions are connections between words, each with a separate meaning, which describe the internal properties of facts or simples. The world is divided into atomistic and independent units that are mirrored in language. Language is the totality of propositions, and therefore, the totality of the world. Propositions provide a logical scaffolding for how things stand in relation to one another if true. There are two alternatives for each proposition: true and false. The logical scaffolding provides a picture of reality." (Fierke, 2002: p.336)<sup>27</sup>

So, as with Kratochwil, it appears that according to Fierke the representational view of language is one which takes language and linguistic communication as a whole to be reducible to factual propositions (an assumption which is expressed as the stipulation that 'language is the totality of propositions'); according to which the individual words that make up these propositions each refer to objectively real 'things' or 'elements' of reality, the meaning of each word is derived from what it refers to in reality, and the meaning of a proposition is the possible configuration of 'things' that it depicts. That Fierke also takes this view to be committed to the two corollaries of 'objective realism' and 'essentialism' is implied by her assertion elsewhere that "the *Tractatus* presents logic as a picture of the objective of facts,

---

<sup>27</sup> The paragraph before this one in Fierke's 2002 article suggests a more complex version of the representational view of language, in which there is a distinction made between 'elementary propositions' in which every word corresponds with an 'object', and other types of proposition which can be 'analysed' into elementary ones (see, e.g., 2002: p.336). However, this is not a distinction that Fierke acknowledges when she comes to criticise the representational view of language and its assumptions. Therefore I am taking the simpler version as definitive of what Fierke understands the representational view of language to amount to.



which have essences” (Fierke, 2002: p.343). Fierke goes one step further than Kratochwil in explicitly attributing to this view the additional assumption that the truth of a sentence (or proposition) is determined by whether it ‘corresponds’ or ‘agrees’ with reality, although this is an assumption that Kratochwil sometimes implicitly associates with the ‘mirror view’ (e.g. Kratochwil, 2011 [2000]: p.155).

Like Fierke, Pin-Fat bases her summaries of the representational view of language on her interpretation of the *Tractatus*, although again it broadly accords with what Kratochwil summarises as the ‘mirror’ view. In her 1997 article Pin-Fat provides the following outline:

“On this view names name objects and configurations of names depict possible configurations of objects in the world. In this way, language can represent possible states of affairs because it shares the same structure. Thus, the truth or falsity of a proposition depends on whether it agrees or disagrees with reality (Wittgenstein, 1922, 2.223, 4.05).” (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.79-80)

In her 2010 book Pin-Fat repeats the above summary together with a quote of the second paragraph of the first remark of Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* (PI §1b) which she takes to be a critical reference to this view, and attributes to it the additional assumption that “the objects to which words refer confer meaning and sentences are combinations of such names” (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.10). There Pin-Fat modifies her interpretation to one according to which early Wittgenstein did not himself endorse the representational view of language, but presented it within the *Tractatus* for ‘therapeutic’ reasons as something for the reader to overcome (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.27).

While Pin-Fat differs from Kratochwil in taking the representational view of language to be presented with the *Tractatus*, and departs slightly from Fierke in terms of her revised interpretation of early Wittgenstein’s motives in presenting this view in the *Tractatus*, she nevertheless attributes the same assumptions to the representational view of language as these other two scholars. Thus – as we can see from the above passages – Pin-Fat takes the representational view of language to assume that

language consists of propositions that represent possible 'states of affairs'; that these propositions are composed of individual words that refer (or correspond) to 'objects'; and that the meaning of words and sentences is conferred on them by the facts and objects which they describe or refer to. Elsewhere in her 1997 essay, Pin-Fat associates the representational view of language with a "picture of the subject, reality and their relationship to one another" according to which reality "is the external world ... outside the mind" (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.81), which suggests that like Kratochwil and Fierke she takes this view to be committed to an assumption of 'objective realism'; while her equation of the assumption that words name objects with the assumption that "the meaning of [a] word ... is ... dependent on naming an element which is *common* to all instances of its use" (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.80) implies that she takes it to also involve the assumption of 'essentialism'. As with Fierke's summary, Pin-Fat's explicitly includes the additional assumption that propositional truth is determined by 'agreement' or 'correspondence' with reality.

## Outline of the Representational View of Language

In light of the last section, the representational view of language according to Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke can be outlined as consisting of the following assumptions:

<b>Figure 3: The Representational View of Language According to Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke</b>	
Assumption 1:	Language is composed of sentences that describe possible 'facts'.
Assumption 2:	Individual words in these sentences name/ refer to/ correspond with 'objects'.
Assumption 3:	The meaning of words and sentences comes from, or is constituted by, the 'objects' and 'facts' to which they refer.
Corollary i:	The relevant objects and facts belong to a reality that is 'objective' in the sense that it exists and is a certain way independently of subjective factors (objective realism);
Corollary ii:	Items falling under the referential scope of a particular word all share one common feature by virtue of which they belong to the same category (class essentialism);
Corollary iii:	Sentences are 'true' when they correspond or agree with reality (correspondence theory of truth).

Pin-Fat and Fierke sometimes group a number of the above assumptions together and summarise them collectively as the assumption that there is a 'logical' structure or order to reality which language 'mirrors' or 'reflects'. Thus Pin-Fat refers to the assumption of "a *super-order* between *super-concepts* – a 'hard' connection between the order of possibilities common to both thought and world" (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.80); while Fierke follows Hacker in attributing to the *Tractatus* the claim that "a sentence with 'sense' is one in which the logical syntax of language is perfectly isomorphic with the logical structure of reality" (Fierke, 2003: p.335-6; Hacker, 1996: p.37).

#### **1.4 How do Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke link the ‘Representational View of Language’ with ‘Positivist’ Approaches to IR?**

Having summarised what Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke take the ‘representational view of language’ to be, I will now explore in more detail how these scholars suggest that this view is connected with ‘positivist’ approaches to IR.

##### Connection 1: Historical Influence

All three scholars frame the connections that they draw between the representational view of language and ‘positivist’ approaches to IR with a historical narrative about the role of the representational view of language within philosophy, and the purported influence of philosophy on the methods employed in social and political study. The gist of this narrative is as follows: that the representational view of language was the dominant view of language within philosophy until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and was endorsed by a number of prominent philosophers and philosophical movements including the ‘logical positivists’ of the Vienna Circle; that scholars of social and political affairs were later influenced by these philosophies when developing their methodologies, especially by ‘logical positivism’ which they used as the basis for adapting and justifying the application of purportedly ‘scientific’ methods to their subject matter (such as hypothesis testing); and that as a result of this historical influence, approaches to IR which recommend or employ such methods are wholly or partially committed to the representational view of language that underpinned the philosophies according to which they were developed.

So, for example, while Kratochwil does not explicitly identify the ‘mirror view’ of language with the work of a particular philosopher, he implicitly attributes this view to a range of influential past philosophical movements including “classical as well as ‘modern’ (Cartesian) epistemology” (Kratochwil, 2001: p.34), “classical logic” (Kratochwil, 1989: p.225), “classical linguistic analysis” (Kratochwil, 1989: p.268, n.26) and the “logical positivism” of the Vienna Circle (Kratochwil, 1989: p.5-6). Kratochwil suggests that as a result, the “conventional understanding of social action” among IR

scholars is one which incorporates the 'mirror view' of language (Kratochwil, 1989: p.5); and that "much of [IR scholars'] standard understanding about the function of language was based, until recently, on a conception of language as a mirror of reality" (Kratochwil, 2001: p.19). As we saw previously, Kratochwil claims that in particular, "research programs developed within the confines of logical positivism are ... indebted to" the 'mirror conception' of language (Kratochwil, 1989: p.6), since they adopt a "positivist epistemology" that is committed to this view (Kratochwil, 1989: p.5).

Like Kratochwil, Fierke associates the representational view of language with "philosophical presuppositions underlying Western philosophy since Descartes" (Fierke and Jørgensen, 2001: p.4). However, while Kratochwil implies that Descartes himself was committed to the 'mirror view', Fierke suggests instead that Descartes was part of a tradition of metaphysics out of which the representational view of language developed, and that it was early Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* who "added a mirror or picture view of language, to ideas, building on the tradition of metaphysics, that logical structures are properties of an objective world" (Fierke and Jørgensen, 2001: p.9-10, n.2). From this point onward, Fierke's historical narrative is more or less in agreement with Kratochwil's, as she claims that the representational view of language was then "adopted by the logical positivists of the Vienna Circle" (Fierke and Jørgensen, 2001: p.9-10; Fierke, 2010a: p.83), and through their influence has shaped positivist practice in the social sciences" (Fierke, 2003: p.333).

Pin-Fat gives expression to a similar narrative in her 1997 article. There she argues that both the *Tractatus*' alleged "'picture theory' of meaning", and Waltz's 'positivist' account of how theory functions,<sup>28</sup> are committed to a "picture" of the relationship between the subject and reality which they get from "the Cartesian legacy of the exaltation of epistemology" (1997: p.79, p.81). Pin-Fat identifies the central assumption of this 'picture' as being of a distinction between the thinking 'subject' and an 'objective' external reality, in addition to which Pin-Fat attributes to the

---

<sup>28</sup> Pin-Fat does not refer to Waltz as a 'positivist' in this essay, however in her 2010 book she explicitly identifies Waltz as epitomising a 'positivist' approach to IR (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.34).

Cartesian tradition the assumption that the relationship between the subject and reality is essentially one of *representation*, whereby the subject's thoughts, perceptions, utterances, knowledge etc. are all understood as 'representations' of reality in some sense (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.81).

These historical sketches offered by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke can be seen as an introduction to the more specific parallels and connections that they identify between the representational view of language and 'positivist' approaches to IR, and as offering a potential explanation for why such connections might exist. Now I am going to look more closely at some of the specific ways in which Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke take the two to be connected (some of which have already been mentioned), which can be summarised under headings of *implicit commitment*, *common association* and *similarity*.

## Connection 2: Implicit Commitment

One of the main ways in which Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke allege a connection between the representational view of language and 'positivist' approaches to IR, is by suggesting that 'positivist' approaches to IR automatically *imply* or *entail* the representational view of language, and that they stand or fall together. Thus, for example, in his 1989 book Kratochwil suggests that the reduction of communication to the description of 'facts' and to "the 'match' of concepts and objects" is part and parcel of a "positivist epistemology", which is why he concludes that the problems associated with the 'mirror view' can only be averted by a complete reorientation of the research programme (Kratochwil, 1989: p.5-6). This is a suggestion that is reinforced by Kratochwil's argument in his 2001 essay, that the rejection of conceptual 'fuzziness' and 'normative' concerns in IR follows from the adoption of an "epistemology that is based on a 'mirror' image of language" (Kratochwil, 2001: p.29).<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Fierke claims in her 2010 essay that "the picture theory of language continues to underpin assumptions about hypothesis testing within the social sciences" (Fierke, 2010: p.83), and that "hypothesis testing rests on a picture theory

---

<sup>29</sup> Underlining denotes my emphasis.

of language and the idea that we can compare scientific categories with the world to see whether they correspond” (Fierke, 2010: p.84); both of which suggest that the recommendation and attempted employment of ‘hypothesis testing’ within IR betrays an implicit acceptance of the representational view of language.

At times, Pin-Fat and Fierke go as far as to imply that ‘positivism’ in IR, and the representational view of language, are one and the same thing. For example, Pin-Fat refers to the account of language she finds in the *Tractatus* as “logical positivism” (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.6), and then uses the term ‘positivism’ to cover both “positive science and logical positivism” (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.134, n.6), going on to identify the ‘naming’ model of the relationship between language and reality as taking the form in IR and other social sciences of “an empiricist-positivist approach” (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.12). Fierke is more overt in this regard, writing in a joint introduction with Jørgensen that:

“The linguistic turn signalled the transition from a positivist view of language as mirroring an objective reality, to language as constitutive of the social world. The former is a necessary point of departure for notions of hypothesis testing or the idea that theoretical statements can be compared with the world to see whether they correspond.” (Fierke and Jørgensen, 2001: p.7)

In the above passage, Fierke and Jørgensen not only identify the representational view of language as a specifically ‘positivist’ view, but also propose that assuming this view is “necessary” for ‘notions of hypothesis testing’, which suggests that one cannot endorse or develop a conception of hypothesis testing *without* assuming the representational view of language. In her 2010 essay Fierke again equates the representational view of language with ‘positivist’ approaches to IR when she argues:

“the transition in [Wittgenstein’s] thought from a picture theory to a more constitutive notion of language is precisely the transition that has been underway within IR debates for the last twenty years, from the unquestioned assumption, best articulated by Waltz (1979), that theory mirrors the logic of the international system across time, to the ‘constructivist turn’, and the greater attention to cultural difference, meaning, context and processes of constitution and change.” (Fierke, 2010a: p.84)

This identification of the representational view of language with ‘positivist’ approaches in IR can be viewed as a stronger version of the claim that ‘positivist’ approaches are implicitly committed to this view.

### Connection 3: Common Association

A slightly weaker way in which Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke try to forge a connection between the representational view of language and ‘positivist’ approaches in IR is by suggesting that IR scholars who adopt a ‘positivist’ approach *frequently* or *typically* happen to also assume the representational view of language. Thus Fierke writes that “Wittgenstein, in his later work, provided a critique of the picture theory of language, which is often assumed in explanatory theories” such as “realist or institutionalist” theories of IR (Fierke, 2010a: p.84, my emphasis), while Kratochwil argues that “most ‘realists’ ... believe in natural kinds and some essence that ‘correctly’ names the things in the world” (Kratochwil, 2011: p.144, my emphasis).<sup>30</sup>

### Connection 4: Similarities

Another sort of way in which Fierke and Pin-Fat try to connect the representational view of language with ‘positivist’ approaches to IR is by pinpointing specific similarities between the two in terms of the claims or assumptions to which they are committed. For example, in her 1997 essay Pin-Fat compares Kenneth Waltz’s claim that “a theory is a picture ... of a bounded realm or domain of activity” with the *Tractatus*’ proposition that language is a ‘picture’ of reality, and suggests that they are similar in that they both assume (a) that there is an irrevocable “separation” between the subject “and a passive, external reality”, and (b) that the relationship of the subject to reality is one of ‘representation’ (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.81-2; Waltz, 1979: p.8). Pin-Fat also draws a parallel between Waltz’s claim that a theory “indicates that

---

<sup>30</sup> Since Kratochwil uses the term ‘realist’ to characterise approaches to IR that he elsewhere calls ‘positivist’, the latter argument can be understood as intended to apply to ‘positivist’ approaches to IR as well.



some factors are more important than others and specifies the relations among them”, and the *Tractatus*’ alleged assumption that there is “a super-order” between concepts and essential elements of reality (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.81; Waltz, 1979: p.8), arguing that Waltz’s stipulation that theory must abstract from reality in order to “mirror the most important elements under consideration” is tantamount to assuming that there is a logical “order of possibilities common to both thought and world” (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.82).

Meanwhile Fierke, in her 2002 essay, also picks out Waltz’s claim that theory ‘depicts’ reality as resembling the Tractarian proposition that language is a ‘picture’ of reality, and suggests that Waltz’s approach to IR theory “relies on similar assumptions about the nature of language” to the (Fierke, 2002: p.336). Fierke highlights Waltz’s recommendation to IR theorists “to give a clear and fixed meaning to otherwise vague and varying terms,” his account of theory as being “derived from invariant laws based on factual correlations,” and his attempt to “lay bare the essential elements” of international politics as aspects of his work that particularly resemble the assumptions of the representational view of language presented in the *Tractatus*. Fierke spells out the similarities as follows:

“Like the *Tractatus*, Waltz provides a positional picture of reality composed of atomistic units. The relations between these parts and the whole are expressed in the structure of a logical scaffolding. Both provide a crystalline logic that relates to a world of simples. ... The resemblance rests on the following common assumptions. Logic exists in the world. To capture this logic requires an exercise in clarifying and fixing the meaning of terms. These terms correspond to a world of simples.” (Fierke, 2002: p.336)

With regard to the assumption that words correspond to simples, Fierke acknowledges that Waltz “does not claim the isomorphic [i.e. one-to-one] qualities of perfect correspondence between theory and world”; but like Pin-Fat, she suggests that Waltz makes the related assumption that there is an ‘essential’ underlying order or ‘logic’ of reality to whose ‘elements’ the concepts of a theory correspond (Fierke, 2002: p.336).

## Outline of the Connections

The ways in which Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke suggest that 'positivist' approaches to IR are connected with the representational view of language are summarised in the box below, for convenience.

***Figure 4: Ways in which Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke Suggest that 'Positivist' Approaches to IR are linked with the Representational View of Language***

- 1) 'Positivist' approaches to IR were *historically influenced* by popular philosophies that endorsed the representational view of language (this connection being used to frame the other more specific connections below).
- 2) 'Positivist' approaches to IR are *implicitly committed* to the representational view of language.
- 3) 'Positivist' approaches to IR *often go along with* a commitment to the representational view of language.
- 4) 'Positivist' approaches to IR are *similar* to the representational view of language in that they are committed to some of the same assumptions, and/or to assumptions which resemble those of the representational view of language in certain respects.

## A Note on Consistency

The reader may observe at this point that not all of the ways that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke try to link 'positivist' approaches to IR with the representational view of language appear to be compatible. So, for example, it might seem self-contradictory

to suggest – as Fierke does – that ‘positivist’ approaches to IR are *implicitly committed* to the representational view of language, and then to argue that they are committed to assumptions which are merely *similar* to those endorsed by this view (see, e.g., Fierke, 2002: p.336). Such apparent inconsistencies are indeed a cause for concern. However, since my aim in this chapter is to summarise rather than evaluate, having briefly acknowledged this difficulty, I will now move on to explain the objections that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke use Wittgenstein to make against ‘positivist’ approaches to IR on the basis of the above connections.

### **1.5 What are the Criticisms that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke Use Later Wittgenstein to make on this Basis?**

To recapitulate, so far in this chapter I have accomplished the following: In 1.1 I provided an overview of the anti-representationalist line of objection against ‘positivist’ approaches to IR that is employed by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke, using passages from their work in which this line of argument is most concisely and cohesively expressed. In 1.2 I explained which sorts of approaches are included in what these scholars consider to be ‘positivist’ approaches to IR, against which their anti-representationalist line of objection is directed. In 1.3 I provided an account of what these scholars understand by the problematic ‘representational’ view of language that they associate with ‘positivist’ approaches to IR, which they refer to using terms like the ‘mirror view’ or ‘picture view’ of language. In 1.4 I explained the different sorts of ways in which Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke connect this representational view of language with ‘positivist’ approaches to IR.

Having come this far, my task in the current section will be to explain the criticisms that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke make of ‘positivist’ approaches to IR on the basis of the alleged association with the representational view of language, for which they appeal to Wittgenstein’s later philosophy for support. As I have previously stated, my aim in this chapter is to summarise rather than to critically evaluate; and so aside from the occasional acknowledgement, I will largely refrain from pointing out any flaws or problematic features in Kratochwi, Fierke and Pin-Fat’s arguments.

Something that I would like to acknowledge at this juncture is that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke do not always make a clear distinction between criticisms that are meant to apply solely to the representational view of language, and those that are meant to also apply to 'positivist' approaches to IR on the basis of their assumption of this view. This is connected with the point that the manner in which criticisms of the representational view of language are thought to be applicable to 'positivist' approaches to IR would depend upon the precise ways in which they are thought to be connected. For example, if the claim is that 'positivist' approaches to IR automatically imply a commitment to the representational view of language, then criticisms of the latter view would presumably be thought likewise to automatically work as refutations of such approaches. If, however, the claim is that 'positivist' approaches to IR are committed to assumptions which *resemble* those of the representational view of language, then there would have to be some explicit argument made for how criticisms of the latter are still applicable to the former. Again, this is a problem that I will address in the next chapter when I come to evaluate the anti-representationalist line of objection. However, for now I will simply summarise the criticisms that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke make of the representational view of language (in the context of which they appeal to later Wittgenstein), and follow this with some brief remarks on what Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke envisage the consequences of these criticisms being for 'positivist' approaches to IR.

### Criticism 1: The 'Propositional' Model is Inadequate

In his work Kratochwil often airs the criticism that thinking of language purely in terms of factual propositions is not a good way of understanding the meaning of sentences and other so-called 'speech acts'. This is clearly a criticism aimed at what I previously called 'Assumption 1' and 'Assumption 3' of the representational view of language, according to which language is composed of sentences which describe possible 'facts', and the meaning of a sentence is the possible 'fact' that it represents.

Pin-Fat and Fierke also allude to this criticism of the representational view of language in their work (e.g. Pin-Fat, 1997: p.80; Fierke, 2003: p.75-6) – however, since they conflate it with the separate criticism that not all words refer to objects, I will focus here on Kratochwil’s version, as it is by him that this criticism is most clearly expressed.

There are two main reasons that Kratochwil offers to support his criticism of the propositional model of linguistic meaning: firstly, he argues that not all uses of language are statements of possible fact, and secondly, that are other important factors that contribute to the meaning of a particular use of language aside from its supposed ‘propositional content’. The following passage from Kratochwil’s 1989 book shows how these two reasons are combined by Kratochwil in his objection to the representational view of language:

“While classical logic assumed that communication among actors is possible on the basis of propositional content, which, in turn, is safeguarded by certain truth functions, the discussion of speech acts showed that such a conception of language is inadequate. Truth and falsity are appropriate criteria only when applied to propositions. Neither the illocutionary nor the perlocutionary effect of speech acts can thereby be analyzed. However, since promising, contracting, asserting, etc., are important parts of our *social* world, we cannot simply exclude these aspects from our theorizing about social reality.”  
(Kratochwil, 1989: p.29)

In this passage Kratochwil initially points out that aside from factual assertions, there are other ways of using language (such as “promising” and “contracting”) which are not well-characterised as descriptions that could be true or false. Kratochwil credits Searle’s “discussion of speech acts” with this observation, however Kratochwil’s references elsewhere to Wittgenstein as the decisive figure in instigating the demise of the ‘mirror view’ of language suggests that he is using this phrase to gesture towards the sorts of considerations that originally surfaced in Wittgenstein’s later philosophy. In the second part of the passage Kratochwil makes the complementary suggestion that there are not only ways of using language that are non-propositional, but also that there are other factors that contribute to the meaning of a ‘speech act’

than its supposed 'propositional content' (i.e. the possible factual scenario that it allegedly describes). Kratochwil uses J.L. Austin's terms 'illocutionary' and 'perlocutionary' to refer to these factors which are excluded by 'propositional' analyses of linguistic meaning (Austin, 1955).

Elsewhere in his work Kratochwil explores in more depth some examples of using language whose (main) purpose or function is not to provide factual descriptions, and also explains in more detail the different aspects of language-use that he takes to contribute to linguistic meaning, including those he characterises as 'illocutionary' and 'perlocutionary'. An example of a non-propositional use of language that Kratochwil frequently refers to is Austin's example of saying "I do" in a marriage ceremony (Kratochwil, 1989: p.7; 2001: p.31). Kratochwil states in his 2001 article that "when I say, for example, in a marriage ceremony 'I do,' I [do not] describe something .... As a matter of fact, here the notion of a description breaks down entirely since I am 'doing' something" (Kratochwil, 2001: p.31). Meanwhile, in his 1989 book, Kratochwil suggests that what one *does* by uttering 'I do' in the context of a marriage ceremony, is to "commit" oneself to a marriage (Kratochwil, 1989: p.7). In this light, Kratochwil suggests that "asserting" a proposition is only one of a whole range of different 'speech acts' which include "demanding", "appointing", "apologizing", "threatening" etc. (Kratochwil, 2001: p.31).<sup>31</sup> An important point with regard to this argument is that it does not deny that there are *some* 'propositional' uses of language, or that there may be a 'descriptive' aspect to many speech acts; rather, what it denies – with reference to counter-examples – is that *all* meaningful uses of language are 'propositional', and that language necessarily depends for its meaning upon its descriptive function.

With regard to the 'illocutionary' or 'perlocutionary' dimensions of language-use, Kratochwil clarifies in his 1989 book that these terms are part of the three-part distinction made by Austin and Searle between the 'locution', 'illocution' and

---

<sup>31</sup> Fierke also potentially implies a form of this criticism in her 2002 essay when she writes that "[t]he picture view couldn't account for the multiple ways in which language is used" (Fierke, 2002: p.337).

'perlocution' of a speech act.<sup>32</sup> According to Kratochwil, the *locution* of a speech act refers to what it is that is said (such as 'I do', or 'I promise'), while the *illocution* or *illocutionary force* refers to what kind of act an utterance ostensibly amounts to, for example, 'promising', 'requesting', 'demanding' etc. Finally, the *perlocution* or *perlocutionary effect* refers to the consequence(s) of the utterance, in terms of "the impact it has on the hearers".<sup>33</sup> An example of a perlocutionary effect cited by Kratochwil is "threatening" (1989: p.30, p.147). Thinking back to the passage quoted at the start of this subsection, Kratochwil's argument in the second part of that passage can be put like this: if the meaning of 'speech act' depends not only on what is said (its 'locution'), but also on what *sort* of action it amounts to (its 'illocution') and on the consequences or effects that it has (the 'perlocution'), then an analysis which focuses only on 'propositional content' will at best only succeed in providing a partial account of the meaning of an utterance.

Expanding on the last point, Kratochwil argues in his 1989 book that the illocution and perlocution of a speech act often depends upon a wider social or linguistic context in which it takes place, such as a relationship between two people, or an extended dialogue or written text. Taking the example of an 'indirect' or 'implied' statement, Kratochwil writes:

"'Indirect' speech acts are very common occurrences that simply cannot be neglected. The utterance 'You look pale' in most cases is not a simple factual statement but is part of a larger context, such as 'I worry about you,' 'Can I do anything for you?', etc. Sentence grammars and [formal] semantic investigations ignore, however, precisely this pragmatic dimension of language exchanges, as well as *syntagmatic* chaining of sentences and clauses to larger units or sequences." (Kratochwil, 1989: p.30)

In his 2001 article Kratochwil puts this objection in stronger terms, claiming that "it is the context that determines the meaning entirely" (2001: p.29).<sup>34</sup> This claim will be

---

<sup>32</sup> Kratochwil, 1989: p.8

<sup>33</sup> Kratochwil, 1989: p.8

<sup>34</sup> I should like to note at this point that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke retain a 'semantic' conception of linguistic function in criticising the representational view of language and its assumptions; in that they treat their observations concerning how language functions in various situations as equivalent to observations about the manner in which language can be said to have meaning, and therefore as

considered further under ‘Criticism 3’, below, when I will look at the more general argument made by Kratochwil and Fierke that linguistic meaning is ‘socially constructed’.

### Criticism 2: Words do not refer to ‘Objects’

A second criticism, made by all three scholars, is that it is not the case – as the representational view of language holds – that each word in language refers to an ‘object’. This criticism is worked out by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke in such a way that it actually targets a combination of the assumptions that these scholars assign to the representational view of language, including Assumption 2 (that words refer to objects), Assumption 3 (that the meaning of the word comes from the object to which it refers), Corollary 1 (according to which the ‘objects’ to which words refer are ‘objective’ in the sense that their existence and characteristics do not depend upon ‘subjective’ factors such as how they are perceived or interpreted by individuals), and Corollary 2 (according to which the ‘objects’ to which words refer fall naturally into categories defined by some ‘essential’ property which is possessed by all members of the class). As with the previous criticism, there are some different reasons that are offered by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke to support their objection to these assumptions. These can be summarised as follows.

- Reason A): Not all words refer to something.

One of the reasons offered in support of this criticism by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke is that not all words refer to, or name, something (whether an ‘object’ or not), and that there are many other ways in which words can be used meaningfully aside from reference or naming. Pin-Fat argues in her 1997 article that later Wittgenstein criticises the assumption that words name objects in *PI* §23, by “show[ing] that there are many other ways in which words are meaningful which do not rely on the word-object naming relation. For example, giving orders and obeying them, making a joke,

---

capable of contradicting the representational view of language’s assumptions concerning the semantic functioning of words and sentences.



forming and testing a hypothesis, praying etc.”<sup>35</sup> Fierke makes a similar claim in her 2003 article, where she writes that “the absence of an isomorphic relationship between the word and the world was at the heart of Wittgenstein’s later work, particularly his *Philosophical Investigations*, in which he sought to explore the many different ways humans use language”.<sup>36</sup> In both cases the implication is that there are various ways of using language – including giving and obeying orders, telling jokes, forming and testing hypotheses, and praying – in which words are used in ways other than reference or naming, and that one of Wittgenstein’s main aims in listing such examples in the *PI* is to demonstrate this point.

Meanwhile, in his 2001 article, Kratochwil points out that there are words such as “connectives and conditionals”<sup>37</sup> which do not correspond to anything in reality, but nevertheless modify the meaning of sentences in which they occur.<sup>38</sup> An example of a conditional that Kratochwil cites is ‘although’. Elsewhere, Kratochwil suggests that ‘normative’ terms such as “public interest” and “national interest” are also non-referential,<sup>39</sup> since rather than functioning as “descriptive labels,” they are used “for evaluating, criticising, or justifying action”.<sup>40</sup> Like Pin-Fat and Fierke, Kratochwil elsewhere credits this criticism to later Wittgenstein, for example when he writes in his 2009 article that his analysis of ‘rule of law’ “began from a Wittgensteinian notion that the meaning of a concept ... is not its reference but its ‘use’” (Kratochwil, 2011 [2009]: p.145), and that “if meaning is not simple reference ... then meaning is conveyed by how we *use* our concepts, as Wittgenstein suggested” (Kratochwil, 2013: p.2). Both of these attributions allude to *PI* §43, where Wittgenstein writes:

---

<sup>35</sup> Pin-Fat, 1997: p.80. From this quote of Pin-Fat’s, it is clear that she conflates Assumption 3 of the representational view of language with Assumption 2 (according to which sentences are propositional), and so offers Wittgenstein’s observation of the variety of different ways of using language as an objection to Assumption 2 and 3 of the representational view of language together. This is apparently also the case with Fierke. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that both Pin-Fat and Fierke would, on reflection, commit to something like the first criticism of Assumption 2 of the representational view of language offered by Kratochwil under Objection 1 above, as well as the criticism that not all words work by referring to objective phenomena.

<sup>36</sup> Fierke, 2003: p.75-6

<sup>37</sup> Kratochwil, 2001: p.29

<sup>38</sup> “there are also certain important modifiers such as connectives and conditionals—what does ‘although’ correspond to?—that play a role in what a sentence means” (Kratochwil, 2001: p.29).

<sup>39</sup> Kratochwil, 2011: p.56

<sup>40</sup> Kratochwil, 2011: p.39

“For a *large* class of cases – though not for all – in which we employ the word ‘meaning’ it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language”.

- Reason B): The cases to which a given word refers need not all share one ‘core’ property in common.

Another reason offered by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke in support of their criticism that words do not refer to ‘objects’ in the sense assumed by the representational view of language, is that there is not necessarily a single ‘core’ property, or set of properties, that is shared by all cases to which a referential word applies. In making this argument, Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke all cite a famous passage from Wittgenstein’s *PI* where he introduces his idea of a ‘family resemblance’ concept.<sup>41</sup> In the relevant passage Wittgenstein invites the reader to consider the example of the word ‘game’, and to think of various cases of what are called ‘games’. Wittgenstein suggests that if we put aside the preconception that all of these cases “*must* have something common” then we will notice that there is no one common property shared by all things we call ‘games’, but rather a number of characteristic features which relate certain games to certain others:

“Look, for example, at board-games, with their various affinities. Now pass to card-games; here you find many correspondences with the first group, but many common features drop out, and others appear. When we pass next to ball-games, much that is common is retained, but much is lost. – Are they all ‘*entertaining*’? Compare chess with noughts and crosses. Or is there always winning and losing, or competition between players? Think of patience. In ball-games, there is winning and losing; but when a child throws his ball at the wall and catches it again, this feature has disappeared. Look at the parts played by skill and luck, and at the difference between skill in chess and skill in tennis. Think now of singing and dancing games; here we have the element of entertainment, but how many other characteristic features have disappeared! And we can go through the many, many other groups of games in the same way, can see how similarities crop up and disappear.” (*PI* §66)

---

<sup>41</sup> Pin-Fat, 1997: p.80; Fierke, 2001: p.119; Kratochwil, 2011 [2001]: p.251 and 2010 [2002]: p.76

Wittgenstein goes on to suggest that this form of relatedness can be characterised as “family resemblance”, by analogy with the way in which one can observe such discontinuous patterns of similarities between individual members of the same family (*PI* §67). Wittgenstein also identifies the words ‘language’ and ‘number’ as examples of other words whose applications “form a family” (*PI* §65-66).

Apparently referring to Wittgenstein’s remarks in *PI* §65-7, Kratochwil identifies various concepts that are used in IR as ‘family resemblance’ terms; or, as he sometimes puts it, “cluster concepts”.<sup>42</sup> In a 2001 article, after having considered various cases where someone or something is said to ‘represent’ the people in a political sense, Kratochwil writes:

“[T]here is no clear concept of [political] representation. Instead, a variety of closely related, though quite distinctive, practices and conceptions of making public choices are covered by this term. ... Each of the different models seems to be derived from one example which quickly loses its plausibility when it is applied to other contexts that are illuminated by a different example. Representation is more like a cluster-term for a variety of understandings that might share a certain family resemblance but that do not seem to have a firm core aside from the fact that they serve as a cipher pointing to the importance of ‘the people’.” (Kratochwil, 2011: p.251)

Another example identified by Kratochwil is the concept ‘power’:

“[P]ower turned out to be better understood as a cluster-concept, linking various ‘forms’ ... . Sometimes it can be ‘possessed’, at other times it is more diffuse (as in the case of intellectual hegemonies or structural power), sometimes it has certain observable effects (as in Weber’s or Dahl’s definition), and in other cases it can be ‘seen’ only on the basis of a counterfactual thought experiment (as in the case of the power of anticipated reaction). None of these variations, however, disqualifies any of these manifestations from being properly called an instance of power, and eliminating any of them might entail significant heuristic costs.” (Kratochwil, 2011: p.209)

---

<sup>42</sup> Kratochwil, 2011: p.209

- Reason C): Identifying the referents of a word may involve interpretation and evaluation.

Another reason that Kratochwil offers in support of this criticism is that there are cases in which identifying something as an instance of a conceptual kind involves subjective interpretation and/or making evaluative judgements. This is clearly targeted at the 'objective realist' corollary of the assumption that words correspond with 'objects'. In his 1989 book and 2001 article, Kratochwil argues that "what counts as a case of self-defence", "aggression", "self-determination" or "interference" is not something that can be simply observed or deduced 'objectively' from some relevant facts, but rather depends on how one evaluates and interprets these facts as "part of a complex appraisal".<sup>43</sup> In other words: if deciding whether or not a given action constitutes an instance of 'self-defence', 'aggression' etc., is not a wholly objective matter,<sup>44</sup> that means that there is room for genuine disagreement about what the referents of these words are.

Kratochwil suggests that in some cases a word may even be what he calls an "essentially contested concept", which is a term he borrows from Connelly (1983)<sup>45</sup> to characterise concept-words whose application is typically contested, and where such contestation appears to be central to the word's function. Kratochwil suggests that the application of words like 'deterrence', 'self-defence', 'aggression' and 'legitimate' are inherently contestable in this manner (Kratochwil, 2001: p.28), and that the essential contestability of these words' applications is what allows them to be used for the purposes of persuasion in the context of political discourses (2001: p.29). Kratochwil sometimes uses the adjective "fuzzy" to characterise concept-words whose application is contestable (Kratochwil, 2001: p.29).

---

<sup>43</sup> Kratochwil, 1989: p.33; and 2001: p.29

<sup>44</sup> E.g. such as could be settled by "pure observation" (Kratochwil, 2001: p.29).

<sup>45</sup> Although the term was originally coined by W.B. Gallie (1955).

- Reason D): The referents of a word may change over time.

A fourth reason put forward by Kratochwil and Fierke is that the application of a word and/or the cases to which it refers may be subject to change over time. For example, in a 2002 article on sovereignty Kratochwil carries out an historical investigation into the manner in which the concepts of ‘sovereignty’ and ‘property’ “emerged and changed over time as the key notions for understanding ... the territorial state and its concomitant ‘system’ ... [and] how the ‘invention’ of the state and the modern ‘individual’ are connected”.<sup>46</sup> In this context, Kratochwil observes how the word ‘sovereignty’ initially emerged during the medieval period as a way of denoting any hierarchical relationship between two or more parties, before being defined by Bodin as a supreme and absolute authority (or ‘majesty’) over all citizens and things common to them;<sup>47</sup> and was then subsequently redefined by Hobbes to refer to the limited public authority of a figurehead (a Sovereign) to whom a group of individuals lend power for the purposes of keeping order.<sup>48</sup>

Meanwhile Fierke, in her 2001 article, points out the difference between two scenarios of international politics that have historically been cited as examples of “balance of power” politics; observing that “in the Cold War, the balance of power was given meaning as a conflict between two stable and permanent nuclear ‘families’ (alliances) within which it was largely unthinkable that a member would leave to join the other family”, while in contrast “the classic European balance of power” during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century positively encouraged new alliances, with states “trying to remain attractive to new suitors in a context of ever changing affairs” (Fierke, 2001: p.130). Thus while the term “balance of power” has been used to characterise both the politics of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Europe and the politics of the Cold War,

---

<sup>46</sup> Kratochwil, 2011 [2002]: p.64

<sup>47</sup> Kratochwil, 2011 [2002]: p.65

<sup>48</sup> Kratochwil, 2011 [2002]: p.72. In a different article, Kratochwil examines the historical ‘shifts’ that have taken place in political discourse regarding what is identified as the justification for following the “rule of law”; observing that there has been a move away from an emphasis on “the importance of the state, sovereignty and most of the traditional ‘sources’ of law,” towards an emphasis on “‘humanity’, or even more abstractly, ‘human dignity’” as “the exclusive legitimising source” (Kratochwil, 2011 [2009]: p.145).

“the practices by which balance is maintained [in each of these scenarios] *are diametrically opposed*” (Fierke, 2001: p.130).<sup>49</sup>

Kratochwil’s discussion of the different historical senses in which the word ‘sovereignty’ has been used, and Fierke’s discussion of the differences between the historical scenarios to which the term ‘balance of power’ has been applied, highlight the potential for the application of words to change over time such that the scope of a word’s reference may shift, expanding to incorporate new scenarios that either did not previously exist or were not considered appropriate referents, and/or potentially diminishing to exclude certain cases that were once considered appropriate referents but are now obsolete. This point is integrated by Fierke with Reason (B), as she suggests that in cases like ‘balance of power’ where the previous referent is retained along with the new scenario as a possible meaning of the term, it is more appropriate to think of the term as referring to a “family” of related cases, as opposed to members of an ‘essential’ type of phenomenon “transcending time and space” (Fierke, 2001: p.130).

### Criticism 3: Linguistic Meaning is ‘Socially Constructed’

In addition to the more specific criticisms that I have outlined so far, Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke also make some broader objections to the representational view of language in the context of which they advance their own general claims about language and linguistic meaning. One such objection involves endorsing the claim that the meaning of words and sentences is ‘constructed’ or ‘constituted’ by their use in particular social contexts, which is meant to contradict the representational view’s assumption that the meaning of words and sentences is determined by some ‘objective’ phenomena or factual situations that they supposedly refer to or describe in reality.<sup>50</sup> This is a claim that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke take to have a basis in

---

<sup>49</sup> “In the one case [the Cold War], it is irrational to change alliances; in the other [19<sup>th</sup> Century Europe] changing alliances is part of the game” (Fierke, 2001: p.130).

<sup>50</sup> Kratochwil and Fierke sometimes use the term ‘constructed’ rather than ‘constituted’; however for the purposes of this section I shall use the latter term more often, since this is the term which is used by all three scholars.

Wittgenstein's later philosophy, especially in remarks such as *PI* §23 and §67, and which they typically introduce in the form of a two-part contention, where it is prefaced by a negative general claim to the effect that the meaning of words and/or sentences is *not* 'representational'. Below are some examples of passages in which Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke present this objection:

"The decisive impulse for constructivism came from Wittgenstein's 'linguistic turn' in his *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), where the problem of meaning found a new solution. The meaning of a term consisted no longer in its exact correspondence to an object in the 'outer world' but in its use in speech. In other words, the later Wittgenstein directed our attention to the conventional and pragmatic character of language. Concepts meant something, not because they captured the ontological essences of 'things' ... but because they were used in a certain way among speakers who thereby communicated with one another." (Kratochwil, 2001: p.20, my emphasis. See also Kratochwil, 2013: p.2)

"So if the naming of objects does not provide the meaning of a word then what might? 'For a *large* class of cases – though not for all – in which we employ the word 'meaning' it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language' (Wittgenstein, 1953, §43). Meaning, then, comes from the way in which a word is used in particular contexts, or as Wittgenstein sometimes put [*sic.*] it, 'our talk gets its meaning from the rest of our proceedings' (Wittgenstein, 1969, §229). The 'rest of our proceedings' are our practices. He says, 'The word "language-*game*" is here meant to emphasise that the speaking of language is part of an activity or a form of life' (Wittgenstein, 1953, 23)." (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.80, my emphasis. See also Pin-Fat 2010: p.10 and Pin-Fat, 2013: p.250)

"The *Philosophical Investigations* draws on the metaphor of a game to elaborate the nature of language. Language use is like making moves in a game. The structure of meaning and interaction are dependent on rules shared with others. Language use is a form of action in and of itself, rather than merely a set of labels for a world independent of us (Wittgenstein, 1958: paras. 1, 3, 7, 65, 66)." (Fierke, 2002: p.37, my emphasis. See also Fierke, 2010a: p.86)

In the above quotes, the relevant claim is expressed variously as being that the meaning of a term *consists in* its use in speech, that concepts mean something

*because* they are used in a certain way among speakers, that the meaning of a word *comes from* the way in which it is used in particular contexts, and that the structure of linguistic meaning is *dependent* on shared rules of language-use. It is clear from the fuller explications that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke provide of these claims elsewhere, that they are committed to more or less the same understanding of the sense in which linguistic meaning can be said to be ‘constituted’ or ‘constructed’ by language-use (see below). Therefore, the above variations in their manner of expression should not be taken to indicate any significant differences between the version of this claim that these scholars endorse; but rather as a sign that they do not acknowledge any relevant distinction between claims such as that the meaning of a linguistic item *is* its use, that a linguistic item has meaning *because* of its use, that the meaning of a linguistic item *originates* from its use, and that the meaning of a linguistic item *depends* on its use.

In explaining what it means to claim that the meaning of linguistic items such as words and sentences is constituted by their use, Pin-Fat and Fierke both appeal to later Wittgenstein’s example of a game of chess, which Wittgenstein discusses and refers to in remarks such as *PI* §31 and §199 (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.15; Fierke, 2002: p.337-8 and 2010: p.88). In contrast, Kratochwil draws mainly on Searle’s discussion of a football game (Kratochwil, 1989: p.27), although he acknowledges Wittgenstein as the originator of this way of thinking about linguistic meaning – for example, when he writes that “the decisive impulse for constructivism came from Wittgenstein’s ‘linguistic turn’ in the *Philosophical Investigations*, where the problem of meaning found a new solution. The meaning of a term consisted no longer in its exact correspondence to an object in the ‘outer world’ but in its use in speech” (Kratochwil, 2001: p.8).<sup>51</sup> In any case, the initial point with which all three scholars begin is the observation that the meaning of certain nouns and descriptive expressions that are used in playing or talking about a game such as chess or American football, cannot be explained solely in terms of the physical properties and movements of the objects involved.

---

<sup>51</sup> Searle’s discussion is itself partially based on later Wittgenstein’s example (Searle, 1969: p.52).



Thus, for example, one cannot explain what the “knight” or “king” is in chess by referring solely to the shape and material composition of the piece (Fierke, 2010a: p.88; Pin-Fat, 2010: p.15); nor can one explain what “touchdown” or “time out” is in American football by referring solely to the physical movements of the ball and the player’s bodies (Kratochwil, 1989: p.27). Kratochwil and Fierke bolster this claim with the argument that if one were to attempt to describe a game or other social scenario in purely physical and/or material terms, one would be unable to account for certain distinctions that are ordinarily acknowledged between different sorts of objects and movements. So, for example, Fierke argues that appealing to the knight’s composition out of wood or metal “would not then distinguish this object, or its use, from a thousand other products made with wood or metal” (Fierke, 2010a: p.88); while Kratochwil argues that “describing the opening of a door by way of physical movements and physiological processes does not tell us whether what happened was a random action, was done in order to let fresh air into the room, was a gesture of politeness, or was intended as a signal for another person to leave the room” (Kratochwil, 1989: p.24).

Having made this point, Fierke and Pin-Fat argue that the meaning of a piece in chess comes from, and must therefore be explained in terms of, its *use* in accordance with a set of established rules and conventions that together constitute the game of ‘chess’ (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.15; Fierke, 2001: p.131, 2010: p.88), with Fierke claiming that the objects and practices involved in chess are “constituted and made meaningful” by the “rules of that particular game” (Fierke, 2001: p.131). Similarly, Kratochwil quotes Searle’s claim that actions such as ‘scoring a touchdown’ or ‘going offside’ are “institutional facts” which “can only be explained in terms of the constitutive rules that underlie them”; arguing that “terms such as ‘offside,’ ‘checkmate,’ ‘home run,’ etc. ... attain their meaning by pointing to further consequences within the game-structure, such as choosing a move, making a point, having to pay a penalty, etc.” (Kratochwil, 1989: p.27; Searle, 1969: p.52).

In discussing their examples Kratochwil and Fierke both appeal to the notion of a ‘constitutive rule’, or ‘rule-like action’, which they purportedly get from later

Wittgenstein and Searle (Fierke, 2002: p.338; Kratochwil, 1989: p.27). A constitutive rule, according to Kratochwil and Fierke, is a way of acting in accordance with a rule which can be regarded as a practical instantiation of it, from which other people can deduce the rule that is being followed and/or learn to act in accordance with it themselves. So, for example, if a chess player is playing correctly in accordance with the rules of chess, then the manner in which they move the various pieces around the board while playing the game can be regarded as a practical demonstration of the rules they are following, and can serve as a guide to those watching or participating in the game for how to play. In his work, Kratochwil sometimes refers to rules and rule-like actions together as 'norms'.

It is on the basis of these observations and arguments concerning the playing and description of games that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke endorse the more general claim that the meaning of word (or other linguistic item) is constituted by its use; which, in light of the notion of a 'constitutive rule' above, is in their eyes equivalent to the claim that the meaning of words and other linguistic expressions is constituted by the rules and normative practices that guide their use in particular social contexts. In his 2001 article Kratochwil commits to the "positive heuristic" that "man is not only a language-endowed animal, but ... that meaning is use and that communication among a set of people is governed by conventions and criteria" (Kratochwil, 2001: p.15), asserting that "speech acts are constituted by norms" in the sense that "only within a practice governed by institutional rules will a certain utterance have a meaning" (Kratochwil, 2001: p.31). In her 2002 article Fierke concludes in light of the chess example that "material objects, our actions or observations acquire *meaning* within a social context of rules" (Fierke, 2002: p.338). Meanwhile Pin-Fat claims that "the meaning of a word ... require[s] ... its use within a particular context" (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.10), and that in order to understand a word one must be able to use it and "to follow a rule" (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.16). These general claims about the nature of linguistic meaning that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke endorse are effectively a generalisation of the points they make regarding the meaning of words, objects and actions involved in playing or describing games, such that these points are taken to

hold not just for words and expressions used to describe or participate in games and game-like scenarios, but for all words and sentences in general.

Pin-Fat and Fierke both use later Wittgenstein's terms 'language-game', 'grammar', and 'form of life' to express, and expand upon, their claim regarding the normative constitution of linguistic meaning, citing the passage from *PI* §23 where Wittgenstein writes: "Here the term 'language-game' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life." According to Fierke, 'forms of life' are "patterns of activity visible across cultures", while 'language-games' are "culturally specific" contexts of activity which, "like a game, ... represent a set of interrelated practices that rest on socially accepted rules, which are often assumed rather than consciously applied" (Fierke, 2010a: p.88-9). 'Grammar' according to Fierke, refers to the "range of possible expressions relating to a practice" (Fierke, 2002: p.345), and she quotes Hacker's interpretation of 'grammar' as "the rules for the use of expressions in question, which lay down what it makes sense to say" (Hacker, 1996: p.81; Fierke, 2002: p.344). Examples of 'forms of life' cited by Fierke include religion, war, violence, diplomacy, moral discourse, marriage and sports (Fierke, 2002: p.345; 2010: p.88); while examples of 'language-games' she provides are "a Christian wedding ceremony" (Fierke, 2002: p.344), "praying while facing Meccah" (Fierke, 2010a: p.89), "threaten[ing] retaliation with nuclear weapons" (Fierke, 2002: p.345), justifying war "based on the threat of WMD" (Fierke, 2010a: p.92), and justifying war by appealing to "humanitarian reasons" (Fierke, 2010a: p.92). As examples of 'grammar', Fierke cites the norms of "saying 'I do' in the context of a Christian wedding ceremony or stamping on a piece of glass in a Jewish one" (Fierke, 2002: p.344).

Pin-Fat's interpretation of the terms 'language-game', 'form of life' and 'grammar' is similar to Fierke's, though it differs in some respects. According to Pin-Fat, 'language-games' are "practices" involving language (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.13), which is a somewhat flexible designation that Pin-Fat takes to include various things. She cites examples of language-games that are identified by Wittgenstein as "swearing, giving orders, confessing a motive, talking about sense impressions" etc., but notes that

Wittgenstein also uses the term 'language-game' to refer to the practice(s) of using a particular word, such as the 'language-games' played with the words 'game', 'proposition' and 'thought', and even "to signify the overall system of linguistic practices" as a whole (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.16). Pin-Fat adds to the list of examples "language games of International Relations played with the use of words such as 'ethics', 'universality', 'politics', 'international', 'anarchy', and so on" (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.16), and claims that "theories are language games" (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.13).

Wary of becoming embroiled in an interpretive debate, Pin-Fat is vaguer than Fierke on the question of what a 'form of life' is, stating simply that it "provides a wider context of activities in which the activities of a language game make sense" (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.131, n.5). With regard to 'grammar', Pin-Fat's explanations of this term are elusive; however she apparently uses it similarly to Fierke, to refer both to the kinds of statement that are deemed appropriate in the context of a language-game, and to "the rules of a language-game" that "determine" which expressions and ways of using language are appropriate in that context (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.81). In her book, Pin-Fat quotes the following passage from Pitkin's application of Wittgenstein to political theory:

"Grammar ... establishes the place of a concept in our system of concepts, and thereby in our world. It controls what other concepts, what questions and observations, are relevant to a particular concept. [Thus] knowing what 'a mistake' is depends not on mastering its distinguishing features or characteristics, but on having mastered what sorts of circumstances count as 'making a mistake', 'preventing a mistake', 'excusing a mistake', and so on." (Pitkin, 1985: p.119)

It should be noted that although Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke claim that the meaning of particular uses of language are 'determined' by the normative rules and practices of the context within which they take place, they acknowledge that individual language-users have *some* freedom to influence the meaning of what they say and write, and also to change the normative practices of existing language-games in which they participate. For example, Fierke writes:

“The language user is embedded in a context and constrained by its rules, yet may, through her choices and actions, shape that context, much as the chess player, while embedded in the rules of the game, exercises choice in moving from any particular space.” (Fierke, 2002: p.338)

Elsewhere, Fierke suggests that the “socially accepted rules” or “grammar” of language-games “*regulate* action insofar as deviations from the rules may be sanctioned” (Fierke, 2010a: p.89).

#### Criticism 4: Our Perception is Shaped by Language

Another criticism of the representational view of language that Kratochwil, Fierke, and Pin-Fat make involves endorsing the general claim that our perception of phenomena, including our identification and classification of items, is inextricably bound up with the particular practices of language-use in which we participate, and is thereby determined by the same sorts of context-relative rules and conventions that determine the meaning of linguistic expressions. This can be regarded as a version of ‘linguistic relativism’ or ‘linguistic determinism’, as famously summarised by Sapir:

“The real world is to a large extent built up on the language habits of the group. We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached.” (Sapir, 1956: p.69)

On the basis of this claim, Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke argue that it is not possible for us to consider phenomena ‘objectively’ apart from language so as to be able to evaluate whether and how well language or theory represents them, as the representational view of language and ‘positivist’ approaches to IR would require.

Similarly to the last objection, Pin-Fat and Fierke start from the observation that the identity of the material objects and movements used in games depends on, and is thereby relative to, the rules and normative practices of the game. Pin-Fat quotes Wittgenstein’s remark *PI* §49 in which he compares naming an object to putting a

piece in its place on the chessboard, which Pin-Fat interprets as contending that objects are named and identified in preparation for a particular context in which they are used. From this Pin-Fat draws the general conclusion that “Wittgenstein is pointing out that objects are indeterminate in themselves,” and that whether something is an object, and what sort of object it is, depends on the grammar of the particular context in question (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.13). As support for this claim Pin-Fat cites *PI* §370 where Wittgenstein writes that “grammar tells us what kind of object anything is”. Pin-Fat presents this as a counterclaim to the idea that “ostensive definitions” work “because they are grounded in a basic experience such as Humean apprehension of a particular” (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.13).

Fierke makes the roughly the same argument as Pin-Fat in her 2010 article. There she claims that the “ontology” of the objects and movements used in chess “cannot be separated from our knowledge of the rules of the game” (Fierke, 2010a: p.88); since it is the rules of the game that stipulate the identity and meaning of the objects and movements involved. Thus, for example, recognising a piece of wood or metal as a ‘knight’ requires familiarity with the normative practices and rules of chess, and the same goes for recognising a certain pattern of movements as an instance of ‘cheating’ (Fierke, 2010a: p.89). Fierke then generalises this claim to apply to the perception and identification of phenomena in general, writing:

“The ability to consistently identify, for instance, a table, and distinguish it from a chair, precedes any individual and is reproduced by individuals within a social world. The expression of emotion, no less than the identification of chairs and tables, relies on customs, rules and institutions that precede the individual. Neither the mental processes of individuals nor objects in the world exist independent of this a priori language, which we are socialized into as we learn to use language and thus become social beings.” (Fierke, 2010a: p.85)

In light of these arguments, Pin-Fat and Fierke conclude that it is not possible to perceive phenomena ‘objectively’ in a way which would allow one to compare their pure manifestation with a linguistic artefact such as a theory, a meta-theoretical claim, a hypothesis, or a conceptual definition, in order to evaluate whether, and

how well, the latter represents the former. In her 2001 essay, Fierke sums up the conclusion in the following way:

“Questions of meaning and interpretation are fundamentally questions about language. One can accept the existence of a material reality independent of language, but one cannot say anything meaningful about it, one cannot SAY anything about it, without language ... A consistent constructivist position, I would argue, has to begin with the assumption that we cannot get behind our language to compare it with that which it describes.” (Fierke, 2001: p.118)

In her 2002 essay, Fierke refers to this as later Wittgenstein’s “discovery” that “We cannot stand outside our language to compare it with that which it describes” (2002: p.337). Meanwhile, Pin-Fat concludes similarly in her 2010 book:

“If we open our ears to the echo of Wittgenstein’s spirit, we no longer inhabit a world where it is possible to apprehend a reality which is ‘out there’ (i.e. outside language) and is the object that is represented so that the assessments of claims about it can be measured as accurate (true) or inaccurate (false). Without the possibility of knowledge of this kind, certainty becomes impossible because it rests upon it.” (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.7)

From the above quotations, it is clear that Pin-Fat and Fierke do not wish to deny that there may be an objective reality that exists and has certain properties independently of human cognition and language. Rather what they are challenging is the possibility of our perceiving such a reality in its ‘objective’ form, such that we could compare it with what we say or write about phenomena; and the possibility of being able to use language to articulate reality in its ‘objective’ form independently from the grammar of a particular context of language-use.

This is a conclusion with which Kratochwil concurs in his 2000 and 2002 articles. There he claims that “we cannot get in between the ‘things’ and our description of them” since “their ‘ontology’ depends on the purposes and practices embedded in our concepts” (Kratochwil, 2011 [2000]: p.176); that “no ultimate foundation can be appealed to in order to show what the world is ‘really like’”; and that ‘things’ cannot “speak to us in an unadulterated form” (Kratochwil, 2011 [2002]: p.78) but will need to be expressed through “language” (Ibid.). Like Pin-Fat and Fierke, Kratochwil does

not deny the possibility that reality *exists* 'objectively', but rather he rejects the possibility that we could perceive its 'objective' form and represent it using language. He writes:

“Hardly anyone – even among the most ardent constructivists or pragmatists – doubts that the ‘world’ exists ‘independent’ from our minds. The question is rather whether we can recognise it in a pure and direct fashion, i.e., without any ‘description’, or whether what we recognise is always already organised and formed by certain categorical and theoretical elements. Thus, Kant’s ‘thing in itself’ is ‘there’, but it is unrecognisable and as such uninteresting until and unless it is brought under some description.” (Kratochwil, 2011 [2000]: p.168

## Outline of the Criticisms

To aid the reader, here is a skeleton outline of the criticisms of the representational view of language and ‘positivist’ approaches to IR made by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke, as summarised in the last subsection:

Criticism 1: The ‘propositional’ model of linguistic meaning is inadequate, because:

- A) Not all ‘speech acts’ are propositions of fact, and
- B) There are other factors that influence the meaning of a speech act, such as the perlocution, illocution and context.

Criticism 2: Words do not refer to ‘objects’ in the sense assumed by the representational view of language, since:

- A) Not all words refer to something (e.g. connectives/ conditionals);
- B) The cases to which a word refers need not share an ‘essential’ property in common;
- C) Identifying the referents of a word may involve interpretation and evaluation;
- D) The referents of a word may change over time.



Criticism 3: Linguistic meaning is 'socially constructed', in the sense that:

- (A) The meaning of words and sentences comes from the way in which they are used in particular contexts of language-use ('language-games');
- (B) These contexts are governed by normative rules and practices ('grammar') by which the significance of particular actions (including 'speech acts') is established and maintained;
- (C) These normative rules and practices determine the range of possible ways in which particular concepts or sentences may be used.

Criticism 4: Our perception of phenomena is shaped by language in the sense that:

- The individuation and properties of what we perceive through the senses is determined by the linguistic practices of the community in which we have been raised – i.e. our language is inherently involved in the constitution of the 'objects' of our perception;
- We are therefore unable to perceive how objects and situations *are* independently of a particular language, so as to be able to see how 'accurately' our words and sentences represent them; and
- Even if we were able to perceive reality in its 'objective' form, we would not be able to articulate this in language, since our concepts and sentences are tied up with certain (subjective) ways of perceiving and interpreting phenomena.

### The Applicability of the Criticisms

The above criticisms as they are expressed by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke clearly target the following assumptions attributed by these scholars to the representational view of language: (1) that language is composed of propositional sentences which describe possible 'facts', (2) that words refer to 'objects' in the sense of 'objective' phenomena whose individuation and properties obtain independently of subjective

interpretations, values and preferences, and (3) that the meaning of words and sentences comes from the 'objects' and 'facts' which they allegedly name or describe; as well as against the corollaries of objective realism, essentialism and a correspondence theory of truth. Furthermore, these scholars suggest that the above criticisms to also provide a sound motivation for rejecting 'positivist' approaches to approaches to IR which they take to be linked to the representational view of language in the ways outlined in Section 1.4, which involve testing hypotheses (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.82; Fierke, 2003: p.336, 2010: p.84), formulating explanatory theories (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.18; Fierke, 2010a: p.84), providing abstract definitions of concepts based on the identification of supposedly 'essential' characteristics (Fierke, 2003: p.336; Kratochwil, 2011 [1982] p.39; Pin-Fat, 2010: p.9 and 11), and treating the subject matter of IR as part of an 'objective' reality whose existence and nature is assumed to be independent of the values, interpretations etc. of human 'subjects' (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.84; 2010: p.35; Kratochwil, 2011 [2000]: p.168).

As I alluded to previously in Section 1.4, precisely how the criticisms of the representational view of language are meant to be applicable to 'positivist' approaches to IR depends upon which of the alleged connections between these approaches and the representational view of language one takes to be decisive according to Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke. For example, if we were to go with these scholars' suggestion that 'positivist' approaches to IR *automatically imply or entail* the representational view of language, this would mean that any successful criticisms of the representational view of language should automatically render 'positivist' approaches to IR untenable by extension. Alternatively, if we were to take as authoritative these scholars' suggestion that 'positivist' approaches to IR are *similar* to the representational view of language in that they are committed to some of the same, or similar, assumptions, then this would rather imply that criticisms of the representational view of language are applicable to some of the assumptions made by 'positivist' approaches to IR on the basis of their similarity. As I have already noted, Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke are not entirely clear or consistent with regard to this question, and so I too will have to leave it somewhat vague in my summary of their arguments.

## Chapter 2 Evaluating the Anti-Representationalist Objection

In the last chapter I sought to summarise a particular line of argument that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke use Wittgenstein's philosophy to make against 'positivist' approaches to IR, which I called the 'anti-representationalist objection' (ARO). In my summary I refrained as much as possible from criticising or endorsing the various claims and arguments that these scholars make, and tried simply to set out the relevant line of objection as it appears in their work. Having summarised the anti-representationalist objection as clearly as possible, my next move will be to subject it to a critical evaluation. This evaluation has three aims: firstly, to help IR scholars in general to assess this line of argument and its contribution to methodological debates in IR; secondly, to help Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke to see why they might need to change the ARO to improve the validity and effectiveness of their objection to 'positivist' approaches to IR; and thirdly, to determine for my own purposes where there are gaps or difficulties with the ARO which a new application of Wittgenstein's philosophy could be helpful in overcoming.

To reiterate: any criticisms of the ARO in this chapter are not made with the purpose of undermining the work carried out by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke, but are rather offered in the spirit of a critical 'fellow traveller' – i.e. someone who is sympathetic with these scholars' objection to certain purportedly 'scientific' approaches to IR, but who can see some particular problems with the ARO that necessitate its replacement. Prior to starting the critical part of my evaluation, I will therefore begin in 2.1 by summarising some of the strengths of the ARO as I see it. I will not dwell in great detail on these positive aspects of the ARO, and will offer supporting remarks as opposed to a comprehensive defence. Once I have summarised the strengths of the ARO, the rest of the chapter will be organised into two main parts. In 2.2 I will identify and explain four problematic features of the ARO as it is put forward by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke. Then in 2.3 I will discuss in detail what the implications of these problematic features are for these scholars' more specific criticisms of 'positivist' approaches to IR, focusing on the examples of Waltz and Wendt. This will

prepare the ground for Chapters 3 and 4, where I will work towards developing my own alternative Wittgensteinian approach to criticising scholars such as Waltz and Wendt, which can overcome the problems identified with the ARO.

## **2.1 Strengths and Promising Features of the ARO in its Current Form**

### **(i) It Highlights the Importance of Language for IR**

One strength of the ARO, as currently expressed by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke, is that it draws attention to the important role that language plays in international politics, and in scholarly accounts or theories thereof. The relevance of linguistic considerations for IR was called into question in 2000 by Kai Alderson, who argued that scholars such as Kratochwil have bought into a misleading “analogy” between “normative phenomena in international politics and the social phenomenon of language” (Alderson, 2000: p.1). However this criticism assumes that the sorts of normative practices that are involved in international politics are essentially distinct from the sorts of practices that we refer to as ‘language’, and as such it falls foul of the valid observation at the heart of the ARO that uses of language sometimes constitute normative actions in the form of ‘speech acts’, and that as such language is often an integral part of the normative interactions that make up international politics. So, for example, when the British Defence Secretary Michael Fallon recently referred to Russia’s annexation of Crimea as an act of “aggression” (Associated Press: 19 February 2015) this was not a purely linguistic event that occurred in isolation from the active business of international politics, but was part of an explicitly political act of ‘warning’ or ‘cautioning’ which had significant implications for the diplomatic relations between Russia and the UK. Consideration of these kinds of examples can remind us of the multiplicity of uses of language which either are, or form a part of, actions that are directly involved in the course of international relations.

In addition, there is the consideration that many of the terms used by IR scholars to conceptualise their subject matter, such as ‘war’, ‘state’ and so on, are words whose employments and meanings originate in ordinary (i.e. non-academic) contexts of

language use, including those involved in the conduct of international politics. These contexts might include diplomatic peace talks between representatives of different countries, meetings of the UN Security Council, political speeches made by world leaders, and so on. In other words, the technical sense that such words are given by IR scholars is predicated upon the currency these words have in existing linguistic practices, some of which are involved in the normative activities of international politics. This is a point which is well-made by the ARO, and is another reason why linguistic considerations are relevant for IR.<sup>52</sup>

By drawing attention to the importance of language for IR the ARO not only encourages IR scholars to take into account the linguistic aspects of their subject matter, but also to reflect critically upon their own uses of language in theorising about international politics, as well as any assumptions they may have regarding the functioning or meaning of linguistic expressions. This is a significant contribution to the discipline which increases the level of sophistication and methodological self-awareness of research.

## (ii) It Foregrounds Linguistic Features that are Relevant for IR

Building on the previous point, another strength of the ARO is that the examples of language-use that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke cite as contradicting the representational view of language are ones which foreground features of word-application which are especially prominent in the case of concepts that are relevant for IR. So, for instance, when Pin-Fat cites 'giving orders' and 'praying' as examples of non-referential uses of language that contradict the assumption that words refer to objects, this highlights a 'performative' dimension of language-use which is key to the functioning of language in international politics. The relevance of this dimension for IR is made explicit by Kratochwil when he observes that terms like 'national interest'

---

<sup>52</sup> This relates to the issue of 'reflexivity' in studying human affairs: specifically, in this case, the consideration that new academic definitions and applications of relevant concepts such as 'war', 'state', 'genocide' etc., can influence the ways in which these concepts are used in the original contexts from which they were taken, and hence have an impact on the subject matter which they are being used to study. Reflexivity is an issue which has already been exhaustively discussed in sociology – see May (1999) for an overview.

are not purely descriptive labels, but are used for “evaluating, criticising, or justifying action” (Kratochwil, 2011: p.39, p.56). A topical real-life example which illustrates this point can be found in a March 2014 press interview with the Russian President Vladimir Putin, where Putin gave the following response to a question regarding the possible deployment of Russian troops in Ukraine:

“If we see this lawlessness starting in eastern regions, if the people ask us for help – in addition to a plea from a legitimate president, which we already have – then we reserve the right to use all the means we possess to protect those citizens. And we consider it quite legitimate.” (Putin: 04 March 2014)

In this quote we can see how Putin uses concepts like ‘lawlessness’, ‘legitimacy’, ‘right’ and ‘protection’ to justify his deployment of Russian troops across the borders of a neighbouring country. Putin’s choice of the word ‘protect’ is especially significant given the UN’s recent recasting of the concept of ‘humanitarian intervention’ in terms of an international ‘responsibility to protect’ (R2P).<sup>53</sup> This provides an explicit example of how ‘performative’ (as opposed to merely descriptive or referential) uses of language are an important part of the diplomacy involved in international relations; and therefore of the relevance of considering the ‘perlocutionary’ and ‘illocutionary’ dimensions of the language used by politicians and other international political actors.<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, when Kratochwil challenges the assumption of essentialism by charting the variety of different sorts of case to which the concepts of ‘political representation’ and ‘power’ have been applied, this highlights a genuine feature of the way in which such concepts are used in contexts relating to IR. For example, the concepts of ‘war’, ‘torture’, ‘invasion’ and ‘state’ can all be regarded as family-resemblance concepts (or ‘cluster concepts’ as Kratochwil sometimes calls them), insofar as these terms are applied in political discourses to a diverse range of particular cases which do not all share one specific property or a set of properties in common. To take the example of

---

<sup>53</sup> See General Assembly of the United Nations: 2005 World Summit Outcome Document; and Moon: 2009

<sup>54</sup> The reader may refer back to Chapter 1, Section 1.5, Criticism 1, for a reminder of what Kratochwil understands Austin’s terms ‘perlocutionary’ and ‘illocutionary’ to mean with regard to ‘speech acts’.

the concept 'state': the United Kingdom of Great Britain, Vatican City, Andorra and the United States of America are all recognised as 'states' under international law; however, these entities are quite different from one another in terms of their political, geographical and bureaucratic organisation. Namely: the UK consists of four countries with partially devolved powers united under a central democratic government; Vatican City is an enclave which is ruled by the Pope as an independent ecclesiastical state; Andorra is a co-principality ruled jointly by the President of France and the Bishop of Urgel; and the United States of America is a federal republic made up of fifty states and a federal district. Due to this variety among the accepted referents of the word 'state' it is quite reasonable to suggest that it might be more suitable to think of the referential scope of this concept in terms of a family of interrelated cases, as opposed to a group of cases that all share some particular defining characteristic or set of characteristics that distinguishes them from non-states.

Two other linguistic features highlighted by the ARO which are of particular relevance for concepts used in IR are evaluative application and essential contestability; in other words, the observations that (a) deciding whether a concept is applicable to particular cases may sometimes necessitate having to make a moral and/or interpretive judgement based on subjective beliefs and values that others may not share; and (b) in some cases – as per Gallie's idea of 'essentially contested concepts' (Gallie: 1955) – there may be radical disagreement concerning the application of a concept which cannot be settled by appealing to objective considerations, and this disagreement may furthermore be crucial to the function(s) that the concept performs.

A clear example of a concept that is relevant for IR whose application is both evaluative and essentially contested in the senses just explained, is the concept of 'terrorism' (including the term 'terrorist'). As many scholars have noted, despite comprehensive legal reviews, vast academic surveys and intense political debate, there is still as yet no internationally accepted definition of 'terrorism' (see Record, 2003; Schnelle, 2012; Hodgson and Tadros, 2013; Edwards, 2014: p.184-5). While this

is in part due to the diversity among the number of recognised cases of 'terrorism' that an adequate definition has to capture (Hodgson and Tadros: 2013: p.495), it is also due to fundamental ethical and ideological disagreements among people concerning which are the *overriding* criteria that determine whether or not a particular action counts as 'terrorism' (e.g. violence by non-state combatants, the harming of civilians, the deliberate creation of a frightening spectacle, religious or political motives, etc.), whether there are any exceptional circumstances under which an action that would normally count as 'terrorism' should be thought of as a different kind of act (such as 'guerrilla warfare', 'freedom fighting', 'resistance' etc.) and if so, what the absolving conditions are (see especially Edwards, 2014, p.184-5).<sup>55</sup> What 'terrorism' is, is therefore not something that can be settled once and for all by one academic or a handful of academics, since the criteria of their interpretation will be just as 'contestable' as the inherently controversial uses to which this word is put by any other individual language-user.

A final valid consideration highlighted by the ARO is what one might call the 'historicity' of concepts and their associated social practices, which is raised by both Kratochwil and Fierke as a challenge to the assumption that words refer to essentially definable objects or classes of object. This feature relates to the fact that (a) our current political concepts and/or the institutions and actions associated with them have not always existed, and (b) that the significance and application of relevant

---

<sup>55</sup> A specific demonstration of the essential contestability of the concept of 'terrorism' is found in the fundamental disagreement exhibited among commentators regarding whether or not the rockets fired by Hamas into Israeli settlements constitute acts of 'terrorism', with some people citing Hamas' indiscriminate targeting and the resultant civilian casualties as support for applying the concept in this case, and others citing the dire living conditions, death and destruction experienced by the population of the West Bank and Gaza strip at the hands of the Israeli army as justification for conceiving of these rocket attacks in an alternative way, such as a form of resistance against an unjust oppression (Edwards, 2014: p.185). Whether or not one considers the concept of 'terrorism' to be applicable in this case does not depend on facts, such as how many civilians are killed (although such facts are of course relevant), but rather on subjective factors such as one's moral beliefs about whether and under what conditions it is acceptable to kill civilians. Since people's moral beliefs about such matters vary widely, so too people's opinions, and therefore people's practices, will diverge with respect to the application of the concept. The essential contestability of the concept of 'terrorism' is a topic that has already been discussed at length by political and moral philosophers (e.g. Almond, 1984: p.115), political theorists (e.g. Reitan, 2010), jurists (e.g. Hodgson and Tadros, 2013) and some IR scholars (e.g. Booth and Dunne, 2012: p.22). Other relevant concepts that are essentially contestable in this sense are 'civil war', 'state' (e.g. is ISIS a 'state?'), and 'invasion' (e.g. does the U.S.A.'s use of armed drones in Afghanistan constitute a military 'invasion?').



concepts and their associated practices may have changed over time and may continue to change into the future. Thus, for example, there was a point in human history when there was no such thing as a 'state', or even a 'city', and so the form of these institutions and the meaning of the concepts relating to them is something that has developed over time along with human society and ways of life. This is a point that it is important to keep in mind when theorising about IR in terms of 'state' interactions and so on.

### (iii) It is Similar to Successful 'Anti-Positivist' Arguments Made in Other Disciplines

A third promising feature of the ARO is that it resembles some successful arguments that have been made by scholars in other disciplines against methodologies that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke would regard as 'positivist'.<sup>56</sup> So, for example, in sociology a number of scholars who identify themselves as 'ethnomethodologists' have drawn on similar aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy to support valid criticisms of 'scientism' in the study of human affairs; thereby contributing to an 'anti-positivist' movement in sociology that began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and was subsequently developed through the work of key intellectuals such as Weber (1948), Winch (1958), Garfinkel (1967), Schütz (1967) and Habermas (1968, 1973). Specific examples of such arguments are found in Anderson, Hughes and Sharrock (1986: p.178 and p.188), Sharrock and Button (1991: p.139-142), Lynch (1994: p.137), and – more recently – in Hutchinson, Read and Sharrock (2008: p.24).<sup>57</sup> While the ARO's resemblance to these arguments does not necessarily constitute a definite strength, it does provide reason to be optimistic about the potential of the ARO to provide valid criticisms of 'positivist' approaches to IR.

---

<sup>56</sup> By 'successful', I mean argumentatively sound.

<sup>57</sup> I will not attempt here to summarise these other arguments and to defend their validity, which is a task that would fill a whole thesis in itself. Instead, I am simply mentioning these points and supplying the relevant references in order to give an indication of my motivations for trying to improve the ARO.

## 2.2 Problematic Aspects of the Anti-Representationalist Objection

Having identified some of the main strengths of the ARO I will now explain some of the gaps and weaknesses that I have identified with this line of argument in its current form, which I will argue necessitate its replacement.

### Problem 1: Ambivalence Concerning the Nature of the Representational View of Language

The first weakness that I want to discuss is the ambivalence in Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke's arguments concerning what sort of thing the representational view of language is. This ambivalence is created by these scholars' apparent equivocation between different possible ways of conceiving of this view, and their vagueness when it comes to reconciling these. While Kratochwil equivocates between roughly two conceptions, Pin-Fat and Fierke equivocate between at least three. These different conceptions of the representational view of language can be outlined as follows:

- a. The representational view of language conceived as a specific account of how language functions (Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke);
- b. The representational view of language conceived as something more general, such as:
  - i. A 'type' of account (Pin-Fat and Fierke only);
  - ii. An underlying 'picture' or 'notion' (Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke).

While Pin-Fat and Fierke tend to move sequentially in their arguments from one conception of the representational view of language to another, Kratochwil consistently treats the representational view of language as a hybrid of a) and b)ii. In order to further explain this ambiguity I will first outline the three different conceptions of the representational view of language that appear in the work of Pin-Fat and Fierke, and then detail the way in which Kratochwil merges the first and third of these conceptions.

- Conception a: the representational view of language as a specific account of how language functions.

Sometimes when Pin-Fat and Fierke refer to ‘the picture theory’ or ‘picture view’ of language,<sup>58</sup> they apparently take themselves to be referring to a particular account comprised of a specific set of claims or assumptions about how language functions. This is apparent at the start of Pin-Fat’s 1997 essay where she equates the “view that language and thought represent reality” with the *Tractatus*’ alleged “‘picture theory’ of meaning”,<sup>59</sup> and in Fierke’s essays where she refers to the *Tractatus*’ alleged account as “the picture theory of language”<sup>60</sup> and “the picture view of language”<sup>61</sup> (my emphasis). The identification of the representational view of language as a specific philosophical account is also implied by the way in which Pin-Fat and Fierke use the text of the *Tractatus* to summarise this ‘view’ of language that they object to, presenting direct quotes and paraphrases of the *Tractatus*’ propositions as statements of the targeted view’s commitments.<sup>62</sup>

If we were to go along with this conception, then we should interpret all of Pin-Fat and Fierke’s references to the ‘picture view’ or ‘picture theory’ of language as referring exclusively to the particular set of claims that they extract from the text of the *Tractatus*. To give an example of what this would entail, in Pin-Fat’s case this would mean interpreting such references as being to an account according to which, specifically: “to give the essence of a proposition means to give the essence of all description,” “names name objects and configurations of names depict possible configurations of objects in the world,” “language can represent possible states of affairs because it shares the same structure,” and “the truth or falsity of a proposition

---

<sup>58</sup> Pin-Fat also uses expressions such as ‘the view that language and thought represent reality’ (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.79).

<sup>59</sup> Pin-Fat, 1997: p.79

<sup>60</sup> Fierke, 2010a: p.84

<sup>61</sup> Fierke, 2002: p.333 – my emphasis.

<sup>62</sup> E.g. Pin-Fat, 2010: p.9; Fierke, 2002: p.335. It is also implied the fact that Pin-Fat and Fierke present criticisms of the account of language they find in the *Tractatus* as criticisms of the view of language as representational (or a ‘picture’) of reality (E.g. Pin-Fat, 1997: p.82; Fierke, 2002: p.337, my emphasis).

depends on whether it agrees or disagrees with reality.”<sup>63</sup> This is not to say that we would be bound, according to this conception, to regard the *Tractatus* as the *only* text that contains the representational view of language according to Pin-Fat and Fierke; however, it would mean that we would have to assume that any accounts of language which do *not* endorse the specific claims that Pin-Fat and Fierke extract from the *Tractatus* would not count, according to them, as instances of the representational view of language.

- Conception b(i): the representational view of language as a ‘type’ of account.

At other times in their work, Pin-Fat and Fierke treat the representational view of language more as a ‘type’ of account which includes not only those accounts that adhere to the specific set of claims they each extract from the *Tractatus*, but also encompasses other accounts that are similar or linked to these claims in some way. In Fierke’s case, having identified ‘the picture view’ or ‘picture theory’ of language as an account presented in the *Tractatus*, she then extends her application of these terms to refer to aspects of the philosophies of science put forward by the ‘logical positivists’ of the Vienna Circle and Karl Popper. The *prima facie* reasoning behind this extension of the terms ‘picture view’/ ‘picture theory’ appears to be two-fold: firstly, the historical relationship between the *Tractatus* and the philosophies of science developed by the Vienna Circle and Karl Popper; and secondly, the suggestion made by Fierke that these latter philosophies involve making and/or accepting some of the same claims about language and reality that she identifies as being present in the *Tractatus* (namely that all propositions can be analysed into elementary propositions which represent states of affairs, and that testing the truth or falsity of a proposition involves seeing whether the primitive names in the relevant elementary propositions correspond with real entities).<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> Pin-Fat, 1997: p.79-80

<sup>64</sup> Fierke, 2002: p.336

Fierke subsequently extends the scope of her application of the terms ‘picture view’/ ‘picture theory’ even further when she starts to use these terms to refer to any account or statement of methodology that has either been influenced by the Vienna Circle and Karl Popper, or which she takes to have certain similarities to the claims that she has identified as being in common between these philosophers’ accounts and the *Tractatus*. Thus Fierke refers to IR scholars such as Waltz and Wendt as being committed to a “picture view” or “picture theory” of language on the basis that there are historical links and “family resemblance[s]” between the account of language presented in the *Tractatus* and the claims or assumptions about language that are made in the course of these IR scholars’ work.<sup>65</sup>

In her 2010 book *Pin-Fat* similarly identifies the representational view of language as a class of accounts when she characterises “the view that language and thought *represent* reality”<sup>66</sup> as one which is to be taken “in the widest sense to include any view” according to which each word names an object, and the meaning of a word is the object for which it stands (my emphasis).<sup>67</sup>

- Conception b(ii): the representational view of language as an underlying ‘notion’ or ‘picture’.

Occasionally *Pin-Fat* and Fierke extend the scope of what they mean by terms like ‘the picture view’ or ‘picture theory’ of language even further, suggesting that these terms refer to something so general that it permeates practically the entire history of Western philosophy as well as the approaches of multifarious scholars of social and political affairs. For example, in a jointly-written introduction to a 2001 collection of essays, Fierke refers to the assumption that language “is a mirror of an objective reality” as one of the “presuppositions underlying Western philosophy since Descartes”, and refers to the “implicit acceptance of a mirror view of language” by “conventional constructivists” in IR.<sup>68</sup> She later claims in her 2010 essay that “the

---

<sup>65</sup> Fierke, 2002: p.336-7

<sup>66</sup> *Pin-Fat*, 2010: p.9

<sup>67</sup> *Pin-Fat*, 2010: p.9

<sup>68</sup> Fierke, 2001: p.4

picture theory of language ... is often assumed in explanatory theories”, and that “hypothesis testing rests on a picture theory of language”.<sup>69</sup> Meanwhile, Pin-Fat sometimes refers to the representational view of language as a “picture” of how language works, which “captivates” numerous philosophers and IR scholars.<sup>70</sup>

Quotes such as these suggest – in contrast to the first two conceptions – that in order for someone to be said to ‘assume’ the representational view of language, not only do they not have to articulate any of the specific claims that Pin-Fat and Fierke extract from texts such as the *Tractatus*, but indeed, they need not articulate any definite claims about language at all. In particular, Fierke’s references to the representational view of language in her 2010 article suggest that even choosing to use a particular technique of study – such as formulating a theoretical explanation, or testing a hypothesis – discloses a tacit commitment to the “picture theory” or “picture view of language” (see above). This, along with Pin-Fat and Fierke’s use of terms such as “notion” and “picture” to characterise the relevant ‘view’, suggests that they are arguing against something much vaguer, more general and less definitively articulated than either a particular account of language, or a family of related accounts that share certain claims or assumptions.<sup>71</sup>

Having outlined the three different conceptions of the representational view of language that are present in Pin-Fat and Fierke’s arguments, I will now explain how the first and third of these conceptions are combined in Kratochwil’s work. Unlike Pin-Fat and Fierke, Kratochwil does not at any point explicitly identify the representational view of language with the work of a particular philosopher, preferring to characterise it in vague terms as an “image”,<sup>72</sup> “notion”,<sup>73</sup> or “idea”<sup>74</sup> of

---

<sup>69</sup> Fierke, 2010a: p.84

<sup>70</sup> Pin-Fat, 1997: p.80; 2010: p.9 & p.14

<sup>71</sup> For example, it would be highly implausible to claim that someone who employs a specific sort of method, such as testing a hypothesis, thereby tacitly ‘assumes’ all of the specific propositions about language that are presented in the *Tractatus*. Therefore when Fierke claims that hypothesis testing “rests on a picture theory of language”, it is reasonable to suppose that by “picture theory of language” she is referring to something more cerebral and less definite than a specific account or set of claims (Fierke, 2001: p.7).

<sup>72</sup> Kratochwil, 1989: p.5-6; 2001: p.29

<sup>73</sup> Kratochwil, 2011 [2006]: p.187

<sup>74</sup> Kratochwil, 2011 [2009]: p.210

language which is associated with various philosophical schools and movements including “classical logic”,<sup>75</sup> “classical and modern (Cartesian) epistemology”<sup>76</sup> and “logical positivism”.<sup>77</sup> Despite this, Kratochwil is implicitly ambivalent between this more general conception of the representational view of language, and a conception of this view as something quite specific that can be refuted by objecting to particular set of claims. This is demonstrated in the following passage from Kratochwil’s 2001 essay:

“Much of our standard understanding about the function of language was based, until recently, on a conception of language as a mirror of reality. If language was supposed to be meaningful, it was so in virtue of its ability to depict, accurately, the things, actions and properties of the ‘outer world.’ Thus, nouns stood for things, verbs for actions, and adjectives for properties.” (Kratochwil, 2001: p.19)

In this passage, Kratochwil starts off by talking about the ‘mirror’ conception of language as something so general that it underlies “much of our standard understanding” of language. However, he then goes on to attribute to it the relatively specific assumptions that ‘nouns stand for things’, ‘verbs stand for actions’ and ‘adjectives stand for properties’. Unlike a shared ‘notion’ that could underlie a range of accounts and form the basis for a general understanding, the latter are the sorts of specific claims that could differentiate one particular representational account of language from others. A few lines later, Kratochwil articulates the central assumption of this view in an even more specialist manner, using terminology taken from Descartes.<sup>78</sup>

From the above discussion we have seen how the ARO in its current form is ambivalent between two or three different conceptions of the nature of the representational view of language, which are not obviously compatible with one another. The most significant problem with this ambivalence is that which criticisms turn out to be appropriate and effective objections to the representational view of

---

<sup>75</sup> Kratochwil, 1989: p.29-30

<sup>76</sup> Kratochwil, 2001: p.34

<sup>77</sup> Kratochwil, 1989: p.5

<sup>78</sup> Kratochwil, 2001: p.20

language will partly depend upon what sort of item it is. For example, if the representational view of language is an account consisting of some specific written claims and their implied assumptions (as per Conception a), then a plausible way to criticise it would be to contradict one of more of the individual claims or assumptions to which it is committed – which is indeed the main tactic adopted by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke (see Section 1.5). However, if the representational view of language is rather a *kind* of account that encompasses various similar but not necessarily identical sets of claims about how language functions (as per Conception b(i)), then criticising the specific claims made by one particular account that falls within this category will not necessarily undermine the whole class. In this case it would be necessary to supply additional explanations of how each counterargument can be made to work against similar versions of the targeted claim or assumption which are not directly challenged by it<sup>79</sup> – however, this is precisely the sort of explanation that is often missing from Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke’s arguments.<sup>80</sup> Finally, if we are to understand that the representational view of language is instead a vague ‘image’ or ‘notion’ of language that underpins a variety of different accounts and approaches (as per Conception b(ii)), then it becomes even more doubtful that contradicting specific claims about words, sentences, and so on is an appropriate or effective way to contradict it.

The above outline might seem abstract; however, by analysing some passages from Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke’s work in this light, we can start to see how their ambivalence concerning the nature of the representational view of language constitutes a genuine argumentative difficulty. In Pin-Fat’s case, a prime example is found on page 9-11 of her 2010 book. Early on page 9, Pin-Fat initially establishes a distinction between “the view that language and thought *represent* reality” on the one hand, and certain “pictures” or “assumptions” that inform this view on the other. However, Pin-Fat then immediately conflates the distinction she has just established

---

<sup>79</sup> This is a recommendation that will be repeated in the coming sections.

<sup>80</sup> For example, when Kratochwil states that the exclusion of ‘fuzzy’ or ‘normative’ concepts from ‘scientific’ approaches to IR are “beholden to an epistemology that is based on a ‘mirror’ image of language”, and then presents as an objection to the exclusion of fuzzy and normative concepts from IR the modal counter-arguments that reference is not the only factor that determines the meaning of a sentence, and that not every word corresponds to something (Kratochwil, 2001: p.29).



by introducing a passage from Wittgenstein's *PI* §1 as a summary of a "picture of language [which] is constructed in the widest sense to include any view" according to which words name objects, sentences are combinations of such names, and every word has a correlating meaning which is the object for which it stands (my emphasis). From there on, Pin-Fat treats the "view that language and thought represent reality" and the "picture of language" that allegedly informs this view as though they were one and the same thing. Referring to both, she writes:

"In this view, the relationship between language and reality comes through naming. Language can represent reality because names name objects and configurations of names depict possible configurations of objects in the world. In this way, language can represent possible states of affairs because it shares the same structure. Thus, the truth or falsity of a proposition depends on whether it agrees or disagrees with reality (Wittgenstein 1922: 2.223, 4.05)." (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.9)

An initial effect of this conflation is that although Pin-Fat claims that the relevant 'view'/'picture' is constructed "in the widest sense" to include a variety of different accounts, her summary (like Kratochwil's) actually ends up being quite specific, pinning this supposedly wide-ranging item down to a limited selection of what are, at times, quite specialised propositions. Hence when Pin-Fat later criticises the representational view of language using her interpretation of later Wittgenstein, despite the alleged generality of this view, the criticisms she provides are quite narrowly-targeted objections to specific claims regarding words and sentences that she has extracted from passages in the *Tractatus* and *PI*.<sup>81</sup> What makes this doubly problematic is that when Pin-Fat comes to sum up her criticisms, she does not acknowledge their specificity, but on the contrary, refers to them as though they pose a challenge to any account or approach which assumes that language is in some sense 'representational'.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> For example, Pin-Fat's observation that "naming is only a small part of language use" counters the specific claim that 'every word names an object', while her argument that "the meaning of a word does not require a naming relationship" counters the claim that 'the meaning of a word is dependent upon its naming an object' (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.10).

<sup>82</sup> For example, on page 11, after having presented her criticisms of the claims that 'every word names an object' and 'the meaning of a word is the object for which it stands', Pin-Fat concludes: "Language games are not ... representational" (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.10, original emphasis).

Similarly, as we have seen, although Fierke initially clarifies her extended application of the term ‘picture view’ or ‘picture theory’ of language as being based on certain similarities (including some common claims) shared between the relevant accounts and approaches,<sup>83</sup> at times she characterises this connection in much stronger terms; such as when she claims that “it is the same view” that is at the heart of the *Tractatus*, the ‘logical positivism’ of the Vienna Circle, and Karl Popper’s philosophy of science.<sup>84</sup> Consequently, when Fierke comes to sum up her criticisms of specific claims that she attributes to the *Tractatus* – such as that language consists of factual propositions, or that there is an isomorphic correspondence between words and elements of reality – she presents her criticisms as though they were general refutations of a traditional philosophical view of language based on the “metaphor” of a picture.<sup>85</sup> We can characterise the problem identified above as an ‘over-inflation’ of the actual scope of Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke’s more specific criticisms, owing to these scholars’ ambivalence in shifting between, and conflating, different conceptions of a representational view of language with disparate levels of generality.

A partial solution to this problem that might be entertained by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke, is to pin the ARO down to *one* conception of the representational view of language. However, this would give rise to further difficulties, since there are some aspects of their line of argument that rely upon one conception, and some aspects that rely upon another. For example, if the ARO is to be applicable to the whole range of philosophical accounts and ‘positivist’ approaches to IR that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke suggest, then this would require conceiving of the representational view of language as something quite general, such as an underlying ‘notion’ or ‘picture’ of how language functions (Conception b(ii)). However, since most of the actual criticisms of the representational view of language that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke make are specific counterarguments targeted towards particular versions of claims or

---

<sup>83</sup> i.e. the *Tractatus*, the ‘logical positivism’ of the Vienna Circle, and Karl Popper’s philosophy of science.

<sup>84</sup> Fierke, 2003: p.75

<sup>85</sup> Fierke, 2003: p.76

assumptions, their effectiveness would appear to depend upon the representational view of language being something more specific, such as a particular theory or account (Conception a).

## Problem 2: Ambiguity Surrounding the Most General Conception of the Representational View of Language

A related weakness is that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke do not provide an adequate explanation of what a 'notion' or 'picture' of language is in the sense of their most general conception of the representational view of language employed by the ARO (Conception b(ii)). Pin-Fat is superior in this regard to Kratochwil and Fierke, in that she does at least attempt to provide such an explanation; however, as I will argue, Pin-Fat's account still leaves important questions unresolved, and therefore is unsuccessful at dispelling the ambiguity surrounding the representational view of language in its most general form.

Looking back over the extracts already quoted in this chapter, we can deduce the following criteria that the representational view of language conceived in its most general form – as an underlying 'notion' or 'picture' – should satisfy if it is to perform the role in the ARO that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke assign to it:

- *It should be extremely general.* As we have seen, according to these scholars, the representational view of language in its general form underlies a whole range of accounts and movements throughout the history of Western philosophy, including (but not limited to) Cartesian epistemology, the 'logical positivism' of the Vienna Circle, and contemporary 'realist' philosophies of science. If it is to live up to this claim, then the representational view of language in its general form should be capable of encompassing this diversity of philosophical accounts and movements, while transcending their specific differences. In Kratochwil's words, it must be capable of being viewed as part

of philosophy's traditional "epistemological project", "irrespective of its various forms".<sup>86</sup>

- *It should be capable of being meaningfully attributed to written accounts of a greater specificity than itself.* From the first condition (above) it follows that the representational view of language according to this conception should be more general than the specific claims of some particular account, or group of accounts, of language. However, despite its greater generality, it should be capable of being 'attributed' to those more specific accounts which Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke identify as containing or assuming it. So, for example, in order for the *Tractatus* to justifiably be said to epitomise the representational view of language in its general form, the representational view of language needs to be capable of being attributed to the text in some way that is more meaningful than just being acceptable as a vague summary of some of its propositions.<sup>87</sup>
- *It should be capable of being tacitly (perhaps even unconsciously) assumed.* As we saw earlier, the representational view of language according to this conception is something that can be automatically assumed simply by adopting a certain method or approach. As such it needs to be capable of being endorsed by someone without being articulated by them in spoken or written form, and perhaps even without the person necessarily being aware that they have endorsed it (for example, in the case of someone who tries to formulate and test a hypothesis without consciously entertaining any definite claims about language).

These are the conditions that the representational view of language under the most general conception needs to satisfy if it is to perform the role in the ARO that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke assign to it. From this it is clear that the

---

<sup>86</sup> Kratochwil, 2011 [2009]: p.203

<sup>87</sup> This is based on the consideration that the fact that several specific accounts of language can be summed up by the same general paraphrase does not in itself necessarily mean that these accounts are all committed to some common underlying 'view'.

representational view of language according to this conception will be something quite novel which differs substantially from other more conventional targets of academic criticism such as particular theories and claims about language. Given that this is so, it behoves Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke to give an in-depth explanation of what sort of thing the representational view of language in this general incarnation could be, and how it can be said to be 'assumed' or 'committed to' by those accounts and academic endeavours to which they attribute it. At present, however, a sufficient explanation of this kind is not found in Kratochwil, Pin-Fat or Fierke's work.

For example, Kratochwil frequently uses terms like 'image',<sup>88</sup> 'understanding'<sup>89</sup> and 'notion'<sup>90</sup> to refer to the representational view of language, in an apparent effort to differentiate it from more specific philosophical accounts and claims. However, at no point does Kratochwil explain what an 'image' of language is, how it differs from a particular account of language, or what it means for someone's work or the methods they employ to be 'indebted' to such an image. Similarly, when Fierke makes claims such as that "hypothesis testing rests on a picture theory of language",<sup>91</sup> she is clearly using the term 'picture theory of language' to refer to something more general than the specific set of claims she extracts from the *Tractatus* – however Fierke never explains what this is, or what 'resting' on such a theory in the absence of advancing any explicit claims about language amounts to.

Out of all three scholars, Pin-Fat is the only one who seriously attempts to give a more in-depth explanation of what a 'picture' of language is, which she does by drawing on her interpretation of later Wittgenstein's concept of a 'grammatical picture'. In her 1997 article Pin-Fat suggests that such 'pictures' are generated by statements which appear to represent "deep metaphysical facts about the world",<sup>92</sup> but are in fact merely "full-blown representation[s] of our grammar. Not facts; but as it were illustrated turns of speech".<sup>93</sup> Pin-Fat explains that by 'grammar', later

---

<sup>88</sup> Kratochwil, 1989: p.5-6; 2001: p.29

<sup>89</sup> Kratochwil, 1993: p.76; 2001: p.19

<sup>90</sup> Kratochwil, 2011 [2006]: p.187

<sup>91</sup> Fierke, 2010a: p.84

<sup>92</sup> Pin-Fat, 1997: p.81

<sup>93</sup> Pin-Fat, 1997: p.82; Wittgenstein *PI* 295

Wittgenstein is referring to the conventional rules and practices which determine the possibilities of meaning for particular words and sentences within a given social context.<sup>94</sup> While Pin-Fat's explanation of Wittgenstein's concept of a grammatical picture goes some way towards explaining how such pictures arise, it does not squarely address the central question of what a grammatical picture *is*, leaving metaphors such as 'illustrated turns of speech' unexplained.

The main reason why this ambiguity is problematic for the ARO is that it means that the criticisms that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke aim at the representational view of language in its most general form are made without proper justification, and are not capable of being properly held to account by other scholars who might object to them. That is to say: without a coherent explanation of what an underlying 'notion' or 'picture' is in the relevant sense, and what the methodological criteria are for determining whether or not a particular scholar is committed to such a 'picture', the door is left wide open for anybody to arbitrarily identify an academic account or approach as being committed to a problematic 'picture' of language, on the basis of vague connections with previously criticised claims or accounts to which it bears some manner of resemblance. In addition, without further methodological clarification, it is not possible for critics of the ARO to be able to refute the identification of a particular account or approach in IR as being committed to a problematic 'picture' of language, as in order to argue that an account or approach is *not* committed to such a 'picture', one would need to have a clear idea of what such a commitment would amount to. Since the generality of the ARO's application depends upon the validity of such identifications, then a more substantial explanation of the nature of the representational view of language in its most general form is required, if Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke wish the reach of their objection to be as general as they make it out to be.

In addition to this, there is the risk that by being vague in this connection, Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke leave the ARO open to a challenge of hypocrisy with respect to their criticism of 'essentialism'. Recall that all three scholars criticise 'essentialism' in

---

<sup>94</sup> Pin-Fat, 1997: p.83; 2010: p.21

the form of the assumption that all the referents or applications of a particular word must share some 'essential' feature or set of features in common; and that Pin-Fat characterises the search for essences as an illegitimate attempt to 'dig beneath' the surface of phenomena (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.8 and p.14). In light of this, some critics of the ARO might ask: doesn't the positing of a representational 'picture' of language as 'underlying' a variety of similar accounts and approaches betray a commitment on the part of the ARO to just such a form of essentialism? Doesn't it precisely assume that there is a common 'element' shared by these different accounts and theories which makes them all vulnerable to broadly the same objections, which lies concealed beneath their various claims? After all, how else are we to make sense of Pin-Fat and Fierke's argument that even though Waltz does not claim that there is an isomorphic correspondence between theoretical concepts and elements of reality, he is nevertheless committed to the same 'picture' of the relationship between language and reality as that presented by the *Tractatus* (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.81; Fierke, 2002: p.336)?

In view of the above, the most important questions that need to be addressed regarding the more general conception of the representational view of language are as follows:

Question 1: What is the representational view of language in its general form?

If, as Kratochil, Pin-Fat and Fierke suggest, the representational view of language is not limited to the specific claims of any particular account of language, and can be tacitly or even unconsciously assumed by scholars adopting a certain academic approach, a crucial question is: what is the representational view of language in its general form? For example, in Kratochwil's case, we might ask what an 'image' of language is; and in Pin-Fat's case, what an 'illustration' in the context of the expression 'illustrated turns of phrase' amounts to.

Question 2: What is the basis for identifying a commitment to the representational view of language?

Since Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke attribute the representational view of language so broadly to so many different accounts and kinds of scholarly endeavours, another important question which arises is: how do Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke decide whether or not something or someone is committed to the representational view of language? One could put this in the form of a negative question: what would it take in order for someone or something *not* to be identified as being committed to the representational view of language?

Question 3: What is the methodological status of claims that attribute the representational view of language to particular scholars, accounts etc.?

A third issue in need of clarification is what sort of statements Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke take themselves to be making when – for example – they claim that such-and-such a scholar ‘assumes’ or is ‘indebted’ to the representational view of language in its general form. Given that according to Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke, the representational view of language in its general form transcends particularities and can be assumed in the absence of an explicit endorsement, there needs to be some kind of explanation as to what Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke are doing when they identify its presence in the work of others.

### Problem 3: Ambiguities Concerning the Specific Claims Attributed to the Representational View of Language

A third problem is that when Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke paraphrase what they take to be the specific commitments of the representational view of language, they fluctuate between different wordings that imply different versions of the relevant claims and assumptions. For example, in his 1989 book Kratochwil conflates Assumption 1 and 2 of the representational view of language (see outline in Chapter



1) when he sums up the 'positivist' assumption that communication consists solely in "describing 'facts'" as the reduction of communication "to the 'match' of concepts and objects" (Kratochwil, 1989: p.5-6). Subsequently Kratochwil paraphrases this assumption in a variety of different ways, referring to it as the assumption that "if language was meaningful, it was so in virtue of its ability to depict accurately the things, actions, and properties of the 'outer world'" (Kratochwil, 2001: p.19); that "nouns [stand] for things, verbs for actions, and adjectives for properties" (Kratochwil, 2001: p.19); that "the meaning of a term consist[s] ... in its exact correspondence to an object in the 'outer world'" (Kratochwil, 2001: p.20); that "concepts [mean] something ... because they [capture] the ontological essences of 'things'" (Kratochwil, 2001: p.20); that "objectively given things are mirrored by our concepts" (Kratochwil, 2011 [2006]: p.187); and that "the meaning of a concept ... is ... its reference" (Kratochwil, 2011 [2009]: p.144-5).

Similarly, Pin-Fat equates the assumptions that "names name objects" (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.80); that "the meaning of a word is the object for which it stands" (Ibid.); that words "rely" on "the word-object naming relation" for their meaning (Ibid.); that "the meaning of [a] word ... is ... dependent on naming an element which is *common* to all instances of its use" (Ibid.); that "language ... shares the same structure" with "possible states of affairs" (Pin-Fat 2011: p.9); and that "words refer to objects" (Ibid.). Meanwhile, Fierke treats as equivalent the assumptions that "language provides labels for an objective reality" (Fierke and Jørgensen, 2001: p.9, fn.2); that "language is the totality of propositions" which are "composed of simple names" of "simple entities in the world" (Fierke, 2002: p.335); that "all propositions can be analysed" into "elementary propositions" composed of "primitive names" (Fierke, 2002: p.336); that "a sentence with a 'sense' is one in which the logical syntax of language is perfectly isomorphic with the logical structure of reality" (Ibid.); that there is a "possibility of correlating primitive names with entities in the world" (Ibid.); that there is an "isomorphic ... correspondence" between language and the world" (Ibid.); that language is "a set of labels, linked in propositions" which "picture the logic of the world" (Fierke, 2004: p.478-9); and that "we can compare scientific categories with the world to see whether they correspond" (Fierke, 2010a: p.84).

From the examples quoted above one can clearly see the manner in which terminological equivocations and conflation in Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke's writing generate ambiguities concerning precisely which assumptions are being identified and criticised as belonging to the representational view of language and 'positivist' approaches to IR. More specifically, these equivocations include:

- Treating conceptually distinct expressions like 'name', 'label', 'correspond', 'refer', 'stand for' etc. as synonymous;
- Shifting seamlessly between versions of assumptions that involve different quantifiers, such as between the universal assumption that *all* words correspond with objects and less extensive assumptions to the effect that *some* words correspond with objects (such as the 'simple names' in analysed propositions, or certain theoretical concepts);
- Conflating connectives with different implications, such as 'if', 'because', 'is constituted by', 'is identical with', 'depends on' etc.,
- Wavering between expressions of actuality and possibility, e.g. words *can* be made to correspond with objects vs. there *is* a correspondence between words and objects.

The distinctions that are erased by these equivocations might seem subtle. However, they are actually highly significant for the validity of the criticisms that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke make of the representational view of language and 'positivist' approaches to IR. This is because the distinctions in question relate to differences in the scope and meaning of the paraphrased assumptions that would affect whether or not certain criticisms would apply to them. So, for example, the modal criticism made by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke that '*not all* words refer to objects' would work as a counterargument against the universal claim that '*all* words refer to objects'; however, it would not directly contradict the similar assumptions that 'words in elementary propositions refer to objects' or that 'some theoretical concepts refer to objects' as Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke suggest, since these latter assumptions do not involve a blanket denial of the existence of non-referential words or non-

referential factors affecting linguistic meaning. That is not to say that counter-arguments and examples used to challenge the universal claim that ‘all words refer to objects’ could not conceivably be adapted to refute non-universal versions of this claim; however the point is rather that there needs to be a clear explanation included in the ARO of *how* such arguments can be extended so that they work against these other versions to which they are not directly applicable. Otherwise the connection is left obscure, which does not provide a sound basis for making methodological recommendations that will be taken seriously by other IR scholars – especially by those for whom this would involve making radical changes to their way of working.

A salutary example of why such distinctions matter in the philosophy of language is found in the form of Robert Brandom’s 2008 book, *Between Saying and Doing: Towards an Analytic Pragmatism*. There Brandom sets forth a sophisticated programme for the philosophical analysis of linguistic meaning, in which he attempts to reconcile “the classical project of philosophical analysis” as developed by “Russell and Moore, the *Tractatus*, the Cambridge analysts of the 1920s, the Vienna Circle, Ayer, Goodman and Quine” (2008: p.xvii-xviii), with what he terms the “pragmatist critique of semantics” developed by philosophers such as James, Dewey, Austin, later Wittgenstein, Searle and Rorty (Brandom, 2008: p.4-5). In this context, Brandom accepts the ‘pragmatist’ rejection of the unqualified assumptions that “uses of singular terms have the job of picking out objects” and “declarative sentences are in the business of stating facts” (Brandom, 2008: p.4-5), which are assumptions that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke also criticise in the context of the ARO. However, in place of these assumptions Brandom adopts the more nuanced premise that the identification of objects and factual statements are uses of language which “form a privileged centre” on the basis of which “more peripheral” uses can be understood (Brandom, 2008: p.4-5). Now, this premise of Brandom’s is somewhat similar to the universal assumptions that all words refer to objects and all sentences state facts; nevertheless, Brandom is correct in thinking that his premise is not directly challenged by the ‘pragmatist critique’ of the latter assumptions, as his claim is one of the *primacy* rather than the *universality* of referential and propositional uses of language. While one may still reasonably disagree with Brandom, the point remains

that in order to criticise Brandom's premise it would not be sufficient to point out the similarities between this premise and historical universal assumptions regarding the functioning of words and sentences that have been successfully refuted by the 'pragmatist critique'. Rather, one would have to provide a thorough explanation of how the 'pragmatist critique' can be adapted so that it continues to pose a challenge to Brandom's modified premise, despite relevant differences between this premise and the universal assumptions that formed the original target of these objections.

This example helps to illuminate why it is important for IR scholars like Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke, who seek to apply something like the 'pragmatist critique' to the assumptions of scholars within their discipline, to be careful to paraphrase their targets in a precise manner, and not to conflate assumptions involving different quantifiers, connectives, etc., so as to avoid mistakenly giving the impression that criticisms of a particular assumption will automatically refute similar versions to which it may not be directly applicable. It also illustrates the need for such scholars to provide 'bridging' explanations to explicitly set forth how existing criticisms of certain historical claims and assumptions within philosophy are applicable to similar, yet relevantly distinct, versions of these claims that may be found in the more recent work of IR scholars.

#### Problem 4: Insufficient Methodological Justification for Appealing to 'Ordinary Language'

As we saw in Chapter 1, Section 1.5, many of the criticisms of the representational view of language made by the ARO are counter-claims based on observations about how language is ordinarily used. In employing this strategy, Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke appear to be following the lead of philosophers like J.L. Austin, later Wittgenstein and Searle, whom they cite in support of their objections. The observations employed by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke in this manner include both illustrative examples of how specific words and sentences are typically used, and modal generalisations about how language *can* function that are derived from these examples. Now, many people may be content to accept such observations as truisms

about how language is used – and indeed, they may turn out to be perfectly valid. However, at present, these observations pose a potential problem for the ARO in the following way.

First of all, despite its intuitiveness, this sort of appeal to ‘ordinary language’ is a far from straightforward strategy, and has been subject to considerable debate over the past 60-odd years (for example, Heath: 1952; Mates, 1958; Cavell: 1958; Fodor and Katz: 1963; Kindi, 1998; Hanfling, 2000; Jackman, 2001). Some of the key issues that have been raised and discussed in this context include:

- Whether appealing to observations about language-use constitutes an appeal to empirical facts;
- Whether these are sociological facts about how the majority of speakers use their native language, or facts of some other kind;
- What sort of evidence or investigation (if any) is required in order to correctly observe that language is used in such-and-such a way;
- How disagreements over facts of this kind are to be resolved.

In view of the above, it is no longer tenable for scholars wishing to base their arguments on observations of ordinary language-use to simply present their observations and expect them to be accepted as self-evident, as Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Flerke apparently do. Even if one is sympathetic to the observations that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke make, in order for these to serve as a sound basis for contradicting other people’s approaches to IR, the ARO needs to include a plausible account of the methodological status of such observations, which addresses the main uncertainties that have previously been identified (above). This is not to suggest that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke could not rise to this challenge and show their observations to be sound; but simply to point out that at present, this amounts to a significant weakness in their arguments which needs to be addressed.

Secondly, there is the more serious potential problem facing Pin-Fat and Fierke that if they follow Searle in acknowledging the status of their linguistic observations as

factual claims of some kind,<sup>95</sup> they could end up contradicting some of their own arguments against making and testing true/false statements.<sup>96</sup> These include Pin-Fat's suggestion that knowledge-claims and questions of truth or falsity should be avoided because they are based on unjustified assumptions about the nature of proof, evidence etc.,<sup>97</sup> and Fierke's argument that 'hypothesis testing' is based on mistaken assumptions about the ability of language to 'mirror' an objective reality.<sup>98</sup> The potential for this kind of contradiction is foreseen by Fierke in her 2001 article, when she notes that her use of the word 'empirical' to characterise the approach she thinks IR scholars should adopt "is not without problems" – given her position that "the word 'empirical,' and the data/theory dichotomy, presuppose a correspondence theory of truth" and a "way of knowing" that "Wittgenstein criticised" in his later philosophy.<sup>99</sup> Fierke hints at a possible solution to this apparent contradiction when she suggests that later Wittgenstein's "alternative approach" to linguistic analysis is "not properly empirical as this word has traditionally been used."<sup>100</sup> However, Fierke does not elaborate further in explaining in what sense later Wittgenstein's approach is 'not properly empirical', or how such 'non-traditional' empirical observations manage to avoid the criticisms that she takes herself and later Wittgenstein to have levelled against more traditional empirical approaches.

## Problem 5: Endorsement of Universal Claims

As we have seen, many of the ARO's objections to the representational view of language and 'positivist' approaches to IR involve citing particular counter-examples and making modal generalisations to contradict universal claims about language. At times, however, Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke go further than this in expressing their objections, and end up endorsing some universal claims of their own. Thus, for example, after contradicting the universal claim that 'words only have meaning when they name objects', by observing that not all words name objects and that there are

---

<sup>95</sup> E.g. Searle, 1969: p.13

<sup>96</sup> Pin-Fat, 1997: p.82; Fierke, 2002: p.351

<sup>97</sup> Pin-Fat, 1997: p.82; Fierke, 2002: p.351

<sup>98</sup> Fierke, 2002: p.351

<sup>99</sup> Fierke, 2001: p.122

<sup>100</sup> Fierke, 2001 p.123

various contexts in which words are meaningful without naming objects, Pin-Fat asks: “so, if the naming of objects does not provide the meaning of a word then what might?” Here Pin-Fat shifts from a modal denial to the effect that ‘the meaning of words does not always come from naming objects’, to endorsing a negative universal claim to the effect that ‘The meaning of words is not provided by the naming of objects’ (my emphasis).<sup>101</sup> A similar shift is performed a few lines later when, after quoting Wittgenstein’s remark in *PI* §43 that “for a *large* class of cases in which we use the word ‘meaning’ ... [it] can be explained in this way: the meaning of a word is its use in the language” (original emphasis), Pin-Fat concludes: “meaning then, comes from the way in which a word is used in particular contexts”.<sup>102</sup> Here Pin-Fat converts the modal tone of Wittgenstein’s remark, in which Wittgenstein explicitly specifies that he is speaking of a “*large* class of cases” and “not for all”, into an unqualified categorical assertion about what constitutes the meaning of words in general.<sup>103</sup> Another example of a universal claim endorsed by all three scholars is the claim that we cannot step outside language so as to see whether, and how well, it represents an objective reality (Kratochwil, 2011 [2000]: p.176; Fierke, 2001: p.118; 2002: p.337; Pin-Fat, 2010: p.7).

These sorts of universal claims made by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke are problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, many of these universal claims look a lot like metaphysical theses, in the sense that they appear to be attempts to assert necessary *a priori* truths about the nature of language and/or reality. This is especially problematic for Pin-Fat and Fierke, since they criticise other philosophers and scholars for buying into metaphysical theses, and so if they were to endorse metaphysical theses themselves this would amount to a contradiction in their arguments. So, for instance, in her book Pin-Fat strongly criticises IR scholars who have given in to “the urge to make universal claims” about “what anarchy is, what a

---

<sup>101</sup> The transition Pin-Fat undertakes here is akin to that of someone who goes from denying that all fruit grows on trees, to asserting that ‘fruit does not grow on trees’.

<sup>102</sup> Pin-Fat, 1997: p.80

<sup>103</sup> Kratochwil commits to the same (or similar) universal claims about where the meaning of words does and does not come from, when he endorses “the Wittgensteinian notion that the meaning of a concept ... is not its reference but its ‘use’” (Kratochwil, 2011: p.144-5); while Fierke asserts that “language use ... constitutes human action and meaning” (Fierke, 2010a: p.84).

state is, what war is, what power is, what security is, and so on” which purport to “apply universally to all instances of that ‘thing’ ... without exception” (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.2). However, she herself claims that it is not possible to assess claims of truth or falsity (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.7), that “certainty [is] impossible” (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.7), that “meaning cannot be fixed” (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.13) and so on. These claims are apparently just as universal as those which Pin-Fat uses the ARO to rebut, and so unless Pin-Fat can provide some sort of explanation for why her own universal claims are not subject to the same criticisms, then this indeed appears to be a fundamental contradiction in her argument.

Secondly, some of the universal claims about language that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke make directly contradict modal claims and examples of language-use that these same scholars present elsewhere in their arguments. Thus, for example, in making their modal arguments against the universal assumptions that ‘*all* words refer to objects’ and ‘*all* sentences are factual propositions’, Kratochwil and Pin-Fat acknowledge that there are actually some words and sentences which do function as referential terms and factual propositions; although they argue that these are not, so to speak, the ‘be all and end all’ of language. Thus Pin-Fat includes “forming and testing a hypothesis” in her list of different sorts of ways in which words may be used, and argues that “there are many other ways in which words are meaningful which do not rely on the word-object naming relation” (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.80); while Kratochwil claims that “normative terms follow a logic different from that of descriptive definitions” (Kratochwil, 2011: p.39).<sup>104</sup> However, these acknowledgements of the existence of *some* legitimate uses of language which involve factual claims, referring to objects, description and so on, are contradicted elsewhere by Pin-Fat and Kratochwil’s universal claims that “the meaning of objects does not provide the meaning of a word” (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.80), that it is not possible to assess claims as “accurate (true) or inaccurate (false)” (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.7); and that

---

<sup>104</sup> These examples serve to highlight the observation that ‘reference’ and ‘use’ are not two diametrically opposed ways of conceiving of linguistic meaning as Fierke suggests (2002: p.332), since ‘reference’ can be a kind of ‘use’ – or group of uses – to which words and sentences may be put (the same goes for ‘description’, ‘naming’ etc.).



“the meaning of a concept ... is not its reference but its ‘use’” (Kratochwil, 2011: p.145).

Thirdly, there is the problem that making and/or assessing of some of these claims would apparently require adopting a kind of objectivity that all three scholars argue is impossible. This is most clearly exemplified by the claim that ‘we cannot step outside language’. If it really were the case – as Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke argue – that in order to justifiably assert that language represents reality, one would have to be able to occupy an impossible position ‘outside’ language, then this would also apply to their counterclaim that language and reality are intertwined. This highlights the self-contradictory nature of Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke’s claim, since it effectively amounts to the mystical paradox that ‘we have ascertained that the relationship between language and reality is such that one cannot ascertain what this relationship is’.

#### Problem 6: Inconsistent Stance towards Everyday Linguistic Practices

As I have already mentioned, the validity of many of the ARO’s criticisms depends upon the methodological soundness of Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke’s appeals to ‘ordinary language’ in the form of observations about features of everyday linguistic practices. In view of this dependence, another problematic facet of the ARO is that in some places Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke actually find themselves contradicting or denying some ordinary linguistic practices in their eagerness to argue against certain universal claims or assumptions regarding how language functions.

For instance, we have already seen under the last heading how Pin-Fat denies the possibility of evaluating true/false claims or of gaining certain knowledge; and yet in everyday life there are a variety of accepted practices and scenarios in which people are said to evaluate the truth or falsity of claims, and to be certain or to gain certainty. Thus a news journalist may challenge the truth or accuracy of a claim made by a politician, a doctor may carry out tests on a patient in order to ascertain the

cause of their illness, and so on. By claiming that it is impossible to evaluate true/false claims or to gain certainty, it appears that Pin-Fat is not only arguing against an academic view of language, but is denying the very possibility of being able to do what people who engage in these sorts of practices take themselves to be doing; i.e. denying the ability of doctors to get to the bottom of a patient's illness so as to be capable of prescribing appropriate treatment, or the ability of journalists to legitimately be able to say that a politician's claim is false or misleading. Similarly, there are times when Fierke goes beyond challenging assumptions about language and appropriate methods for studying IR, and appears to contradict established practices of scientific enquiry, such as when she makes the unqualified claim that "hypothesis testing rests on a picture theory of language and the idea that we can compare scientific categories with the world to see whether they correspond" (Fierke, 2010a: p.84). Rather than criticising a particular assumption that supports the supposition that one can apply quasi-scientific techniques of 'hypothesis testing' to the study of IR, this claim apparently contends that practices of 'hypothesis testing' in general – no matter in which context they are employed – are founded on a misconception.

These sorts of denials are not only problematic due to the radical and controversial theses they advance, implying, as they do, that the results and achievements of all practices involving hypothesis testing and evaluations of truth or falsity are ill-gotten, but also because they betray an inconsistent attitude on Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke's part concerning the argumentative weight that observations of ordinary language-use carry. When it comes to the observations of ordinary language-use that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke use to refute the assumptions of the representational view of language, they treat such observations as *prima facie* evidence that is powerful enough to thwart academic claims and approaches that go against them. However, when it comes to the ordinary linguistic practices that stand in the way of Pin-Fat and Fierke's disavowals of hypothesis testing, true/false evaluations, and epistemic certainty, these everyday practices are ignored in favour of these scholars' somewhat grand claims about their impossibility. This inconsistent attitude towards observations of ordinary linguistic practices risks undermining the authority of the

ARO's criticisms, and makes it difficult to arrive at a consistent methodological justification for the appeal to ordinary language observations in this context.

### Problem 7: Inadequate Treatment of Objective Realism

A final problem with the ARO, is that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke's criticisms of 'objective realism' are inadequate in that: (a) they fail to address alternative ways of conceiving of social facts as 'objectively real' that are more commonly upheld in social and political study, and (b) risk buying into radical forms of linguistic relativism which have been rendered highly questionable by recent criticisms of 'strong' versions of the so-called 'Sapir-Whorf hypothesis'.

The form of objective realism that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke target is the assumption that there is an objective reality which exists and has a natural form that obtains independently of human cognition, language and theory; and furthermore that this reality and its form can be perceived and represented in a neutral way.<sup>105</sup> 'Objectivity' in this context is apparently understood by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke primarily in terms of independence from human mentality, language and meaning; but is also associated by these scholars with externality,<sup>106</sup> neutrality<sup>107</sup> and transcendence/ universality.<sup>108</sup> While Pin-Fat argues against the entire assumption, Kratochwil and Fierke are careful to specify that they do not deny the *existence* of an objective reality, but rather they deny that this reality can be known independently of human thought and language (Fierke, 2001: p.134; Kratochwil, 2011 [2009]: p.171).

---

<sup>105</sup> Kratochwil, 1989: p.21, 2011 [2006]: p.187, 2011 [2007]: p.204; Fierke, 2001: p.130, 2001: p.134 fn. 1, 2002: p.338; Pin-Fat, 1997, p.81, p.82.

<sup>106</sup> "Reality is the external world, that is to say outside the mind" (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.81), "patterns do not exist in an objective world 'out there', as assume by the behaviourists" (Fierke, 2001: p.130).

<sup>107</sup> Kratochwil refers to the attempt "to eliminate the value-tinge in the description" and insistence "that everything has to be cast in neutral, 'objective', observational language" (2011 [2007]: p.204).

<sup>108</sup> Pin-Fat characterises the idea of objective truth as assuming that something is "universally true regardless of time and place" (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.46).

As I have suggested, one problem with this way of conceiving of objective realism is that it leaves out a main sense in which many scholars – including some whose work would count as ‘positivist’ according to the ARO – have conceived of social or political facts as being ‘objective’. For example, in his *Rules of Sociological Method*, Durkheim famously argued that aspects of our collective social life such as religious practices, the language we speak, the monetary system we use, and the professions into which we enter, are ‘objectively real’ in the sense that they exist “outside the consciousness of the individual”, and have “a compelling and coercive power by virtue of which, whether [the individual] wishes it or not, they impose themselves upon him” (Durkheim, 1989: p.50-51). By this, Durkheim is not claiming that religious practices, monetary systems, professions etc. are independent of human cognition and language *per se*. Rather, he is pointing out that as collective social phenomena, they have an existence and form that is independent of the thought and volition of any particular individual who is born into them; and that they are encountered by individuals as an external constraint upon their possibilities of action.

Whatever its flaws may be, Durkheim’s conception of the ‘objective reality’ of social facts is not vulnerable to the same criticisms as the assumption that reality has a form that is independent of human thought and language in general. This is an important point, since Alexander Wendt – whom both Kratochwil and Fierke criticise as adopting a ‘positivist’ approach to IR – sometimes appeals to a Durkheimian form of objective realism in developing his *Social Theory of International Politics*; for example, when he writes that “shared beliefs and the practices to which they give rise confront individual actors as external social facts, even though they are not external to actors collectively” and that in this sense “social structures are no less real than material ones” (Wendt, 1999: p.24; see also p.75). This observation also highlights that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke are remiss in not distinguishing between individual versus collective subjectivity when arguing against assumptions of objective realism; and that as a result the ARO at present has no way of discerning between somewhat absurd assumptions concerning the independence of social and political phenomena from human mentality and language in general, versus more modest (still potentially mistaken) assumptions concerning the relationship between

individual subjects and the collectively maintained social practices and institutions in which they can participate.

Moving on now to the next problem, as I have already mentioned, Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke paraphrase the assumption of objective realism primarily as assuming that phenomena are 'objective' in the sense of having an existence and form that is independent from human *cognition and language*. When these scholars come to criticise this assumption however, they reduce this to independence from *language* alone, arguing against objective realism by denying that it is possible for us to apprehend phenomena 'outside' language, and endorsing the general counter-assertion that the form of what we perceive or recognise is already shaped by the form(s) of the language we use (Kratochwil, 2011 [2000]: p.168; Pin-Fat, 2010: p.7; Fierke, 2010a: p.85). The strongest form of this contention is expressed by Fierke in her 2010 essay, where she writes:

“The expression of emotion, no less than the identification of chairs and tables, relies on customs, rules and institutions that precede the individual. Neither the mental processes of individuals nor objects in the world exist independent of this a priori language, which we are socialized into as we learn to use language and thus become social beings.” (Fierke, 2010a: p.85)

Similarly, Kratochwil suggests that “what we recognise is always already organised and formed by certain categorical and theoretical elements. Thus, Kant’s ‘thing in itself’ is ‘there’, but it is unrecognisable and as such uninteresting until and unless it is brought under some description” (Kratochwil, 2011 [2000]: p.168).

The risk with these arguments against objective realism is that they appear to involve a commitment to a quite radical form of linguistic relativism, according to which the language we use completely determines the form of what we can perceive and recognise. In disciplines such as psychology, linguistics and anthropology, this idea is commonly known as the 'strong' version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, named after two American linguists of the 1930s – 1950s (see e.g. Lund, 2003: p.10). This contention is problematic first and foremost because it implies that those without language cannot perceive or recognise anything, which is manifestly false when we

consider that non-language-using animals routinely detect, recognise and discriminate between phenomena on a perceptual basis – such as when hawks see the movement of mice in the grass, when squirrels revisit locations where they have buried nuts, or when thrushes find convenient stones to crack a snail’s shell on. If it were the case, as Fierke and Kratochwil allege, that distinct phenomena are not ‘recognisable’ or do not ‘exist’ as such independently of the linguistic practices into which we as humans are socialised, then it would be impossible for animals to perform such tasks; and yet we only have to look out of the window to see animals routinely engaging in activities which involve them. In addition, while there is a certain amount of experimental evidence to suggest that words involved in the categorisation of perceptual phenomena – such as colour words – may influence the speed and accuracy of tasks involving relevant perceptual judgements (e.g. Winawer et al, 2007), the recorded effects are, as McWhorter puts it, “distinctly subtle and, overall, minor” (McWhorter, 2014: p.xv), and do not provide a sound basis for the vastly more general and vague speculation to the effect that language determines how we perceive ‘reality’.

### Chapter 3 Revisiting Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy

In Chapter 2 I critically examined a particular line of argument that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke use Wittgenstein's philosophy to make against 'positivist' approaches to the study of International Relations (IR) which I call the 'anti-representationalist objection' (ARO). While I was sympathetic to the general direction of the ARO and Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke's motivations for pursuing it, I highlighted some specific problems and gaps in these scholars' reasoning which have the result that the ARO does not fully support the conclusions that they seek to draw from it.

Many of the problems with the ARO that I identified in the last Chapter can be seen to stem from inadequacies in the way in which Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke account for what they take to be the main target of later Wittgenstein's philosophy; namely, the representational view of language. So, for example, the difficulties discussed under Problem 1, Problem 2 and Problem 3 in Section 2.2 of the last Chapter can all be seen to arise largely because Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke provide inconsistent and inconclusive accounts of what sort of thing the representational view of language is, what its commitments are, what the methodological justification is for claiming that a given scholar is committed to this 'view', and how the criticisms that they provide are meant to apply to accounts or approaches that are deemed to be committed to it.

This being the case, a good first step to take in order to determine whether and how later Wittgenstein's philosophy might offer a way to overcome the problems faced by the ARO, would be to re-examine remarks of the *PI* that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke regard as being critical of the representational view of language. The focus of this examination would be to re-evaluate what later Wittgenstein identifies as his target(s) in these remarks, what sorts of criticisms he makes, what the methodological basis of these criticisms is, and how he takes them to apply to the work of other philosophers. This would then allow a comparison to be made between the target(s) and manner of later Wittgenstein's criticisms in the *PI*, and the sorts of

criticisms employed by the ARO, with a special attention paid to aspects of the ARO that I have previously identified as problematic.

A sequence of remarks from the *PI* which is particularly appropriate for the purposes of this Chapter is *PI* §§1-5, where Wittgenstein critically investigates a ‘picture’ of language and a philosophical idea of meaning that he extracts from St Augustine’s *Confessions*. I will proceed in the next section to offer a close re-reading of the remarks in question, followed by a reflection on what the implications are for Wittgenstein’s potential to overcome some of the problems faced by the ARO. This will be followed by a further discussion and investigation of some questions regarding Wittgenstein’s approach in *PI* §§1-5 which remain unanswered by my initial interpretation, and which need to be settled in order to definitively see whether and how Wittgenstein manages to overcome *all* of the difficulties faced by the ARO.

At this point I should like to reiterate what I said in the introduction about my approach: i.e. that I do not mean to suggest that a re-interpretation of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy is the *only* way to repair the ARO; nor that in order to be successful, applications of Wittgenstein’s philosophy must employ faithful interpretations of his work. My rationale is simply that in my informed opinion as an interpreter of later Wittgenstein’s philosophy, a more textually and culturally sensitive reading of his work can help us to craft an alternative mode of objection that not only avoids the current problems with the ARO, but also yields more subtle and sophisticated ways to criticise ‘positivist’ approaches to IR.

### **3.1 Wittgenstein’s Target in the Opening Remarks of the *PI***

As we saw in Chapter 1 and 2, Pin-Fat explicitly quotes *PI* §1 as containing a summary of the “picture of language” which she subsequently identifies with the representational “view” of language that she claims is rejected by later Wittgenstein in the *PI* (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.9). Meanwhile, Fierke implies that *PI* §1 and §3 contain a paraphrase and rejection of the representational view of language, when she cites these remarks in support of her interpretation that according to later Wittgenstein



“language use is a form of action in and of itself, rather than merely a set of labels for a world independent of us [i.e. as per the ‘picture view’ of language]” (Fierke, 2002: p.337). Kratochwil does not explicitly cite any specific remarks from the *PI* in support of his claim that later Wittgenstein was opposed to a ‘mirror’ or ‘picture’ view of language; however, the fact that Kratochwil summarises the ‘mirror’ view in terms that are almost identical to the wording used by later Wittgenstein in *PI* §1(b) strongly suggests that Kratochwil interprets *PI* §§1-5 in the same way as Pin-Fat and Fierke (see e.g. Kratochwil, 2001: p.29).

As well as interpreting the opening of the *PI* as involving the presentation and criticism of a representational view of language, Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke are also apparently committed to an interpretation according to which the alleged paraphrases of this view contained in the opening remarks of the *PI* are also intended to double up as summaries of the commitments of some actual philosophers who they take to be the implied targets of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy. Thus Pin-Fat explicitly suggests that *PI* §1b serves to summarise a view that Wittgenstein associates with Augustine, and which was presented by early Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.79; 2010: p.9); while Kratochwil and Fierke imply that *PI* §1b summarises a view of language that was assumed by early ‘analytic’ philosophers at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century – including Frege, Russell, G.E. Moore and early Wittgenstein – and was at the root of the problems they encountered to do with meaning and reference (see Fierke, 2003: p.335, and Kratochwil, 2001: p. 20 and p.34).

Thirdly, when Pin-Fat and Fierke paraphrase what they take to be later Wittgenstein’s criticisms of the representational view of language, they do so in a way that suggests that they interpret these criticisms as taking the form of specific counter-claims or counter-examples that are intended to refute particular assumptions about language to which adherents to the representational view of language are allegedly committed. So, for example, we saw in Chapter 2 how Pin-Fat interprets later Wittgenstein as contradicting the “idea that the meaning of a word is the object ... for which it stands (names)” as she takes it to be summarised in *PI* §1, with the

observation “that there are many other ways in which words are meaningful which do not rely on the word-object naming relation” (Pin-Fat, 1997: p.80).

The above features of Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke’s interpretations of Wittgenstein’s critical approach and strategy in the opening of the *PI* should be kept in mind during the following discussion, since the interpretation which I will recommend differs from Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke on all three points. According to the interpretation of *PI* §§1-5 that I will present, Wittgenstein does not (a) identify in these remarks a particular representational view of language as the object of his criticism; (b) consider his paraphrases of the items he criticises to double up as accurate summaries of the commitments of rival philosophers; or (c) intend his criticisms to work as direct counter-arguments against the published accounts or claims of other philosophers.

Prior to introducing my interpretation, I will provide a brief précis of *PI* §§1-5 to remind the reader of what Wittgenstein writes in these passages, and also to provide a point of reference for some of the more detailed observations that I am going to make regarding specific wordings and other textual features of these remarks.

### Précis of *PI* §§1-5

Wittgenstein famously begins his *Philosophical Investigations* in *PI* §1(a) by quoting a passage from St Augustine’s *Confessions* in which Augustine describes how he first learnt to speak.<sup>109</sup> After quoting this passage, Wittgenstein writes: “in [Augustine’s] words we get ... a particular picture [*Bild*] of the essence of human language” according to which “the words in language name objects” and “sentences are combinations of such names” (*PI* §1b). Wittgenstein furthermore suggests that “In this picture of language we find [*finden wir*] the roots of the following idea [*Idee*]: Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands” (*PI* §1b). Wittgenstein makes some critical observations

---

<sup>109</sup> Or rather, how he envisages this to have taken place.

regarding Augustine's approach to providing his description (*PI* §1c), and then instructs the reader to imagine a scenario of language-use between a shopkeeper and a customer who wants to buy some apples (*PI* §1d).

In *PI* §2 Wittgenstein states "That philosophical concept [*Begriff*] of meaning is at home in a primitive conception [*Vorstellung*] of the way language functions. But one might instead say that it is the imagining [*Vorstellung*] of a language more primitive than ours" (*PI* §2a). Wittgenstein then invites the reader to "imagine a language for which the description given by Augustine is correct" (*PI* §2b), and proceeds to describe an imaginary language used by a builder and his assistant consisting of just four words for types of building stones. Wittgenstein instructs the reader to "Conceive of this as a complete primitive language" (*PI* §2b).

In *PI* §3 Wittgenstein suggests that what Augustine describes is a "system of communication", but that not everything we call language is included in this system. Thus Augustine's description is appropriate for a "narrowly circumscribed area" of what we call language but "not for the whole" of what Augustine is purporting to describe (*PI* §3a). Wittgenstein compares Augustine to someone who tries to define 'playing a game' with a definition that is only really appropriate for board games (*PI* §3b).

In *PI* §4 Wittgenstein instructs the reader to imagine an example of someone providing an over-simple description of the use of a script, which is designed to further illustrate the sense in which "Augustine's conception [*Auffassung*] of language" is "over-simple" (*PI* §4).

In *PI* §5 Wittgenstein suggests that from the example in *PI* §1, one may "get an idea of how much the general concept [*Begriff*] of the meaning of a word surrounds the working of language with a haze which makes clear vision impossible" (*PI* §5a). Wittgenstein proposes that "It disperses the fog if we study the phenomena of language in primitive kinds of use in which one can clearly survey the purpose and functioning of the words" (*PI* §5b).

## Interpretation of *PI* §§1-5

As I noted earlier in this chapter, Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke apparently interpret Wittgenstein's purpose in the opening remarks of the *PI* as being to introduce and criticise his main target, which they take to be the representational view of language. According to such an interpretation, the extract from Augustine's *Confessions* quoted by Wittgenstein in *PI* §1a, along with the 'picture' and 'idea' that Wittgenstein outlines in *PI* §1b, are all to be regarded as part of one coextensive summary of a single problematic 'view' to which later Wittgenstein was allegedly opposed. However, as several previous interpreters of Wittgenstein's later philosophy have pointed out, there are actually some subtle but important distinctions registered by Wittgenstein in *PI* §1 that stand in the way of such an interpretation.

So, for example, David Stern acknowledges that for "many philosophers, §1b provides a clear outline of the mistaken view of the nature of language that Wittgenstein finds in Augustine, a view that is presupposed in §1a, and that forms one of the principal targets in what follows" (Stern, 2004: p.76). However, Stern challenges such "black-and-white readings"<sup>110</sup> on two counts: firstly, by pointing out that Wittgenstein uses the tentative qualification "it seems to me" when suggesting that the 'picture' of language outlined in *PI* §1b is present in Augustine's words; and secondly, by observing that Wittgenstein separates the 'picture' and the 'idea' outlined in *PI* §1b with a "long double-dash" which is typically used elsewhere in the *PI* "to indicate either a change of topic, or a new voice" (Stern, 2004: p.76).

Stern is not alone in acknowledging the first distinction between the passage quoted from Augustine in §1a, and the 'picture' of the essence of language outlined in §1b. Another feature that some other interpreters appeal to in arguing for this distinction is that what Augustine writes about language-learning in the quoted passage is actually more sophisticated than the 'picture' of the essence of language that Wittgenstein subsequently outlines; and that therefore, the latter cannot be regarded as a straight summary of the former. Thus, as early as 1976, Fogelin noted

---

<sup>110</sup> Stern, 2004: p.23

that the 'picture' outlined in *PI* §1b is "more naïve than the view actually presented by Augustine" (Fogelin, 2001 [1976]: p.109); while Fischer and Ammereller have more recently contested that Augustine "says nothing of the sort in the passage Wittgenstein quoted, and never claimed that, say, prepositions name objects" (Fischer and Ammereller, 2004: p. XIII).<sup>111</sup>

Regarding the second distinction proposed by Stern, between the 'picture' and 'idea' in *PI* §1b, Joachim Schulte also registers such a distinction when he observes that in this paragraph Wittgenstein "is talking, not about *one* picture but about two things – a 'particular picture' of the essence of human language, on the one hand, and an idea which has its roots in that picture, on the other" (Schulte, 2004: p.23). Schulte appeals to some different textual evidence for this distinction from Stern, noting that while the 'picture' outlined in the first half of *PI* §1b is "vague and sketchy", the "idea" whose roots Wittgenstein locates in this 'picture' is expressed with "full and explicit generality" (Schulte, 2004: p.23). What Schulte is alluding to here is that whereas the 'picture' of language outlined in the first half of *PI* §1b makes unqualified references to 'words' and 'sentences' without explicitly specifying that this is meant to include *all* words or *all* sentences, the 'idea' of meaning that is summarised in the second half of *PI* §1b contains the phrase "every word" and thus explicitly indicates that it is meant to apply universally to all words. It is on this basis that Schulte concludes that "Wittgenstein's remarks in §1 contain a distinction between a sketchy picture conveyed by the quotation from Augustine and a [more explicit and polished] idea rooted in that picture" (Schulte, 2004: p.23).

To the above we can add the observations that Wittgenstein uses a colon to introduce the 'picture' of the essence of language that he outlines in *PI* §1b ("...a particular picture of the essence of human language. Namely this:"), and a separate colon to introduce the subsequent 'idea' of meaning ("...we find the roots of the

---

<sup>111</sup> By itself, this observation does not definitively establish that Wittgenstein intended there to be a distinction between the passage he quotes from Augustine and the 'picture' he outlines in *PI* §1b – after all, Wittgenstein could have wrongly attributed something to Augustine that is not implied by what Augustine writes. However, it does give a reason to be wary of *assuming* that Wittgenstein intends the 'picture' in *PI* §1b to be a straight summary of Augustine's commitments, in the absence of an explicit indication by Wittgenstein that this is his intention.

following idea:");<sup>112</sup> and that he employs a metaphor of growth to characterise the relationship between the 'picture' and 'idea', stating that the latter has its "roots" in the former. These observations add extra support to the textual argument for the second distinction – already identified by Stern and Schulte – between the 'picture' and the 'idea' that Wittgenstein outlines in *PI* §1b.

So far, then, we have the following evidence of two distinctions marked by Wittgenstein in *PI* §1:

- ***Distinction 1: Augustine's description versus the 'picture' of language that Wittgenstein finds in it***
  - Wittgenstein uses the qualification "it seems to me" when suggesting that we find the 'picture' in Augustine's words (Stern, 2004: p.76).
  - What Augustine writes about language in the quoted passage is more sophisticated than the 'picture' outlined by Wittgenstein in *PI* §1b, and does not state or imply the same assumptions about language (Fogelin, 2001 [1976]: p.109; Fischer and Ammereller, 2004: p. XIII).
  - Wittgenstein does not claim that Augustine's description is equivalent to the 'picture' that he finds in this description.
  
- ***Distinction 2: The 'picture' of language vs. the 'idea' of meaning that Wittgenstein suggests has its roots in this picture***
  - Wittgenstein uses a long double-dash [—] to separate the 'picture' and 'idea' he outlines in *PI* §1b (Stern, 2004: p.76).
  - The 'picture' outlined in the first half of *PI* §1b is "vague and sketchy", while the "idea" whose roots Wittgenstein locates in this 'picture' is expressed with "full and explicit generality" (Schulte, 2004: p.23).
  - Wittgenstein uses separate colons to introduce the 'picture' of the essence of language and the subsequent 'idea' of meaning in *PI* §1b.

---

<sup>112</sup> *PI* §1, my emphasis.

- Wittgenstein uses a metaphor of growth to characterise the relationship between the ‘picture’ and ‘idea’ outlined in *PI* §1b, thereby implying that although they are related they are not the same thing.

In my opinion, the above observations provide ample evidence that Wittgenstein distinguishes in the opening remark of the *PI* between three items: (1) the description of language-learning that he quotes from Augustine’s *Confessions*, (2) the ‘picture’ of the essence of language that he extracts from this description, and (3) the ‘idea’ of meaning that Wittgenstein suggests ‘has its roots’ in this picture. Since these distinctions preclude reading the first two paragraphs of *PI* §1 as a continuous summary of one item, their presence implies that later Wittgenstein is doing something more complex in *PI* §§1a-b than introducing and summarising a mistaken ‘view’ of language which will become the prime target of his subsequent criticisms, as Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke suggest.

Moving on now to consider the criticisms themselves, the first critical comment that Wittgenstein makes in the *PI* is that “Augustine does not speak of any differences between types of words” (*PI* §1c). In light of the previous discussion, we can see that this comment is not aimed directly at the ‘picture’ or ‘idea’ that Wittgenstein outlines in *PI* §1b, but rather at the way in which Augustine describes language-learning in the passage quoted in *PI* §1a. Furthermore, the criticism that Wittgenstein makes is not of a positive claim or statement that Augustine makes in this passage, but of an omission; that is, Augustine’s failure to explicitly mention differences between types of words. Wittgenstein then goes further to suggest that “whoever describes language-learning in this way is thinking, so I want to believe, primarily of nouns like ‘table’, ‘chair’, ‘loaf’, and of people’s names, and only secondarily of the names of certain actions and properties; and of the remaining kinds of word as something that will take care of itself” (*PI* §1c). This implies that, in addition to identifying Augustine’s failure to mention different word-types as a potentially problematic feature of the latter’s description, Wittgenstein also interprets it as symptomatic of a further problem to do with the way in which someone who offers such a description

is thinking about their subject matter. Specifically, the kind of problem which Wittgenstein characterises is one of *bias*, whereby someone who purportedly sets out to think generally about some phenomena (in this case, language-learning) concentrates their attention on a narrow range of examples of a certain type, e.g. names and nouns, while giving lesser or no consideration to other equally deserving cases. We should note that Wittgenstein does not make the strong claim that Augustine was definitely thinking about language in this biased way, and qualifies his suggestion with the phrase “so I want to believe” [*so möchte ich glauben*] (*PI* §1c). Another point to note is that Wittgenstein does not at this stage say precisely what he thinks the problem is with either (a) Augustine’s failure to mention different types of words in his description, and (b) the biased way of thinking that Wittgenstein surmises that someone who gives such a description is engaged in. This is something that unfolds in subsequent remarks.

The next apparently critical comment comes at the start of *PI* §2, where Wittgenstein writes: “That philosophical concept [*Begriff*] of meaning is at home in a primitive conception [*Vorstellung*] of the way language functions.” Wittgenstein’s use of the word “that” [*Jener*] indicates to the reader that he is referring back to something that has already been mentioned in *PI* §1. Out of the three items introduced by Wittgenstein in *PI* §1, the most likely candidate for what Wittgenstein is referring back to as “that philosophical concept of meaning”, is the ‘idea’ [*Idee*] outlined in the latter half of *PI* §1b that every word has a meaning which is correlated with the word, and is the object for which the word stands (*PI* §1b). Meanwhile the German word *Vorstellung*, which I have translated as ‘conception’, can also mean ‘imagination’/ ‘picture’/ ‘image’, and thus has a connotative association with the word *Bild* which Wittgenstein uses in the first half of *PI* §1b when outlining the “picture [*Bild*] of the essence of human language” that he finds in Augustine’s description. This provides some basis for thinking that the “primitive *Vorstellung*” in which Wittgenstein suggests that the “philosophical concept [*Begriff*] of meaning has its place” is either the same as, or continuous with, the ‘picture’ of the essence of human language in which Wittgenstein previously stated that this concept has its ‘roots’. This



interpretation is strengthened by the agreement of the metaphors of ‘having its roots in’ and ‘having its place in’, which are used in *PI* §1b and *PI* §2a respectively.<sup>113</sup>

If the above interpretation is correct – and, at the very least, it appears plausible – then the first line of *PI* §2a would to some extent be a restatement of Wittgenstein’s contention in *PI* §1b, that the ‘idea’ of meaning outlined at the end of *PI* §1b has its roots in the ‘picture’ of the essence of language outlined in the first half. However, if we read the first line of *PI* §2a in this way, then we have to acknowledge that it is a somewhat *modified* restatement of *PI* §1b, since there are some small but potentially significant differences between the two passages in terms of phrasing. For example, as Joachim Schulte has noted, the ‘*Bild*’ mentioned in *PI* §1b is said to be of “the essence of human language”, whereas the ‘*Vorstellung*’ in *PI* §2a is of “the way language functions” (Schulte, 2004: p.25). Another difference is that the ‘concept of meaning’ Wittgenstein refers to at the start of *PI* §2a as being at home in a primitive *Vorstellung* of how language functions, is identified there as a “philosophical” concept – an epithet which is not used to characterise the ‘idea’ that is said in *PI* §1b to have its ‘roots’ in the *Bild* of the essence of human language. Finally, there is Wittgenstein’s use of the word “primitive” in *PI* §2a to characterise the *Vorstellung* in which this ‘concept’ has its place, which likewise is not used previously in connection with the *Bild* of the essence of language introduced in *PI* §1b.

These differences in the phraseology of *PI* §2a compared with that of *PI* §1b can be seen as elaborations which serve to provide the reader with additional information concerning Wittgenstein’s assessment of the *Bild* and *Idee* that he previously introduced, and of their interrelation. This information includes the following judgements: (1) that the ‘picture’ [*Bild*] of the essence of human language outlined in *PI* §1b either amounts to – or is part of – a ‘conception’ or ‘imagination’ [*Vorstellung*] of the way that language functions; (2) that this ‘picture’ and/or ‘conception’ is “primitive” in character; and (3) that the ‘idea’ [*Idee*] that has its roots in this ‘picture’ is moreover a “philosophical concept [*philosophische Begriff*] of meaning”.

---

<sup>113</sup> It is further supported by the fact that in a later remark, *PI* §59, Wittgenstein uses the phrases *bestimmtes Bild* and *bestimmte Vorstellung* interchangeably to refer to the “particular picture” that names signify “only what is an *element* of reality”.

So, what does Wittgenstein mean by calling the conception of language mentioned in *PI* §2a “primitive”? One meaning of the word ‘primitive’ which some scholars have focused on when interpreting the first line of *PI* §2a is ‘simplistic’ or ‘overly simple’ (e.g. Schulte, 2004: p.24). That Wittgenstein intended to evoke this meaning of the word ‘primitive’ in connection with the conception of language mentioned in *PI* §2a is supported by the fact that later on in *PI* §4 Wittgenstein refers to “Augustine’s conception of language” as “over-simplified” [*zu einfachen*]. As Schulte and others have observed, this sense of ‘primitive’ can also have a “pejorative shade” when applied to someone’s approach or way of thinking, since it implies that the latter is “too simple in a way which might warrant the inference that [the person concerned] is not particularly bright” (Schulte, 2004: p.24). However, this implication is not necessarily intended by Wittgenstein in the context of his remarks at the start of the *PI*.

In addition to suggesting that the picture or conception of language summarised in *PI* §1b is ‘over-simple’, some scholars have proposed that by using the word ‘primitive’ Wittgenstein meant to imply that this picture is characteristic of an early stage in the course of an individual’s thought or reflection upon some subject matter which precedes their formulation of overtly philosophical concepts, such as a philosophical concept of meaning. Baker and Hacker express this interpretation, though somewhat obliquely, when they refer to the picture outlined in *PI* §1b as a “pre-theoretical picture” (Baker and Hacker, 2005 [1980] a: p.1). This reading is supported firstly by Wittgenstein’s use of a metaphor of growth (‘has its roots in’) to characterise the relationship between the ‘picture’ and ‘idea’ in *PI* §1b, thus suggesting that the former precedes and is less developed than the latter; and secondly, by Schulte’s observation that the ‘picture’ summarised in *PI* §1b is “vague and sketchy”, in contrast to the “full and explicit generality” of the subsequent ‘idea’ which Wittgenstein refers back to as a ‘philosophical concept’ (Schulte, 2004: p.23).

In summary: there is textual evidence to support an interpretation of the first line of *PI* §2a as proposing that the ‘idea’ outlined in the second half of *PI* §1b is a

“philosophical concept” which has its place in a ‘primitive’ picture or conception of the way language functions; and that this picture/ conception is ‘primitive’ in the sense that it is (a) simplistic compared to the phenomenon it is meant to capture, and (b) characteristic of a pre-philosophical stage in a person’s reflection upon some subject matter, prior to their formulation of a philosophical concept.

Progressing now to the second line of *PI* §2a, Wittgenstein continues: “But one might instead say that [this primitive conception of language] is the conception of a language that is more primitive than ours” (*PI* §2a). Here Wittgenstein is suggesting that we can shift from viewing the relevant conception of language as a primitive conception of something that is not primitive (the workings of our language), to viewing it as a conception of a language that is more primitive than our own. The German words Wittgenstein uses for ‘conception’ and ‘primitive’ in this line are *Vorstellung* and *primitiven*, which are the same words used in the previous line to refer to the ‘primitive conception’ of how language functions in which the philosophical concept of meaning had its roots. The fact that in the next paragraph Wittgenstein introduces an example of a *fictional* primitive language as one “for which the description given by Augustine is correct” implies that this second usage of the word *Vorstellung* is meant to carry its connotation of ‘imagination’ in addition to that of ‘conception’.<sup>114</sup> Schulte has also rightly observed that “the second occurrence of ‘primitive’ [in *PI* §2a] does not carry the same [negative] connotation that the first occurrence can” (Schulte, 2004: p.24), since in the second line of *PI* §2a the quality of ‘primitiveness’ is no longer being attributed to the conception of language in which the philosophical concept [*Begriff*] of meaning outlined in *PI* §1b has its place; but rather to an *imaginary language* for which this conception of language would be fitting.

The imaginary language that Wittgenstein then goes on to describe can be said to be ‘primitive’ in the sense that it is relatively simple in comparison to actual human language, in the following ways:

---

<sup>114</sup> This adds further credibility to observing a distinction in the opening remarks of the *PI* between that which is characterised using the words ‘*Idee*’ and ‘*Begriff*’, and that which is characterised using the words ‘*Bild*’ and ‘*Vorstellung*’.

- (1) It only has four words ('block', 'pillar', 'slab' and 'beam'); in contrast to existing natural languages, which have hundreds of thousands of words apiece.<sup>115</sup>
- (2) There are only two people who use the language: a speaker (builder A) and a responder (assistant B).
- (3) There is only one social context in which language is used, i.e. 'building with building stones'.
- (4) There is apparently only one kind of word, and only one kind way in which the words function: A calls a word out, and B brings the relevant building stone.

Altogether, the implication of *PI* §2 is this: that either we can think of Augustine's description of language – and by extension, the conception of language in which the concept of meaning in *PI* §1b has its place – as a staggeringly over-simplified attempt to grasp the hugely complex phenomenon that we call 'language'; or we can think of it as an adequate portrait of some less complicated phenomenon which resembles what we call 'language' to some extent, but is much simpler in the relevant ways mentioned above. This interpretation is confirmed by the next remark, when Wittgenstein writes that Augustine "does describe a system of communication; only not everything we call language is encompassed by this description" (*PI* §3a). In this remark, Wittgenstein offers us a third possible way of thinking of Augustine's description and the associated conception of language: namely, as being appropriate for a *small portion* of what we call language. He writes:

"And one must say in so many cases where the question arises 'Is this representation [*Darstellung*] suitable or unsuitable?', the answer is: 'Yes, but only for this narrowly circumscribed area, not for the whole of what you were purporting to describe.'"

So far, then, Wittgenstein has offered his reader three alternative ways of thinking of Augustine's description quoted in *PI* §1a:

---

<sup>115</sup> This is a conservative estimate: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/words/how-many-words-are-there-in-the-english-language>

- As an over-simplistic description of how language functions;
- As a description of a (fictional) 'primitive' language, which is much simpler and less complex than what we call 'language';
- As a description that purports to be of 'language' in general, but is only really appropriate for a small part of what we call 'language'.

Likewise, Wittgenstein has also offered the following two ways of thinking about the 'primitive' conception or image of how language functions, in which he suggested that the philosophical concept of meaning in *PI* §1b has its place:

- As an over-simplistic and/or pre-philosophical conception of how language functions;
- As the imagining of a language (or language-like phenomenon) that is much simpler than what we call 'language'.

In the second paragraph of *PI* §3 Wittgenstein compares Augustine to someone who purports to describe 'games' in general, but offers a description which is only really appropriate for board games. Extrapolating from this example and the previous paragraph, we can draw the conclusion that what Wittgenstein finds primarily objectionable about Augustine's description at this stage is that it purports to apply to more cases than it is actually appropriate for. In the last line of this remark, Wittgenstein provides what he apparently considers to be a remedy to this kind of problem when he suggests that such a description can be 'rectified' by "expressly restricting" it to those cases for which it is suitable.

Skipping now to *PI* §5, there Wittgenstein writes: "If one looks at the example in §1, one can perhaps get an idea of how much the general concept of the meaning of a word surrounds the working of language with a haze which makes clear vision impossible." One might assume that the 'example' Wittgenstein is referring to in this sentence is the imaginary scenario of 'going to the grocers' that he described in *PI* §1d. However, it is equally possible that Wittgenstein is referring here to the idea of

meaning outlined in the second half of *PI* §1b as an ‘example’ of a general philosophical concept of meaning; or even to the whole sequence charted in *PI* §1a-b as an ‘example’ of how someone might arrive at a general philosophical concept of meaning, which illustrates how such a concept can come to surround the working of language with a haze.

Likewise, one might think that by ‘the general philosophical concept of the meaning of a word’ Wittgenstein is referring specifically to the idea of meaning outlined in *PI* §1(b), that ‘every word has a meaning with which it is correlated, which is the object for which it stands’. However, if this is the case, then it is strange that Wittgenstein uses the pronoun ‘the’ to identify this concept, as opposed to referring to it as ‘this’ or ‘that’ philosophical concept of meaning – especially when Wittgenstein has previously referred back to the idea of meaning in *PI* §1b as “that [*jener*] philosophical concept of meaning” (*PI* §2a). In this light, it is more likely that by “the general philosophical concept of the meaning of a word” in *PI* §5 Wittgenstein is referring to the idea that ‘word-meaning’ is a cohesive phenomenon of which a universal account or definition can be provided.

Something else that is important to notice about *PI* §5 is that what Wittgenstein identifies as problematic about the philosophical concept of word-meaning is that it prevents us from having a clear vision of the workings of language. As with Wittgenstein’s previous critical remarks, we have to recognise the distinctiveness of the tone and implications of this criticism in contrast with other more familiar critical strategies. So, for instance, unlike a direct contradiction, Wittgenstein’s criticism is by contrast a much gentler caution concerning the obstructive effect that a concept has upon one’s ability to observe and think clearly about the phenomena at hand. Also unlike a direct contradiction, Wittgenstein’s criticism does not imply that there could be a ‘correct’ general philosophical concept of word meaning to replace the concept that is being criticised. In this way we can start to see how Wittgenstein might avoid the problems I identified with Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke’s replacement of a general representational concept of word meaning with an equally general concept of ‘meaning as use’. In other words: by employing a more nuanced type of criticism

that does not imply that there could be a ‘correct’ concept of meaning to replace the criticised concept, Wittgenstein avoids committing to universal claims about language which would be hypocritical in the sense that they would fall foul of some of the same criticisms of over-generalisation and omission which Wittgenstein makes of Augustine’s description and ‘way of thinking’ in *PI* §§1-5. This observation is borne out by the fact that when Wittgenstein later provides his own take on word-meaning in *PI* §43, he explicitly specifies that his explanation does not apply universally to all cases in which we might speak of the ‘meaning’ of a word, writing:

“For a large class of cases in which we employ the word ‘meaning’, though not for all, one can explain the employment of this word thus: The meaning of a word is its use in the language.” (*PI* §43)

### Preliminary Implications of *PI* §§1-5 for the ARO

As I observed previously, an important feature of Wittgenstein’s approach in *PI* §§1-5 which contrasts with the ARO, is that Wittgenstein does not direct his criticisms towards one particular target – such as a particular view or account of language – but rather distinguishes between at least three interrelated items in the opening remarks which he proceeds to critically discuss. The main distinctions marked by Wittgenstein in the opening of the *PI* are (1) between Augustine’s description and a ‘picture’ that Wittgenstein finds in Augustine’s words, and (2) between Augustine’s description and a ‘philosophical concept of meaning’ that allegedly has its roots in the aforementioned ‘picture’. An important implication of these distinctions is that Wittgenstein avoids misattributing universal claims to Augustine’s description, such as that all words refer to objects.

A related feature is that when Wittgenstein comes to criticise Augustine’s description and the ‘picture’ of language he finds in Augustine’s words, he does not rely – like the ARO – on modal counterclaims to the effect that ‘not all words refer to objects’; but rather offers more nuanced cautions regarding the suitability and potential obstructiveness of Augustine’s description, the ‘picture’ of language that can be

found in it, and the general philosophical idea of word-meaning.<sup>116</sup> This is just as well since – as I have noted above – neither Augustine’s description nor the ‘picture’ of language outlined in *PI* §1, contain universal claims about language of the kind that would be directly refuted by modal counterclaims such as that ‘not all words refer to objects’. This means that in addition to avoiding the problem of misattributing universal claims to philosophers and other scholars, Wittgenstein’s opening criticisms also avoid the problem I identified with the ARO’s use of modal counter-claims and counter-examples to argue against scholars who do not explicitly commit to the relevant universal claims about words and sentences that would be challenged by these arguments.

Furthermore, when Wittgenstein suggests that one can find a ‘particular picture’ in Augustine’s words, and that someone who offers such a description is thinking about language in a certain way, Wittgenstein does not assert these as definite claims, but rather offers them as tentative suggestions using the qualifications “it seems to me” and “so I want to believe”. Thus Wittgenstein is not committed to strong claims of the sort made by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke regarding the alleged tacit assumptions and underlying commitments of the academics whose work they criticise. Therefore, Wittgenstein also avoids the problems encountered by the ARO which are associated with making obscure and unjustified claims regarding what certain scholars are ‘really’ committed to, even when they do not explicitly assert or imply it in their texts.

Another point is that most of Wittgenstein’s criticisms in the opening of the *PI* are not aimed directly at the *content* of Augustine’s description or the philosophical concept of meaning that Wittgenstein extracts from it, but rather at flawed conceptions or ways of thinking by which Wittgenstein surmises these items could have been

---

<sup>116</sup> For example, Wittgenstein criticises Augustine for *not mentioning differences* between types of word, and for providing a description of language learning which is *really only appropriate for a limited portion* of what we call ‘language’ (i.e. words like nouns and names). Similarly, Wittgenstein criticises the ‘picture’ or ‘conception’ of language that he identifies in *PI* §1b for being *over-simple* compared to the complexities of human language, and therefore inadequate for the purposes of conceiving of our language as a whole. Even when Wittgenstein criticises the ‘general philosophical concept of meaning’, he does not contradict it outright, but contends that it obstructs our view of the workings of language.



produced. So, for example, although in *PI* §1 Wittgenstein notes that Augustine's description fails to acknowledge distinctions between different sorts of word, what Wittgenstein goes on to criticise is the bias involved in the way in which it seems that "someone who describes the learning of language in such a way is thinking". Similarly, when Wittgenstein comes in *PI* §2 to criticise the 'philosophical concept of meaning' he outlined in *PI* §1b, he does so by referring to the 'primitiveness' of the conception or picture in which this concept supposedly "has its place". Thus while the ARO specifically attempts to target 'representational' accounts of language by contradicting particular idiosyncratic claims that are associated with such accounts, what Wittgenstein criticises are certain problematic ways of thinking, such as biased and incomplete consideration of examples.

Accordingly, unlike the ARO, Wittgenstein's criticisms do not specifically target the 'representational' character of Augustine's description or the related 'concept of meaning' in *PI* §1b, except as a contingent result of a more general problem of biased thinking which could be operative regardless of which examples of language-use are preferred. In short: if what Wittgenstein is criticising about Augustine's description is Augustine's presumed failure to consider a sufficiently wide variety of examples of language-use, then it is irrelevant to the success of this criticism *which* particular examples Augustine happens to have concentrated on or ignored; since the criticism of bias would still apply even if Augustine had ignored nouns and names while concentrating on imperative verbs and articles. The crucial factor which would render a person vulnerable to Wittgenstein's criticism in *PI* §1c is not concentrating on nouns and names *per se*, but rather concentrating on *some particular kinds of example over others*. Not only does this mean that Wittgenstein's criticisms are more general than those employed by the ARO, but also that as a result Wittgenstein sidesteps the problems associated with the ARO's over-inflation of some quite specific criticisms and counterclaims as though they were more general refutations of whole classes or types of account.

A final observation is that when Wittgenstein criticises Augustine for focussing on the use of particular sorts of words, Wittgenstein does not lump these examples together

under one heading such as ‘representation’, ‘reference’, or ‘depiction’. Instead, he lists them separately as “nouns like ‘table’, ‘chair’, ‘bread’”, “people’s names”, and “names of certain actions and properties” (*PI* §1c). This is in contrast with Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke, who frequently conflate names with nouns, and equate reference with naming and standing-for, while using a singular term like ‘mirroring’, ‘picturing’, or ‘representation’ to characterise these functions collectively. This is another way in which Wittgenstein’s approach is more nuanced than the ARO, which itself risks falling foul of Wittgenstein’s criticisms in the opening of the *PI* by failing to acknowledge differences between various words that we call ‘nouns’ and ‘names’, and between different sorts of functions that may be characterised using the terms ‘representation’, ‘reference’, ‘naming’, ‘standing-for’ etc. (including the various different senses in which these terms can be used).

## Remaining Questions

In the previous sub-section I identified some significant differences between the ARO and Wittgenstein’s strategy in the opening of the *PI*, and gave some preliminary indications of how these could allow Wittgenstein to overcome or avoid some of the problems faced by the ARO that I discussed in the last chapter. Now I will acknowledge some remaining questions concerning features of the opening of the *PI* that remain obscure, and which need to be clarified in order to see whether Wittgenstein avoids some of the other problems encountered by the ARO that I have not yet addressed. These questions will need to be carried forwards and considered in the next subsection, where I will go into more detail concerning relevant aspects of Wittgenstein’s technique of philosophical criticism in the *PI*.

One such remaining question is: assuming that Wittgenstein intended his remarks in the opening of the *PI* to be of relevance to more recent philosophers than Augustine, then how is the ‘picture’ of language that Wittgenstein finds in Augustine’s words meant to be relevant to the work of contemporary philosophers and academics? This is related to a second question, which is: what is the justification for claiming to find

such a 'picture' in another academic's words, when they themselves do not explicitly endorse it? Addressing this question is vitally important, because without a satisfactory answer, Wittgenstein's suggestion that we can find a 'picture' in Augustine's words is potentially vulnerable to the same criticisms of 'vagueness', 'essentialism' and 'arbitrariness' that I levelled at the ARO's general conception of the representational view of language in Chapter 2.

A third question is: how are we to understand the criticisms Wittgenstein makes of Augustine's description and the 'picture' he finds in it, as being applicable to the work of contemporary philosophers and academics? I have already partially answered this question by pointing out that what Wittgenstein criticises about Augustine's description is a biased way of thinking that is not unique to the specific description of language that Augustine provides. However, there is more going on in the opening of the *PI* than just the identification of biased tendencies of thought, and more to be said about how the 'picture' in *PI* §1b is meant to serve as an instrument of criticism.

All of the questions summarised above require a more in-depth discussion and interpretation of Wittgenstein's use of the term 'picture' in remarks like *PI* §1 than I have so far provided.

### **3.2 Wittgenstein's Use of the term 'Picture' in Remarks like *PI* §1**

In this section I will seek to develop a more comprehensive interpretation of Wittgenstein's use of the term 'picture' in remarks like *PI* §1 which consolidates the useful features of Wittgenstein's critical approach in *PI* §1 that I have already identified, and answers the remaining queries I listed at the end of the last section. In order to do this, I will take up a recent interpretation of later Wittgenstein's use of the term 'picture' found in Oskari Kuusela's *Struggle Against Dogmatism* (2008), which I will use as a template on which to elaborate and develop into an interpretation which can be used to answer the remaining questions identified above. This will result in a coherent interpretation of a relevant and insightful aspect

of later Wittgenstein's methodology that can be used by IR scholars as a tool to criticise approaches to IR (including so-called 'positivist' approaches), while avoiding the problems I identified with the ARO.

## Kuusela's Interpretation

In his book, *The Struggle against Dogmatism*, Kuusela provides an interpretation of later Wittgenstein's conception of philosophical problems, which includes a characterisation of the role of 'pictures' in relation to the genesis and attempted solution of such problems. Kuusela's interpretation of Wittgenstein's use of the term 'picture' in the relevant sense can therefore be introduced by summarising his account of later Wittgenstein's conception of a philosophical problem.

Kuusela introduces Wittgenstein's conception of philosophical problems in the *PI* by describing a number of examples of what later Wittgenstein would regard as a 'philosophical problem', including how such problems might arise and become exacerbated. One of these examples is a problem that Kuusela calls 'the problem of meaning'. Kuusela sums up this problem as follows:

"A sign can be understood in many ways. Hence it seems that by itself it can mean anything or nothing. But how then does a sign acquire its meaning?"  
(Kuusela, 2008: p.33)

Kuusela writes that a "natural way" to respond to this problem might be to say that "a sign has meaning when somebody means something by it". However, he notes that this raises the further question of what this 'meaning something by a sign' consists in. At this point, Kuusela suggests, we might be misled by certain analogies and similarities between the use of the verbs 'to mean' and 'to say,' to propose that meaning is a "process" that accompanies what we say. As an example of the sorts of analogies that we might be misled by, Kuusela observes: "we say ... 'I meant this and that' just as we say ... 'I said this and that'".

The implication here is this: that when someone uses the expression 'I said X', they

are usually referring to an event or activity of *speech* that took place; and because of the similarities between the form of this expression and the expression 'I *meant* X', we might imagine that when someone says 'I *meant* X' they are reporting an analogous event or activity of *meaning* that took place while they spoke. Kuusela provides a vignette to illustrate the further problematic complications that this might create:

"If I said 'Napoleon was a short man' and you ask, 'Did you mean the man who was defeated at Waterloo?' my affirmative answer, of course, does not mean that I must have consciously thought of Waterloo and Napoleon's defeat at the time of my utterance. But does the past tense then indicate that an unconscious act or process of meaning took place in which a connection was made between Napoleon and Waterloo—or in which *everything* that I understood by Napoleon was somehow present? After all, you could have asked something else about him, and insofar as this belongs to my concept of Napoleon, apparently it had to be present in the act or process of meaning him." (Kuusela, 2008: p.34)

Kuusela subsequently characterises the problem of meaning using later Wittgenstein's concept of a 'picture', writing:

"Another way to describe the problem of meaning is to say that one is misled by a particular picture of what meaning something consists of. ... In the above case, the picture is based on an analogy between the use of 'meaning' and 'saying.' ... Such pictures may then come to stand in the way of one's attempts to understand a phenomenon or the use of a word." (Kuusela, 2008: p.35)

So, according to Kuusela's interpretation, we can be misled by the apparent similarity between the forms of the expressions 'I *meant* X' and 'I *said* X' to assume that the use of the two expressions is strictly comparable, with the result that we misinterpret 'I *meant* X' as reporting something that I did; and that this misinterpretation can lead us to imagine an activity or 'process' of meaning which is the semantic equivalent of speaking. This imagined process of meaning can be characterised as a 'picture' in later Wittgenstein's sense. Once accepted, such a 'picture' can seem to throw up more complex and mysterious problems to do with the nature of the imagined

process, such as those enacted by Kuusela above. This is an example of how a ‘picture’ arises, and how it can lead to the generation of philosophical ‘problems’. Kuusela then offers the following characterisation of what a ‘picture’ in this sense is according to later Wittgenstein:

“A picture in the relevant sense can be characterised as a conception or a mode of presenting things or facts, including facts concerning language use. A picture need not be detailed and carefully articulated, or based on any close examination of the issue at hand. Rather it may be just a rough and ready conception that recommends itself to one—perhaps as a consequence of certain forms of expression that one uses” (Kuusela, 2008: p.36)

This characterisation raises a few further questions which I will address later, but for now I am simply presenting it as a statement of what Kuusela understands a ‘picture’ in the relevant sense to be.

As well as generating philosophical problems, Kuusela suggests that according to Wittgenstein such ‘pictures’ can be instrumental in the development of misconceived philosophical theories aimed at solving these apparent problems. Kuusela writes that “it is characteristic of pictures in Wittgenstein’s sense that they can function as the basis for more detailed accounts and grow into more sophisticated philosophical theories.” The way in which a picture has this effect, according to Kuusela, is by “putting one on a certain path of thinking about [some] phenomena”, so that even if the picture itself is not borne out upon investigation, instead of being abandoned, it is refined and modified in ever more subtle ways to try to account for the exceptions. Kuusela uses the ‘picture’ of language that Wittgenstein finds in Augustine’s words in *PI* §1 (which Kuusela calls ‘the Augustinian picture’) as an example to explain how this might happen:

“If one accepts the Augustinian picture of language, it may function as a root for a philosophical theory according to which to be a word is to be something that has a meaning. To have a meaning, in turn, is to stand for an object. But although it may sometimes be unproblematic to say that a word stands for an object, it is not always clear what such an object would be. What do words stand for, for example, in the case of negation or numerals? Some kind of

abstract, Platonic objects, perhaps? But what then is the ontological status of such objects? At this point one runs the risk of being drawn into articulating ever more sophisticated theories about abstract objects, instead of examining more closely the assumed picture of meaning that creates the problem of referents.” (Kuusela, 2008: p.37)

In this passage Kuusela suggests that someone who initially accepts the ‘Augustinian picture’ may subsequently become aware that this picture does not work that well for everything that we call a word – for example, the words ‘five’, or ‘not’, which do not appear to stand for something that we would naturally identify as an ‘object’. In Kuusela’s example, rather than abandoning the picture in light of these conflicting cases, the person instead tries to theorise away the conflict by speculating that the nature or existence of the ‘objects’ for which *these* words stand must be somehow special. This can then give rise to further problems concerning the ontology of the speculated ‘objects’ and the manner in which they relate to the words that are meant to stand for them etc.

If we think back to Kuusela’s previous discussion of how the ‘problem of meaning’ might develop, we can see how something similar is described as happening there. As with the ‘Augustinian picture’, Kuusela suggested how if we have taken up the picture of meaning as a process, then we might subsequently become aware that this picture conflicts with our observations regarding the use of the word ‘meaning’ – such as the observation that when someone says ‘I meant X’, they are not necessarily saying that ‘X’ ran through their mind at the time in question.<sup>117</sup> However, rather than accepting this as a contradiction of the picture of meaning as a process, the person in Kuusela’s vignette responded to this conflict by speculating that the process of meaning must be of such a kind that we are *unaware of its going on* – e.g. an ‘unconscious’ process. Thus instead of abandoning the picture of meaning that has been produced by overstretching the analogy between the use of the words ‘meaning’ and ‘speaking’, they made a speculative theoretical claim that propped the

---

<sup>117</sup> So, in Kuusela’s example, someone who says ‘Napoleon is a short man’ and later clarifies ‘I meant the man who was defeated at Waterloo’, does not have to have consciously thought of Waterloo and Napoleon’s defeat at the time that they uttered the first sentence in order for the second sentence to make sense.

picture up in the face of contradictory evidence. In both this case and that of the Augustinian picture, Kuusela's suggestion is that the 'solution' to the problems thrown up by these pictures, according to later Wittgenstein, is to be found not in a theory that tries to answer these problems by explaining what sorts of peculiar objects numerals might stand for, or what sort of extraordinary process 'meaning' might be; but rather through a critical examination of the pictures and analogies from which the articulation of these problems originally stemmed.

## Clarifications and Additions

Having outlined Kuusela's interpretation of later Wittgenstein's understanding of 'pictures' and their possible role in the generation of philosophical problems and theories, I will now move on to present some clarifications and additions to this interpretation that will allow me to answer the remaining questions I identified earlier, and thereby overcome the final problems faced by the ARO's attempt to apply this aspect of Wittgenstein's later philosophy.

### ***What Exactly Is a 'Picture'?***

One concern that a critic might have about the above interpretation, is that although Kuusela provides a detailed analysis of the role that 'pictures' can have in the genesis of philosophical problems and theories, his interpretation still does not provide a satisfactory answer to the question of what a 'picture' in the relevant sense is. In his characterisation, Kuusela says that a 'picture' can be thought of as "a conception or a mode of presenting things or facts" (Kuusela, 2008: p.36), but does not explain further what this amounts to. This criticism could be seen as similar to the objection that Wittgenstein imagines in *PI* §65 concerning his use of the term 'language-game', when he writes:

"For someone might object against me: 'You make things easy for yourself! You talk about all sorts of language-games, but have nowhere said what is essential to a language-game, and so to language: what is common to all



these activities, and makes them into language or parts of language. So you let yourself off the very part of the investigation that once gave you the most headache, the part about the *general form of the proposition* and of language.”

In this light, we might want to reply to the criticism of Kuusela’s interpretation along the same lines that Wittgenstein responds to the above criticism of his use of the term ‘language-game’ in the *PI*. That is, we may respond that instead of trying to identify a particular phenomenon that corresponds to Wittgenstein’s use of the term ‘picture’ in characterising the development of philosophical problems and theories, our stance is that this term may be used in a variety of affiliated ways (a) which are not necessarily referential, and (b) whereby even those uses that are referential may not necessarily refer to the same sort of phenomena. This response, however, only gets us so far; since although it allows us to sidestep the demand for a *general* account of what a ‘picture’ is, it does not let us off the hook with regard to the requirement for providing further explanations concerning at least some of the specific affiliated senses in which Wittgenstein uses this term as part of a critical technique in the *PI*. We can address this concern by revisiting the *PI* and providing more detailed explanations of some specific senses in which Wittgenstein’s use of the term ‘picture’ to characterise philosophical problems and theories can be understood.

If we look at the various remarks in the *PI* where Wittgenstein uses the term ‘picture’ in contexts of critical examination, there seem to be quite a few cases where Wittgenstein is using this term to mean something like a mental image of the kind that we see while dreaming or exercising our imagination.<sup>118</sup> So, for example, in *PI* §295 Wittgenstein writes:

“‘I know ... only from my *own* case’ – what kind of proposition is this meant to be? An empirical one? No. – A grammatical one?

So this is what I imagine: everyone says of himself that he knows what pain is only from his own pain. – Not that people really say that, or are even

---

<sup>118</sup> I am using the term ‘mental image’ simply to differentiate these sorts of visual images from those that we see using our eyes.

prepared to say it. But *if* everybody said it — it might be a kind of exclamation. And even if it gives no information, still, it is a picture [*Bild*]; and why should we not want to call such a picture before our mind? Imagine an allegorical painting instead of the words.

Indeed, when we look into ourselves as we do philosophy, we often get to see just such a picture [*Bild*]. Virtually a pictorial representation of our grammar. Not facts; but, as it were, illustrated turns of speech.”

A similar use of the term ‘picture’ is found in *PI* §59, where Wittgenstein refers to a “particular picture” [*bestimmtes Bild*] of ‘primary elements’ that “hovered before us” [*schwebte es uns ... vor*], and which was expressed by uttering the sentence “A name signifies only what is an *element* of reality – what cannot be destroyed, what remains the same in all changes.” Finally, *PI* §216 Wittgenstein uses the related term *Vorstellung* [i.e. imagination/ conception] in a similar sense when he writes:

“‘A thing is identical with itself.’ – There is no finer example of a useless sentence, which nevertheless is connected with a certain play of the imagination [*Vorstellung*]. It is as if in our imagination we put a thing into its own shape and saw that it fitted.

We might also say: ‘Every thing fits into itself.’ – Or again: ‘Every thing fits into its own shape.’ While saying this, one looks at a thing and imagines that there was a space left for it and that now it fits into it exactly.”

In these remarks, Wittgenstein apparently suggests that certain propositions can induce us, quite literally, to visualise an imaginary picture of the phenomena in question, which portrays it as being or working in a particular way. We should remember that elsewhere in the *PI* Wittgenstein points out that not everything we call a ‘picture’ is static or “idle (*PI* §291). Therefore when we speak of imaginary pictures in this context, we should take this to include dynamic or animated imaginary scenes.<sup>119</sup>

The above is one of the more specific ways in which we can understand the term ‘picture’ in the context of Wittgenstein’s characterisations of philosophical statements, problems and theories in the *PI*. As I indicated earlier, I do not claim that

---

<sup>119</sup> This interpretation is backed up by Wittgenstein’s use of the phrase ‘play of the imagination’ in *PI* §216.

this is the only way in which Wittgenstein uses the term 'picture' in such contexts, nor that it is the only way in which individual examples of such uses can be legitimately interpreted. However it is one of the uses/interpretations that I am going to argue we can make use of for our purposes in overcoming the problems faced by the ARO's application of Wittgenstein's philosophy, and which answers the critic's objection regarding the lack of a sufficiently detailed explanation of what a 'picture' is.

An alternative way in which we can understand Wittgenstein's use of the term 'picture' in such contexts is as a technique for representing certain patterns of bias that are evident in the way that someone speaks and/or writes about some subject matter. This is an interpretation that is suggested by the way in which Wittgenstein approaches Augustine's description of language learning at the start of the *PI*. If we think back to *PI* §1b, Wittgenstein writes there that: "in Augustine's words, it seems to me, we find a particular picture of the essence of human language". Now, this comment could be understood along the lines of the interpretation I sketched above, as suggesting that when we read Augustine's description of language-use we are liable to imagine a visual picture or scene of language working in the way that Wittgenstein outlines in the first half of *PI* §1b. However, this comment could also be understood in a different way, as summing up a set of tendencies in the way in which Augustine considers the phenomena of language that Wittgenstein reconstructs from certain features of his description.

To recapitulate, in *PI* §§1-3 Wittgenstein picks up on the following features of Augustine's account: firstly, that Augustine does not mention any differences between kinds of words (*PI* §1c); secondly, that the way Augustine describes word-use indicates that he is concentrating his attention primarily on words of a certain kind while overlooking others (*PI* §1c); and thirdly, that Augustine presents his description of how he learnt to use words of this kind as though it were sufficient to account for how he learnt to use language in general (*PI* §3). While these features by themselves do not amount to a claim that words stand for objects that constitute their meaning, they do indicate tendencies of bias in Augustine's manner of thinking

about language which we might expect from someone who *would* endorse such a claim. Accordingly, Wittgenstein's statement that "we find a particular 'picture' of the essence of language" in Augustine's words can be understood as an identification of a pattern of bias in Augustine's description that is *characteristic* of a commitment to certain claims, but which can also be present in the absence of such a commitment.

At this point we might pause in the midst of our interpretation and consider the benefits of applying such a technique within IR: namely, that it would allow us to highlight patterns of bias in scholars' work which are characteristic of problematic commitments which these scholars may not explicitly endorse; and thereby to encourage these scholars to modify and monitor their tendencies of thinking and writing so that they minimise the risk of falling into unwelcome and misleading patterns.

Returning to the task at hand: I have now provided two examples of more detailed ways in which we can understand Wittgenstein's use of the term 'picture' in characterising philosophical problems and theories. What I have suggested is that Wittgenstein not only uses the term 'picture' in various ways within the *PI*; but that even in remarks where Wittgenstein is apparently using the term 'picture' to characterise philosophical problems and theories, he may be using it in different or multifaceted ways. Two of these ways or 'facets' of Wittgenstein's use of the term 'picture' that I have sought to expound, are (1) to refer to an imaginary image or scene of some phenomena that certain forms of expression may induce us to envisage; and (2) to characterise a certain pattern of bias that is evident in the way in which some phenomena is described or approached. These are my additions to Kuusela's interpretation, and should not be taken as faithful elaborations of what Kuusela means by defining a 'picture' in later Wittgenstein's sense as a 'conception' or 'mode of presentation'. However, they do allow us to overcome the critic's concern that the precise meaning of the term 'picture' when used to characterise philosophical problems or theories remains elusive. Putting this modification to one side for the moment, I will continue to consider and address relevant concerns with

Kuusela's interpretation that relate to the 'remaining questions' that I identified in the last section.

***What is the Methodological Justification for attributing a 'Picture' to Someone Else?***

One major way in which Kuusela's interpretation is superior to the interpretation that is apparently employed by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke, is that it does not involve claiming that the 'picture' outlined by Wittgenstein in *PI* §1b literally summarises the written accounts and theories of the various philosophers or other academics to whom Wittgenstein's critical remarks in the *PI* might be addressed. Thus, for example, we saw earlier how Pin-Fat quotes *PI* §1b as a summary of a range of philosophical 'views' of language, including that allegedly presented by early Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* and by Augustine in the *Confessions*; and implies that Wittgenstein's subsequent criticisms of this picture and Augustine's description undermine 'representational' views or accounts of language in general (Pin-Fat, 2010: p.10-11). As I pointed out in Chapter 2, this kind of interpretation is not only exegetically problematic, but also leads to argumentative problems for the ARO, such as the problem of claiming that various 'positivist' IR scholars are somehow 'committed' to the same (representational) account of language even though it is not explicitly expressed in their work, and presenting specific counter-claims against idiosyncratic universal claims regarding words and sentences as though they were effective refutations of any view or claim regarding language that can be said to be 'representational'.

The main feature of Kuusela's interpretation that enables the avoidance of these sorts of problems is what might be termed the *historical or developmental* role that it assigns to pictures in relation to philosophical accounts or theories. This means that rather than identifying the picture in *PI* §1 as summarising some common explicit and/or implicit claims of various contemporary philosophical theories and accounts, Kuusela instead identifies this picture as a *possible source and guiding influence* in the development of such theories, which in their current versions may be much more elaborate and sophisticated than the picture that generated their construction.

Despite this advantage, however, there is a related methodological concern that a critic might raise concerning Kuusela's interpretation, which is to do with the justification with which one can say that another person's philosophical or academic work was developed under the influence of a particular picture such as that outlined in *PI* §1b. I noted above that Kuusela's interpretation avoids the problem of claiming that the simplistic 'picture' of language outlined by Wittgenstein in *PI* §1b is a summary of one or more actual philosophical theories of language, by suggesting instead that this picture may be instrumental in the *development* of such theories and the problems which they are engineered to address. However, this raises the question: how are we to tell in an actual case, whether the development of a given philosophical theory has been influenced by such a picture? And doesn't saying that the development of a philosophical theory has been influenced in this way involve making some hypothetical historical or psychological claims about its author's way of thinking?

Recall that according to Kuusela's interpretation, a picture can influence us by "putting [us] on a certain path of thinking about [some] phenomena" which can lead us to apprehend cases that contradict the picture as somehow 'puzzling' (Kuusela, 2008: p.37). This implies that one way we can tell that a given philosophical theory may have been influenced by a particular picture is by the sorts of cases that the author apprehends as problematic and as in need of theoretical explanation. Thus, for example, imagine a philosophical theory which takes one of its central tasks to be to explain how words like 'five' and 'not' have meaning. This theory is not itself committed to the contention that all words refer to objects that constitute their meaning, and so we cannot attribute this claim directly to the theory, or criticise it as though it were committed to this claim (which is the sort of problematic approach employed by the ARO). However, Kuusela's interpretation suggests that we can make an educated guess from the fact that this theory tries to explain how non-referential words like 'five' and 'not' have meaning, that the author of the theory *may* have started from a picture of language to which these sorts of words were exceptions. Another way of putting this is to say that if a person were thinking open-mindedly

about language, they would have no reason to find the use of words like 'five' and 'not' any more puzzling than the use of words like 'table' or 'bread'. So when someone does find the former sorts of cases puzzling and tries to create a theory to explain them, this gives us grounds to believe that this person initially started thinking about language in a way that did not make sense of such cases.

Here our critic may reply: "But this is pure speculation. We cannot know for certain how a philosopher or academic first started thinking about their subject matter prior to formulating their account, unless they tell us. Also, if the academic in question is still living, what if they were to disagree outright with such an assessment of their work? What right would we have to insist, in the face of the author's denial, that their theory was developed under the influence of a particular picture?" This criticism can be satisfactorily answered by an explanation of what various interpreters have called the 'therapeutic' aspect of Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy in the *PI*. This can be unpacked as follows.

The above problems raised by the critic can be seen to arise if we interpret Wittgenstein's approach in the *PI* as one of authoritative contradiction, whereby Wittgenstein is seen as analysing the work of various philosophers and telling them where they went wrong in thinking about their subject matter. However, if we pay close attention to Wittgenstein's strategies in the *PI* and what he says about his own approach, it becomes apparent that this is not the spirit in which Wittgenstein carries out his techniques of philosophical clarification.

First of all, there is the fact that in the *PI* Wittgenstein hardly ever addresses his remarks explicitly towards the work of actual philosophers, preferring instead to engage in dialogue with imaginary interlocutors who say things that more or less *resemble* the sorts of things that philosophers have said throughout history. Exceptions to this are Wittgenstein's explicit references to Plato (§46, §518), Augustine (*PI* §1, §2, §3, §4, §5, §32, §89, §90, §436, §618), Frege (*PI* §22, §49, §71), Russell (*PI* §46, §79), the *Tractatus* (*PI* §23, §46, §97, §114), Moore (*PI* §87, §98) and William James (*PI* §299); however given that such remarks only constitute a fraction

of the text, it is clear that Wittgenstein's primary mode of operation in the *PI* is to work with unattributed or fictional examples of philosophical problems, theories and ways of thinking.

Secondly, there is the consideration that when Wittgenstein does make inferences about the work of actual philosophers, he quite often qualifies these inferences so that they are not bald assertions about how the relevant philosophers 'think' or how they arrived at certain philosophical propositions or concepts. For example, as I have previously highlighted, when Wittgenstein makes an inference in *PI* §1 about how someone is thinking who describes language learning in the way that Augustine does, he qualifies this with the expression "so I want to believe" [*so möchte ich glauben*]. Similarly, when Wittgenstein provides an account in *PI* §22 of the kind of way in which he thinks that Frege understood his concept of an 'assumption', he writes that "Frege probably conceived of the 'assumption' along these lines" (*PI* §22, my emphasis); and in *PI* §71 Wittgenstein makes the following qualified suggestion concerning Frege's understanding of conceptual boundaries: "Frege compares a concept to a region, and says that a region without clear boundaries can't be called a region at all. This presumably means that we can't do anything with it" (*PI* §71, my emphasis).

Finally, when Wittgenstein writes about his methodology in *PI* §133, he remarks:

"The real discovery is the one that enables me to break off philosophising when I want to. – The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question. – Instead, a method is now demonstrated by examples, and the series of examples can be broken off. – Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a *single* problem.

There is not a single philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, so to speak different therapies."

This remark suggests various possibilities. One of them is that Wittgenstein sees his work in the *PI* primarily as a *demonstration* of different methods for eliminating the difficulties that we call 'philosophical problems'; while another is that Wittgenstein



sees these methods as being more like ‘therapies’ of some kind than methods of criticism or contradiction.

These features of Wittgenstein’s approach in the *PI* have important consequences for how we understand the status of Wittgenstein’s remarks, including those that include the use of the term ‘picture’ to characterise philosophical problems, theories and ways of thinking. One such consequence is that the value of the methods that Wittgenstein demonstrates in the *PI* does not depend upon the validity of any particular claim that Wittgenstein makes about the work of actual philosophers within the text, since these claims are simply part of a demonstration of the methods whose usefulness is to be proven upon their application. Another is that the principal aim of the methods that Wittgenstein demonstrates in the *PI* is not to state how matters stand or to contradict what someone else has said, but rather to enable the dissolution of various difficulties with which a person may become preoccupied. As Kuusela puts it:

“Clarification is not merely a matter of establishing what would be the correct, non-misleading ways of thinking. Philosophy is not the correction of mistakes but is more like a therapy. ... The objective of such therapies is to release a person from the grip of misleading conceptions she has adopted, that is, from the misleading pictures that hold her thought in a cramp, causing disquietude and not allowing her to reach clarity about the matters at hand.”  
(Kuusela, 2008: p.45)

The upshot of these considerations is that (a) the primary justification for the statements that one makes in the course of employing these methods is not based on their veracity, but on how effective they are in dissolving philosophical problems; and (b) it is of paramount importance that someone who seeks to apply these methods to the work of contemporary (living) academics, should engage and involve their subjects in a way that facilitates the latter’s release from their apparent difficulties. In other words, rather than stridently proclaiming the incorrectness of a person’s claims or assumptions, a less didactic, conversational approach may be needed in order for the methods showcased by Wittgenstein in the *PI* to be effective, and therefore justified.

In the context of these sorts of observations, previous interpreters – fortified by supporting remarks from Wittgenstein’s *nachlass* – have stressed the importance of securing a person’s ‘acknowledgement’ when applying the methods demonstrated by Wittgenstein in the *PI* to their thought (e.g. as expressed in their written work). Thus Gordon Baker, following up Wittgenstein’s comparison of his methods with therapies in *PI* §133, writes that Wittgenstein’s “aim was to bring each patient to acknowledge the origins of her particular conceptual disorder,” and that “the patient’s own acknowledgement of the rules in which she is entangled is a precondition of the correctness of the diagnosis (BT 410) as well as of the effectiveness of the cure (BT 410)” (Baker, 2004 [1992]: p.68). Similarly, Hutchinson and Read write that the clarifications Wittgenstein offers in the *PI* are “when read through the hermeneutic of therapy, *clarifications in the achievement sense*. That is to say, they only serve as clarifications if our interlocutor recognises them as such” (Hutchinson and Read, 2008: p.156-7). This is a point with which Kuusela also concurs:

“What counts as a confusion or a misunderstanding [according to later Wittgenstein] is not defined by reference to a criterion established, so to speak, from outside by the philosopher examining a person’s language use. Rather, identifying a confusion requires acknowledgement from the speaker herself. The requirement of acknowledgement or consent is emphasised in the 1937 version of the *Philosophical Investigations*: ‘One of our most important tasks is to express all false trains of thought so characteristically that the other says, ‘Yes that is exactly the way I meant it.’ ... Indeed we can only convict someone else of a mistake if he acknowledges that this is really the expression of his feeling. For only if he acknowledges it as such, *is* it the correct expression.’” (Kuusela, 2008: p.28)

The above re-specification of the status of remarks made using later Wittgenstein’s concept of a ‘picture’ – from didactic claims about the historical and psychological provenance of a person’s way of thinking and writing about their subject matter, to potentially ‘therapeutic’ remarks awaiting the acknowledgement of the person whose work they seek to characterise – enables us to overcome the critic’s objection concerning the lack of a sound methodological justification for such ‘claims’. As we

will see in the next chapter, it also requires us to adjust our tone and modus operandi when using later Wittgenstein to criticise the work of ‘positivist’ IR scholars.

### **3.3 The Methodological Justification of Appeals to ‘Ordinary’ Language**

A final task that I want to accomplish in this chapter is to provide a methodological justification based on Wittgenstein’s later philosophy for appealing to facts or features of ‘ordinary’ language-use. The reason why this is an important issue to address in the context of this thesis is not only because I identified one of the problems with the ARO as being the lack of adequate justification for appeals to ‘ordinary language’; but also because employing later Wittgenstein’s concept of a ‘picture’ in identifying patterns of bias in another’s writing will inevitably involve making observations about how they are using language, sometimes involving comparisons with ‘ordinary’ usage. Unlike Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke, I have not at any point sought to deny that it is possible to legitimately make empirical true/false claims, to form and test hypotheses, and to arrive at certain knowledge, and therefore I do not face the significant potential problem of self-contradiction that the ARO does in appealing to observations of how language is ordinarily used (see Section 2.2, problems 4 and 6). Nevertheless, it is still necessary for the sound employment of the technique(s) I recommend to provide some account of what ‘ordinary language-use’ is, and the status of observations that are made about it.

In order to accomplish this goal, I will start by summarising Baker and Hacker’s interpretation of the role of ‘everyday’ or ‘ordinary’ language-use in Wittgenstein’s later philosophy in their *Analytical Commentary on the PI*, which is a popular interpretation that has not only been taken up by various subsequent interpreters of the *PI*, but also apparently by Pin-Fat (e.g. 2010: p.1 and p.21). I will then consider some problems with this interpretation raised by Kuusela in *The Struggle Against Dogmatism*, before developing my own interpretation of a sense in which Wittgenstein distinguishes between ‘philosophical’ and ‘everyday’ language-use in the *PI* that avoids these problems. Finally, I will appeal to Cavell’s interpretation of

the status of later Wittgenstein's remarks concerning 'what we say' as a methodological basis for making observations about how words are ordinarily used.

### Baker and Hacker's Interpretation

In their *Analytical Commentary* on the *PI*, Baker and Hacker present a reading of Wittgenstein's conception of 'everyday' versus 'philosophical' language along the following lines. Linguistic expressions such as words and sentences only make sense in when they are used in specific 'everyday' contexts of use, where there are established conventions for their application. Using the terminology of the *PI*, these everyday contexts of language-use can be called 'language-games', while the established conventions for the application of expressions within these contexts can be called 'grammar' or 'grammatical rules'. In this light, 'philosophical theses' are either trivial articulations of implicit grammatical rules for the use of expressions (such as 'five is a number'), or "nonsense" that has been generated by philosophers 'misusing' words and other linguistic expressions in ways that go against the established conventions. They write:

"The putative propositions of philosophy (especially, but not only, of metaphysics) are either grammatical trivialities or nonsense that transgresses the grammar of the constituent expressions." (Baker and Hacker, 2005 [1980] b: p.256)

According to this reading, 'everyday' language, in the sense of the conventional ways in which expressions are used in established contexts of language-use, is 'superior' to 'philosophical' language, and serves as the ideal standard of 'sense' according to which philosophical language is deemed to be trivial or meaningless. As Baker and Hacker observe, "it is the everyday, ordinary language-game, not the metaphysical misuse of words, that wears the trousers. For it is in the language-game where the expression is at home that it has an established and intelligible sense" (Baker and Hacker, 2005 [1980] b: p.254).

In this light, Baker and Hacker see Wittgenstein's main task in the *PI* as being to reveal the 'nonsensicality' of philosophical uses of language, bringing philosophers to "the painful recognition of [their] previous attempts to transgress the boundaries of sense" (Baker and Hacker, 2005 [1980] b: p.255), and thereby inducing them to return to using words and expressions in 'everyday' ways that are in accordance with the established grammatical norms of our existing practices. In this way, Wittgenstein's remark that "What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" (*PI* 116) is interpreted by Baker and Hacker as meaning that the methods in the *PI* are designed to "bring words back from their metaphysical use to their correct use (*richtige Verwendung*) in the language" (Baker and Hacker, 2005 [1980] b: p.254).

### Kuusela's Objection

In *Struggle Against Dogmatism* Kuusela takes issue with Baker and Hacker's interpretation, as well as with other interpreters such as Hintikka and Hintikka, and Avrum Stroll who endorse similar readings of the role of the 'everyday' in Wittgenstein's later methodology. He sums up Baker and Hacker's interpretation as follows:

"Baker and Hacker take everyday or ordinary language to constitute a ground of intelligibility for Wittgenstein in a very particular sense. ... from their point of view deviation from ordinary language means either speaking nonsense or falling into irrelevance, that is, losing contact with what we speak about when we employ terms such as 'language' and 'meaning', and so on, that have their roots in everyday life and language. To avoid this fall into nonsense or irrelevancy, philosophers must use their expressions in accordance with everyday language, which in this sense constitutes a standard for correct or meaningful language use and also for the correctness of philosophical views relating to everyday concepts." (Kuusela, 2008: p.275-6)

Kuusela objects to this reading on the grounds that it implies that "ordinary or everyday language, or a certain description of it, constitutes for Wittgenstein a standard of sense that he urges one to abide by" (Kuusela, 2008: p.79, see also p.40).

Against this Kuusela cites Savickey's point that under such an interpretation "Wittgenstein's philosophy would thus become 'a form of intellectual constraint or censorship'" (Kuusela, 2008: p.79; Savickey, 1999: p.105), and argues that to appeal to everyday language as a standard of sense "presupposes that an (ultimately) uncontroversial way of identifying what counts as conformity with everyday language is available" (Kuusela, 2008: p.276). Kuusela also quotes a passage from an earlier draft of the *PI* that appears to directly contradict Baker and Hacker's reading, where Wittgenstein writes:

"Why are the grammatical problems so tough and seemingly ineradicable?— Because they are connected with the oldest thought habits, i.e., with the oldest pictures that are engraved into our language itself. ...

People are deeply embedded in philosophical, i.e., grammatical confusions. And to free them from these presupposes pulling them out from the immensely manifold connections they are caught up in. ... —But this language came about // developed // as it did because people had—and have—the inclination to think in *this way*." (TS 213: 422-423, as translated by Kuusela)

In the passage quoted by Kuusela, rather than portraying ordinary language as the 'standard of sense' according to which philosophical 'misuses' of words can be identified and corrected, Wittgenstein suggests that philosophical problems can arise through engaging in habits of thought that are metaphorically-speaking *engraved into* the forms of our ordinary language. As Kuusela puts it, this shows that "Wittgenstein is not committed to an assumption about the separation of everyday language from philosophical ideas", and that "far from being uninfluenced by philosophically problematic tendencies of thinking, the development of everyday language, according to him, is affected by just the kind of tendencies of thinking that also lie at the root of philosophical problems" (Kuusela, 2008: p.278). Kuusela concludes that "Wittgenstein's conception of everyday language seems radically different from that of the ordinary language philosophers, who seem to have more or less assumed that ordinary language constitutes a reliable ground for deciding philosophical questions" (Kuusela, 2008: p.278).

In response to these problems, Kuusela proposes an alternative interpretation according to which to "lead words back to everyday language ... is ... to refrain from

assuming with the metaphysician that there *must* be some unified definition of the cases falling under a concept and to adopt instead a more humble employment of clarificatory concepts” (Kuusela, 2008: p.281). We can think of Kuusela’s interpretation as a ‘negative’ understanding of Wittgenstein’s conception of the everyday; in the sense that instead of identifying ‘everyday language’ as a type of language-use, Kuusela suggests that according to later Wittgenstein, the ‘everydayness’ of everyday language simply consists in the avoidance of metaphysical uses of words and expressions, where a ‘metaphysical use’ amounts to using a concept as though all cases of its application could be captured under one definition. He suggests:

“By characterising what ‘we’—the Wittgensteinian philosophers—do as ‘leading words back,’ Wittgenstein is referring to a particular approach or to a style of philosophy. But he is not committed to any claims or assumptions about a clearly circumscribable concept of everyday language under which philosophical uses must be subsumed or to the idea that the uses of everyday expressions are clearly definable and that philosophers have to match their concepts with such uses.” (Kuusela, 2008: p.281)

## A Different Approach

Kuusela’s interpretation is all right as far as it goes. However, conceiving of everyday language purely in terms of the avoidance of metaphysics, in the narrowly-defined sense of ‘metaphysics’ employed by Kuusela, does not account for the various remarks in the *PI* where Wittgenstein openly describes or refers to the way in which words and expressions are ‘actually used’ in ordinary or everyday cases – including remarks where Wittgenstein contrasts such uses with ‘philosophical’ or ‘metaphysical’ ones.<sup>120</sup> Examples are *PI* §134, where Wittgenstein addresses the philosophical statement that the general form of a proposition is “this is how things are” by asking “how is this sentence applied—that is, in our everyday language?”, *PI*

---

<sup>120</sup> Kuusela himself acknowledges that even though he thinks it would be wrong to read later Wittgenstein as appealing to everyday language as an ideal standard of ‘correct’ usage, the examination and description of ‘normal’ uses still has a role to play in the clarification of philosophical problems: “Wittgenstein should not be read as suggesting that one must abide by ordinary ways of using language. ... Rather, the purpose of examining the normal context of use is to clarify the functioning of the word and help get rid of confusions” (Kuusela, 2008: p.40).

§412, where Wittgenstein comments regarding an imaginary philosophical utterance that “I did not utter the sentence in the surroundings in which it would have had an everyday and unparadoxical sense”, and a passage in Part II of the *PI* where Wittgenstein writes that “the everyday language-game [of what is called a ‘physical object’] is to be *accepted*, and *false* accounts of it characterised *as false*”.<sup>121</sup> In addition to the above exegetical concern, Kuusela’s interpretation would be of limited use for our purposes of providing a methodological justification for making observations concerning how language is used, in the context of identifying problematic tendencies and patterns of bias in the work of others. What is needed, then, is an interpretation of what Wittgenstein means by ‘everyday’ or ‘ordinary’ language-use in remarks where he describes such uses and contrasts them with philosophical utterances, which avoids the problems identified by Kuusela, and can be used to provide a sound explanation of the methodological status of observations concerning ‘ordinary’ or ‘everyday’ language that we might want to use for the purposes of clarifying apparently problematic forms of expression in academic written work. I will now endeavour to provide such an interpretation.

### ***‘Everyday’ vs. ‘Philosophical’ Language***

As with Wittgenstein’s use of the concept of ‘picture’, trying to explain in more detail what Wittgenstein means by ‘everyday’ or ‘ordinary’ language in contexts of philosophical clarification does not necessarily involve assuming that whenever Wittgenstein uses terms like ‘everyday’, ‘ordinary’, ‘normal’ etc. that he always means the same thing. With that in mind, I will be upfront with my acknowledgement that I am picking out and elaborating one particular sense in which Wittgenstein can be seen to employ the concept of ‘everyday’ or ‘ordinary’ language in a number of remarks in the *PI*, and a corresponding sense in which certain philosophical utterances are *not* ‘ordinary’ or ‘everyday’ according to the sense employed in these remarks.

---

<sup>121</sup> Published as §162 of ‘Philosophy of Psychology – A Fragment xi’ in the 2009 Wiley-Blackwell edition of the *PI*.



In *PI* §412 Wittgenstein writes the following lengthy but worthwhile passage, in which he contrasts a 'philosophical' with an 'everyday' use of a sentence:

"The feeling of an unbridgeable gulf between consciousness and brain process: how come that this plays no role in reflections of ordinary life? This idea of a difference in kind is accompanied by slight giddiness – which occurs when we are doing logical tricks. ... When does this feeling occur in the present case? It is when I, for example, turn my attention in a particular way on to my own consciousness and, astonished, say to myself: "THIS is supposed to be produced by a process in the brain!" – as it were clutching my forehead. – But what can it mean to speak of "turning my attention on to my own consciousness"? There is surely nothing more extraordinary than that there should be any such thing! What I described with these words (which are not used in this way in ordinary life) was an act of gazing. I gazed fixedly in front of me – but *not* at any particular point or object. My eyes were wide open, brows not contracted (as they mostly are when I am interested in a particular object). No such interest preceded this gazing. My glance was vacant; or again, *like* that of someone admiring the illumination of the sky and drinking in the light.

Note that the sentence which I uttered as a paradox ("this is produced by a brain process!") has nothing paradoxical about it. I could have said it in the course of an experiment whose purpose was to show that an effect of light which I see is produced by stimulation of a particular part of the brain. – But I did not utter the sentence in the surroundings in which it would have had an everyday and unparadoxical sense. And my attention was not such as would have been in keeping with that experiment. (If it had been, my gaze would have been intent, not vacant.)"

In this remark Wittgenstein provides an example of a 'philosophical' use of a sentence, whereby someone – under the impression that they are 'turning their attention onto their own consciousness' – gazes fixedly forward, without focusing on a particular point or object, and says "THIS is supposed to be produced by a process in the brain!" In addition, Wittgenstein provides an explicit example of a different scenario in which the same sentence would have had an "everyday sense", which in this case is an experiment to demonstrate that stimulating a certain part of the brain produces a visual light effect.

In the next remark, *PI* §413, Wittgenstein calls the ‘philosophical’ context of use that he imagined at the start of *PI* §412 a “case of introspection”, which he likens to the sort of introspection that “gave William James the idea that the ‘self’ consisted mainly of ‘peculiar motions in the head and between the head and the throat’”. Wittgenstein suggests that this was not an analysis of the ‘self’ as James thought, but rather of “the state of a philosopher’s attention when he says the word ‘self’ to himself and tries to analyse its meaning”. This is similar to the way in which Wittgenstein suggested in *PI* §412 that someone who “turns their attention onto their own consciousness” is not really attending to their own consciousness, but is rather going into a kind of vacant trance. In this light, the next remark that comes is highly significant:

“You think that after all you must be weaving a piece of cloth: because you are sitting at a loom – even if it is empty – and going through the motions of weaving.” (*PI* §414)

The implication of *PI* §414, in light of the two previous remarks, is this: that when philosophers utter or write sentences in contexts of introspective reflection, they might *think* that they are thereby stating observations about their own consciousness or some other matter being introspected upon. However, Wittgenstein’s metaphor of the empty loom suggests that they may only be *going through the motions* of using language; and that the sentences philosophers use in such contexts are not ‘functional’ in the way that they would be in an ordinary (i.e. non-philosophical) setting. The example of a context in which such a sentence would have a functional ‘everyday’ meaning that Wittgenstein provides, is stating the findings of an empirical experiment. However this is presumably just one possible example which is appropriate for the particular sentence that Wittgenstein is considering, and there are other contexts of language-use that could do as well.

There are two especially important observations to be made here: firstly, according to this trio of remarks (§§412-414), it is not particular words or sentences themselves that are either ‘philosophical’ or ‘everyday’; but rather it is the *conditions under which they are written or uttered* that makes them so. Secondly, in these remarks

Wittgenstein associates 'everyday' linguistic meaning with situations in which language is *functional* or *productive*, as opposed to contexts of 'philosophical' reflection or introspection, where Wittgenstein suggests that uttering the same words and sentences is like making motions on an empty loom.

These two observations are borne out by various other remarks in the *PI*. For example, in *PI* §38, Wittgenstein writes:

“Naming seems to be a *strange* connection of a word with an object. – And such a strange connection really obtains, particularly when a philosopher tries to fathom *the* relation between name and what is named by staring at an object in front of him and repeating a name, or even the word 'this', innumerable times. For philosophical problems arise when language *goes on holiday*. And *then* we may indeed imagine naming to be some remarkable mental act, as it were the baptism of an object. And we can also say the word 'this' *to* the object, as it were *address* the object as 'this' – a strange use of this word, which perhaps occurs only when philosophising.”

Here Wittgenstein imagines the example of a philosopher who is attempting to – and is under the impression that they are – investigating the relation between a name and what is named, by 'observing' their own repeated action of naming a particular object in private (a kind of solitary 'ceremony' similar to that Wittgenstein imagines in *PI* §258).<sup>122</sup> However, similarly with the case of 'turning one's attention to one's own consciousness', Wittgenstein suggests that what they are actually doing is simply staring at an object while repeatedly uttering a word. The word 'this' is being uttered; however Wittgenstein suggests that in this 'odd' context of philosophical reflection, it does not perform the kind of productive function that it does in other, non-philosophical contexts: it is "*on holiday*". As Wittgenstein puts it in *PI* §132: "The

---

<sup>122</sup> "Let's imagine the following case. I want to keep a diary about the recurrence of a certain sensation. To this end I associate it with the sign "S" and write this sign in a calendar for every day on which I have the sensation. — I first want to observe that a definition of the sign cannot be formulated. – But all the same, I can give one to myself as a kind of ostensive definition! – How? Can I point to the sensation? – Not in the ordinary sense. But I speak, or write the sign down, and at the same time I concentrate my attention on the sensation – and so, as it were, point to it inwardly. – But what is this ceremony for? For that is all it seems to be!

confusions which occupy us arise when language is, as it were, idling, not when it is doing work.” So we could say that the philosopher in Wittgenstein’s example is ‘using’ the word in the sense that he is speaking it; however he is not ‘using’ it in the sense of *putting it to work*. Wittgenstein’s association of ‘everyday’ language with work and functionality makes more sense if we recognise that the German word Wittgenstein often uses in these contexts – *alltäglich* – can be used not only mean ‘ordinary’ in the sense of ‘commonplace’, but also ‘workaday’.

In other remarks, Wittgenstein adopts a different tactic to show up the idleness of philosophical uses of language by imagining putting them to work in a functional everyday scenario. For example, in *PI* §60 he imagines placing a philosophically ‘analysed’ sentence into an everyday context in which the relevant forms of expression are ordinarily used. He writes:

“Suppose that, instead of telling someone “Bring me the broom!”, you said “Bring me the broomstick and the brush which is fitted on to it!” – Isn’t the answer: “Do you want the broom? Why do you put it so oddly?” — Is he going to understand the further analysed sentence better? – This sentence, one might say, comes to the same thing as the ordinary one, but in a more roundabout way.” (*PI* §60)

The ‘analysed’ sentence in this example might fit some philosopher’s desiderata of clarity or fully-articulated meaning that they have hit upon during a moment of isolated philosophical reflection; however Wittgenstein points out that in the everyday scenario in which the original expression is likely to be used, the ‘analysed’ version has no practical advantage over the original one in terms of enabling the purpose and aims of the utterance – and to the contrary, may even impede its effectiveness.

Meanwhile in *PI* §246, Wittgenstein tries to imagine how one could use the philosophical statement that ‘only I can know whether I am really in pain’ to accomplish something in ordinary non-philosophical scenarios in which we use the expressions ‘know’ and ‘being in pain’; and in *PI* §296, Wittgenstein responds to an interlocutor’s insistence that ‘there is a Something which accompanies my cry of pain

on account of which I utter it' by questioning "Only to whom are we telling this? And on what occasion?" Similarly, in *PI* §416 Wittgenstein responds to the proposition that human beings "are their own witnesses that they have *consciousness*" by questioning: "whom do I really inform if I say 'I have consciousness'? What is the purpose of saying this to myself, and how can another person understand me?" According to such remarks, what is distinctive and problematic about 'philosophical' uses of language is not that they involve the employment of words and expressions in novel ways which 'violate' the implicit rules of established practices of using words; but rather that they do so without achieving any practical improvements over our existing forms of language in terms of the various aims and purposes that they satisfy.

There is also another element to Wittgenstein's understanding of 'philosophical' language in the *PI* that I have already mentioned under the last two sections, which is to do with the generation of 'pictures' or 'illusions'. Although I have suggested so far in this subsection that according to later Wittgenstein, philosophical contexts of language-use are ones where language is uttered and written in a way that is in a certain sense *non-functional*, we saw earlier from remarks like *PI* §216 and *PI* §295 that later Wittgenstein does associate philosophical language-use with a kind of ornamental or aesthetic function in the form of 'calling up pictures' or being accompanied by a 'play of the imagination'. To refresh our memories, here are the relevant extracts again:

"So this is what I imagine: everyone says of himself that he knows what pain is only from his own pain. – Not that people really say that, or are even prepared to say it. But *if* everybody said it — it might be a kind of exclamation. And even if it gives no information, still, it is a picture; and why should we not want to call such a picture before our mind? Imagine an allegorical painting instead of the words.

Indeed, when we look into ourselves as we do philosophy, we often get to see just such a picture. Virtually a pictorial representation of our grammar. Not facts; but, as it were, illustrated turns of speech." (*PI* §295)

"'A thing is identical with itself.' – There is no finer example of a useless sentence, which nevertheless is connected with a certain play of the

imagination. It is as if in our imagination we put a thing into its own shape and saw that it fitted.” (*PI* §216)

In both of these remarks Wittgenstein comments on the ‘uselessness’ of the statements that his interlocutors have come up with, but also identifies their potential for stimulating or facilitating the imagination. In the passage from *PI* §295 quoted above, Wittgenstein notes that the imagination is often stimulated in this way when we are doing philosophy.<sup>123</sup> If we recall the passage Kuusela quoted from *TS* 213, there Wittgenstein did not make a distinction between ‘philosophical’ or ‘everyday’ language in terms of its capacity to harbour ‘pictures’, writing that “grammatical problems are connected with the oldest thought habits, i.e., with the oldest pictures that are engraved into our language itself” and that “this language came about // developed // as it did because people had—and have—the inclination to think in *this way*.”<sup>124</sup> Taking this remark together with the interpretation of Wittgenstein’s distinction between ‘philosophical’ and ‘everyday’ language that I have developed so far, we could add to this the following detail: that although the *language* used by philosophers is no different from everyday ‘non-philosophical’ language in terms of its capacity for suggesting certain ‘pictures’, the typical *contexts* in which philosophy as an activity takes place – i.e. the ‘surroundings’ it provides us with – are such that people who are engaged in philosophising become especially susceptible to the ‘pictures’, analogies and so on that are manifest in the apparent forms of the everyday language that they are inclined to use. This seems to be what later Wittgenstein is alluding to in remarks like *PI* §11 when he emphasises the diversity of functions that words can perform, before asserting: “of course, what confuses us is the uniform appearance of words when we hear them in speech, or

---

<sup>123</sup> One could say that the stimulation of the imagination by language that is used in a philosophical context is a *kind* of ‘function’ or purpose, similar to the function of language when used in poems, for example. However, the issue here is whether this function is the same as the function that the speaker is aiming for, or is under the impression that they are achieving, when they engage in philosophical reflection. For example, if someone thinks that by saying ‘everything is identical with itself’ in a context of philosophical reflection they are stating a truth about the nature of identity, and what they are actually doing is using a sentence to conjure up an imaginary animation of an object being fitted into its own space, then even though stimulating the imagine is a legitimate function of language in certain contexts, the mismatch in this context between aim and achievement would give grounds for classing this particular use as ‘nonfunctional’.

<sup>124</sup> *TS* 213: 422-423, as translated by Kuusela.

see them written or in print. For their *use* is not that obvious. Especially when we are doing philosophy!”

It is in view of the misleading ‘pictures’ and other impressions that can be conjured up by our language, combined with the propensity for philosophical contexts to encourage us to focus on the apparent forms of utterances rather than their functional employment, that Wittgenstein can be seen to recommend close observation of the functioning of various words and expressions as a remedy for dissolving philosophical problems. For example, when he writes in *PI* §4: “It disperses the fog if we study the phenomena of language in primitive kinds of use in which one can clearly survey the purpose and functioning of words”; and in *PI* §132: “We want to establish an order in our knowledge of the use of language: an order for a particular purpose, one out of many possible orders, not *the* order. For this purpose we shall again and again *emphasise* distinctions which our ordinary forms of language easily make us overlook.”

### ***How this Interpretation Overcomes Kuusela’s Objection***

The interpretation I have developed so far in this subsection overcomes the two main problems posed by Kuusela for Baker and Hacker’s interpretation of the distinction between ‘philosophical’ and ‘everyday’ language as follows. Firstly, according to my interpretation, the words and expressions used by philosophers are not in principle different from ‘everyday’ language; as Wittgenstein observes in *PI* §120 and *PI* §134, philosophers “frame” their questions in the language of the everyday, and get their words and sentences from our existing practices of language-use. Rather it is the manner in which these words and expressions are uttered or written within a philosophical context that differentiates them from ‘everyday’ uses. In short: in ‘everyday’ use, words and expressions are employed in ways that satisfy certain aims and functions, whereas in ‘philosophical’ contexts there is a tendency to use and modify language in superfluous or counterproductive ways while being under the *impression* that one is thereby fulfilling a different aim or purpose (such as, perhaps, investigating some phenomenon that is related to the use of the relevant word or

expression in established non-philosophical contexts). This means that my interpretation is resistant to Kuusela's objection that Wittgenstein does not make a principled distinction in the *PI* or other related texts between 'philosophical' and 'everyday' language.

Secondly, according to my interpretation, philosophical uses of language are not to be compared with 'everyday' ones in terms of *correctness*, but rather in terms of their *functionality* (or lack thereof). What is problematic about philosophical uses of language examined by Wittgenstein in the relevant remarks is not that they employ words and sentences in ways that violate norms of what it makes sense to say within established contexts of language-use; but rather that the interlocutor in these examples is using language in an idling, 'ornamental' way while being *under the impression* that they are making highly informative pronouncements about the matters under discussion. Hence the language-use of the philosophical interlocutor in Wittgenstein's examples does not live up to *their own* aims and purposes in using language in the relevant, often idiosyncratic, ways.

Another purpose that is served by offering descriptions of 'everyday' (non-philosophical) language-use to the philosopher which I have mentioned, is the task referred to by Wittgenstein in remarks like *PI* §132, of emphasising distinctions between different ways in which a word is used in order to fend off over-simplified 'pictures' of a concept that may be suggested to philosophers by certain similarities or analogies between the apparent forms of certain expressions. Again, this technique would not fall foul of Kuusela's objection to conceiving of everyday language as the 'standard' of correct use, since the aim – as Wittgenstein says – is not to establish "*the order*" in our knowledge of the use of language; but rather to establish an order which repeatedly 'emphasises' "distinctions that our ordinary forms of language easily make us overlook" (*PI* §132). Here the aim is not to be 'correct', but to provide whatever representations of our knowledge of language-use will be most effective in counteracting the assimilating tendencies encouraged by the forms of certain words and expressions.



### ***The Methodological Status of 'Ordinary' Language Observations***

In the last subsection I developed an interpretation of a relevant distinction that Wittgenstein draws in the *PI* between 'philosophical' and 'everyday' uses of language, which overcomes the problem posed by Kuusela for Baker and Hacker's interpretation, while allowing us to flesh out a concept of 'ordinary' or 'everyday' language-use more satisfactorily than Kuusela's alternative reading. Now it is time to provide an explanation of the status of those observations about 'ordinary'/'everyday' language-use, that according to later Wittgenstein, are meant to help those whose ways of thinking and speaking about some subject matter may have been unduly influenced by the 'pictures' and other impressions that are readily encouraged by the apparent forms of our language, to which those who engage in the sort of reflection characteristic of philosophising are especially susceptible.

At first blush, it is tempting to treat Wittgenstein's various observations in the *PI* regarding how language functions as third-person empirical claims about what people in a given population of language-speakers typically say under such-and-such circumstances. There are, however, various indications in the *PI* that this is not how Wittgenstein intends his observations to be understood. For one thing, Wittgenstein does not appear to have arrived at his observations by carrying out a systematic sociological study of language-use (or at least, there is no evidence for Wittgenstein's having engaged in such a study). For another thing, Wittgenstein frequently characterises his descriptions of language-use as "reminding" us of things we already know, or with which we are already familiar, about "our language" (e.g. *PI* §89, §127, §140, §253). Such remarks suggest that the 'descriptions' Wittgenstein provides are intended to characterise certain aspects of our existing linguistic know-how in such a way as to bring them into a contrast with our use of language in 'philosophical' contexts, where we may have started to employ the relevant words and expressions in ways that are characteristic of certain misleading 'pictures' of their use. In this case, we might ask: what is the status of our personal 'speaker's' knowledge of how our language is used, and with what authority can we appeal to this knowledge as a record of actual usage to be used in the clarification of philosophical disquiets?

In *The Claim of Reason* Stanley Cavell provides a compelling discussion of this very topic which we can make use of. He begins by noting that “the criteria Wittgenstein appeals to – those which are, for him, the data of philosophy – are always ‘ours’, the ‘group’ which forms his ‘authority’ is always, apparently, the human group as such, the human being generally. When I voice [the criteria] I do so, or take myself to do so, as a member of that group, a representative human” (Cavell, 1979: p.18). Cavell then raises two questions regarding this procedure:

- (1) “How can I, what gives me the right to, speak for the group of which I am a member? How have I gained that remarkable privilege? What confidence am I to place in a generalisation from what I say to what everybody says?; the sample is irresponsibly, preposterously small”.
- (2) “Since I do not think the claim to speak for ‘us’ is preposterous, I do not think it is a generalisation. But what else is it?” (Ibid.)

Cavell answers his own questions by suggesting that “For all Wittgenstein’s claims about what we say, he is always at the same time aware that others might not agree, that a given person or group (a ‘tribe’) might *not* share our criteria” (Ibid.). Thus:

“When Wittgenstein ... ‘says what we say’, what he produces is not a generalisation ... but a (supposed) *instance* of what we say. We may think of it as a sample. The introduction of the sample by the words ‘We say ...’ is an invitation for you to see whether you have such a sample, or can accept mine as a sound one. One sample does not refute or disconfirm another; if two are in disagreement they vie with one another for the same confirmation. The only source of confirmation here is ourselves. And each of us is fully authoritative in this struggle.” (Cavell, 1979; p.19)

So according to Cavell, Wittgenstein’s ‘descriptions’ of ‘what we say’ are intended as samples, based on Wittgenstein’s personal know-how as a language-speaker, which we – as members of the same or a similar language-speaking community – can consider in light of our own experiences of using our language, and decide whether or not we agree that it is a sample of a typical usage of the relevant word/expression. This means that later Wittgenstein’s descriptions of language-use hold no greater

authority than that with any individual participants in the linguistic practices of their community.

This should not however be thought of as a 'weak' ground for making observations about how words are used, since it is the ground and authority upon which all of us are able to participate in using language effectively to the extent that we do, and in successfully understanding one another to the extent that we do. The fact – which Wittgenstein reminds us of in *PI* §241-242 – that human beings tend to coincide to a greater or lesser extent in their practices of using language, provides some confidence that a competent individual speakers' observations about how particular words and sentences are typically used will have a good chance of commanding a reasonable degree of assent among fellow speakers, provided that they have carefully considered the uses with which they are familiar. This will of course not be the case with regard to words whose application is 'essentially contested' in the sense explained earlier; however, that simply means that if we want to command the assent of our readers or critical subjects, we would be wise to stick to observations of the use of words whose application is not so controversial. This overcomes Kuusela's objection to the effect that appealing to 'everyday' language assumes that there is a universal and uncontroversial way of determining "what counts as conformity with everyday language" (Kuusela, 2008: p.276).

## Chapter 4 Replacing the Anti-Representationalist Objection

In the last chapter I revisited some of the remarks in Wittgenstein's *PI* which I had identified as the probable inspiration for the ARO's contention that later Wittgenstein decisively criticised a representational view of language that was allegedly endorsed by numerous philosophers throughout history. I carried out a close textual reading of these remarks (*PI* §§1-5) and highlighted ways in which they resisted an interpretation along the lines of that employed by the ARO, before spelling out some preliminary implications for the potential to overcome certain problems faced by the ARO. I investigated in more detail how we can understand Wittgenstein's use of the term 'picture' as part of a 'therapeutic' technique of criticism employed in remarks like *PI* §§1-5. To do this, I used an existing interpretation of this aspect of Wittgenstein's later methodology provided by Kuusela, which I subsequently added to and clarified in order to produce an interpretation which overcomes most of the problems faced by the ARO as well as other potential criticisms. Finally, I developed an interpretation of Wittgenstein's distinction between 'philosophical' and 'everyday' language-use, and used Cavell's reading of Wittgenstein's observations concerning 'what we say' as the basis for providing a methodological justification for making observations concerning how language is ordinarily used.

In this chapter I am now going to provide some detailed suggestions for an alternative critical approach based on the interpretation presented in the last chapter, and demonstrate how one might apply the kind of critical technique employed by Wittgenstein in remarks like *PI* §§1-5 to the work of 'positivist' IR scholars such as Waltz and Wendt. I will start in 4.1 by outlining my recommendations for an alternative approach to criticising 'positivist' scholars of IR which can take the place of the ARO and overcome the various problems identified with the latter line of argument. In 4.2 I will reflect on these recommendations, and address some potential concerns that might arise regarding them. In 4.3 I will demonstrate how putting these recommendations into practice might work out, by carrying out an analysis of 'biased' tendencies that can be seen in the writings of

Waltz and Wendt using the kind of Wittgenstein-inspired approach I have recommended. In 4.4 I will compare and contrast my approach with an alternative possible way of using remarks like *PI* §§1-5 to criticise 'positivist' IR scholars such as Wendt based on Nigel Pleasants' criticisms of Bhaskar's version of 'realism'. Finally, in 4.5, I will suggest how the critical approach I have developed may have relevance for more recent and future work carried out in IR by contemporary 'neo-realist' scholars.

#### 4.1 Recommendations

##### Suggestion 1. From 'Anti-Representationalist' to Anti-Bias

The first suggestion I am going to make is that those wishing to use remarks such as *PI* §§1-5 to criticise 'positivist' approaches to IR should orient themselves away from a specifically 'anti-representationalist' (i.e. anti- 'mirror view' or 'picture view') line of objection, to one which targets *biased tendencies of thought*; and furthermore that these tendencies should be addressed in the specific forms in which they are manifest in the work of particular IR scholars, rather than as general tendencies that are vaguely insinuated as being present in the works of various academics throughout history. As we saw in the last chapter, it is a distortion to interpret Wittgenstein's strategy in *PI* §§1-5 as being to summarise and criticise a particular representational 'view', 'theory' or 'account' of language, and that a better characterisation of Wittgenstein's approach in these and other similar remarks would be to say that he is demonstrating a 'therapeutic' method for dissolving philosophical problems, whereby one identifies a certain pattern of bias in what someone else has written or said, and presents this pattern to the author as stemming from, or constituting, a 'particular picture' of the nature of their subject matter (the term 'picture' in this context being understood in one of the two ways which I outlined in 3.2 – or in an alternative manner for which an appropriate methodological justification has been provided).

Rather than seeking to undermine approaches to IR on the basis of their alleged commitment to a particular view, account or theory of language, a revised application of this aspect of Wittgenstein's later philosophy to IR should therefore direct its critical attention towards the kinds of imaginary models and/or biased tendencies of thought that later Wittgenstein suggests motivate or stimulate the formation of such accounts, which can be seen to be active in the work of IR scholars as well as philosophers. This would not only involve a more textually faithful interpretation of Wittgenstein's remarks in the *PI*, but would also overcome the problems that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke face in trying to make out that the various philosophers and 'positivist' scholars of IR that they criticise are somehow committed to the same underlying set of claims concerning how language functions.

### Suggestion 2. From 'In Principle' Objections to Specific Critical Observations

My second suggestion is that rather than criticising 'positivist' approaches to IR *in principle*, scholars like Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke should seek instead to critically identify specific tendencies or patterns of bias manifest in the work of particular IR scholars, with a *focus* on those that adopt a 'positivist' approach. This would remove the temptation to over-inflate the application of quite specific critical observations as though they applied in principle to all approaches that can be re-described so as to fit a certain classification of what these scholars regard as 'positivist', and thus avoid the problem of making out that the relevant criticisms are more generally applicable than they are.

### Suggestion 3. Broaden the Scope of Criticism

So far I have suggested that scholars such as Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke who wish to use remarks such as *PI* §§1-5 to ground criticisms of 'positivist' approaches in IR should move from (a) being against a particular 'representational' view of language to being critical of certain biases in the way in which IR scholars think and write about

their subject matter, and (b) being against 'positivist' approaches to IR in principle, to critically examining specific tendencies of bias in the work of individual 'positivist' IR scholars. This being the case, in the interests of avoiding hypocrisy, these scholars should also be open to detecting and highlighting tendencies of bias in the work of non-'positivist' IR scholars as well as 'positivist' ones, despite the main focus being on those that adopt a 'positivist' approach. This should include critical self-examination and acknowledgement of any tendencies of bias in one's own statements and ways of thinking, as well as on-going attempts to overcome these.

#### Suggestion 4. Qualify Critical Observations and Invite Acknowledgement

As we saw in the last chapter, there are roughly two factors that enable the method of criticism demonstrated by Wittgenstein in *PI* §§1-2 to avoid the problem of not having sufficient methodological justification for making claims about the development of other people's work. These factors are (a) that the inferences Wittgenstein makes about what someone else has written are often qualified with expressions such as 'it seems to me' and 'so I believe'; and (b) that characterisations of the origin or form of what someone has written are to be offered in a 'therapeutic' spirit, whereby these characterisations are justified insofar as they are (i) accepted by the person whose work is under scrutiny and are (ii) successful in allowing them to overcome the relevant tendencies. With this in mind, my fourth recommendation is that those who want to apply this aspect of Wittgenstein's method within IR should take care when making more speculative or novel statements about other IR scholars' work (such as that we find a particular 'picture' in their words), to qualify what they say in the way that Wittgenstein often does in the *PI*; and to present their characterisations in an open-minded manner for the consideration of those whose work they are examining, so as to encourage dialogue, assent, and genuine reconsideration.

## 4.2 Reflections on the Recommendations

Before moving on I will provide a brief summary of the import of the recommendations just made, and address a potential concern regarding the consistency of my approach so far.

### ***A Replacement – rather than Modification – of the ARO***

In the above recommendations I have suggested that the IR scholars who previously sought to employ the ARO as an objection to ‘positivist’ approaches to IR should alter their approach so that it is:

- (1) Not specifically targeted against a ‘representational’ view, theory or account of language and approaches which allegedly assume this view;
- (2) Not a principled universal objection to ‘positivist’ approaches to IR;  
and
- (3) Not a line of argument in the traditional sense.

As I have previously stated, what these recommendations effectively amount to is a proposal for the replacement of the ARO with a different strategy for criticising ‘positivist’ and other approaches to IR, based on a re-interpretation of remarks such as *PI* §§1-5 by which the ARO was originally inspired. This is necessary largely because the criticisms I made of the ARO in Chapter 2 identified fundamental problems with the characteristic features that make this line of argument what it is – namely, its ‘anti-representational’ focus, its principled objection to ‘positivist’ approaches to IR, and its use of counter-claims and counter-examples to refute the ‘view’ of language to which these approaches are alleged to be committed.

### ***The Consistency of My Approach***

A potential concern that might arise at this point in the thesis is that my own critical approach to the work of Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke in Chapter 2 apparently does not live up to the ideals of the recommendations that I have made so far in this



chapter. This is true; however I can offer the following reasons in defence of my approach. Firstly, in the earlier parts of the thesis I do not purport to be applying Wittgenstein's later philosophy directly, until I come to demonstrate the approach I have recommended in 4.3. Prior to that point, I see myself as having used conventional methods of academic analysis and textual interpretation to identify problems with a line of argument that these scholars use Wittgenstein's later philosophy to support, and to explain an alternative way in which the relevant aspects of Wittgenstein's *PI* might more fruitfully and legitimately be applied.

Secondly, I have tried my best not to make speculative claims about Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke's ways of thinking, and have attempted to stay as close as possible to what they write and direct implications thereof. In addition, I have not claimed that the approach I recommended in the last section is the only legitimate way to criticise the work of IR scholars;<sup>125</sup> rather, I have presented the suggested approach as a legitimate way of applying the relevant aspects of Wittgenstein's later philosophy to IR that overcomes or avoids certain problems encountered by the ARO. This leaves room for alternative critical approaches, including those employed in the earlier stages of this thesis, as long as they do not fall into the problems I have identified with the ARO or other significant difficulties. Finally, as a practical matter, I judged that the thesis will be more readily understood and received by my intended audience if I were to introduce a novel method of criticism using conventional academic techniques, rather than if I had attempted to introduce this method on its own terms by employing it myself from the start.

### **4.3 How the Recommendations can be Implemented**

Having outlined my recommendations and addressed potential concerns, I will now attempt to demonstrate the sorts of ways in which they can be implemented by carrying out analyses of patterns of bias that are visible *Waltz's Theory of*

---

<sup>125</sup> Indeed, nor have I claimed that it is the only legitimate way in which the relevant aspects of Wittgenstein's later philosophy can be applied to IR.

*International Politics* and Wendt's *Social Theory of International Politics*. The techniques that I will employ, and the manner in which I present my analyses, will be based on the interpretations of relevant aspects of Wittgenstein's later philosophy which I developed in Chapter 3; although my demonstration will at times be interspersed with observations about my own approach that are intended for the benefit of those readers who would like to follow or develop it in their own work.

## Patterns of Bias in Waltz and Wendt

### ***Waltz on Scientific 'Laws', Theoretical 'Representation' and 'Structures'***

Waltz begins his *Theory of International Politics* by seeking to define the key terms 'theory' and 'law' in a way that meets "philosophy-of-science standards" (Waltz, 1979: p.2). Starting with the term 'law', Waltz appeals to a "widely accepted" definition according to which "laws establish relations between variables, variables being concepts that can take different values" (ibid.). According to this definition, a statement of a law has the form "if *a*, then *b*, where *a* stands for one or more independent variables and *b* stands for a dependent variable" (ibid.). Waltz states that "if the relation between *a* and *b* is invariant, the law is absolute"; while "if the relation is highly constant" the law would be probabilistic and would read "if *a*, then *b* with probability *x*" (ibid.). Waltz contends that "in the natural sciences even probabilistic laws contain a strong imputation of necessity", and that by extension statements of probabilistic correlations in the so-called 'social sciences' can be treated as "law-like statements", whereby "the word *like* implies a lesser sense of necessity" (ibid.).

Pausing at this point, we can make the following observations:

- Waltz approaches the questions of what a 'theory' is, and what a 'law' is, by considering how philosophers of science have previously defined these concepts.

- Waltz does not mention or discuss any particular examples of laws that are operative in the 'natural sciences'.
- Waltz couches the distinction between invariant correlations and highly constant probabilistic correlations in terms of their relative strength of 'necessity', with invariant correlations being 'absolute,' and highly constant probabilistic laws holding with a 'strong' but comparatively 'lesser' imputation of necessity.

For now, let us pick up on this last point. In the philosophy of science – at least, among the philosophers of science whom Waltz references – the term 'necessity' is applied to invariant correlations in which a variable *a* is always accompanied by another variable *b*, to assert that *a* cannot occur without *b* also occurring and that there is therefore a 'necessary' relation between the two variables (e.g. Boltzmann, 1901: p.78; Harris, 2002 [1970]: p.52). While this is already a philosophical usage of the word 'necessity' that Waltz is drawing upon, it is clearly related to everyday non-philosophical contexts in which the word 'necessary' is used to mean 'must'. In this light, it is not clear that one can, in this established sense of 'necessary', say that a highly constant probabilistic correlation carries a 'lesser' imputation of necessity, since any correlation that obtains with a probability of less than 100% cannot be a 'necessary' correlation in the relevant sense. That is: if *a* is not accompanied by *b* in every instance, then it is not the case that *a* cannot occur without *b* occurring; hence *a* is not a 'necessary' condition for *b* in any probabilistic correlation, no matter how high the proportion of cases in which it holds.<sup>126</sup>

Am I saying, then, that it is forbidden or impossible to use the word 'necessity' as a relative term to compare invariant correlations with probabilistic correlations? The short answer to this is 'no'. What I am saying is that probabilistic correlations cannot be said to be 'necessary' in the sense that invariant correlations have been called 'necessary relations' by the philosophers of science; and so by attributing "strong"

---

<sup>126</sup> Another way to put this is to say that 'necessity', as this word has commonly been applied to invariant correlations by philosophers of science, is a *binary* term, in the sense that either *a* must be accompanied by *b*, or it need not; and so the relation between *a* and *b* is either necessary or it is not. However, Waltz tries to treat the term 'necessity' as though it designated a *spectrum*, with the 'absolute' correlations at the top and 'probabilistic' correlations lower down.

and “lesser” imputations of necessity to probabilistic correlations, Waltz is either making self-contradictory statements to the effect that non-necessary correlations are still somehow necessary, or he is applying the term ‘necessity’ to such cases in a *new* sense, to mean something other than that ‘if *a* occurs, *b* must also occur’. Let us therefore take a moment to consider in which novel sense Waltz could be using the term ‘necessity’ with regard to highly constant probabilistic correlations, which departs from the sense in which this term is applied to invariant correlations by philosophers of science, as well as the everyday uses of ‘necessary’ to mean ‘must’.

As we saw above, Waltz suggests that we can call statements of probabilistic correlations in the ‘social sciences’ “law-like statements”, whereby “the word *like* implies a lesser sense of necessity” (Waltz, 1979: p.2). Immediately afterwards, Waltz qualifies that such a statement “would not be at all like a law unless it had so often and so reliably been found in the past that the expectation of its holding in the future with comparable probability is high” (Waltz, 1979: p.2-3). According to this qualification, in order for a statement of a probabilistic correlation to be legitimately termed ‘law-like’ – and thereby be said to hold with a ‘lesser sense of necessity’ in Waltz’s sense – the correlation has to be found to obtain reliably with a high level of probability. From this we can infer that in Waltz’s terminology, to say that a probabilistic correlation has a certain strength of ‘necessity’ is equivalent to saying that it obtains with a certain frequency and reliability – i.e. a probability – that falls within an upper range. Presumably, the correlations with the ‘strongest’ imputations of necessity would be those that obtained with the highest probability; while the ‘less’ necessary correlations would be those that obtain with lower probabilities that are nevertheless above a threshold of what counts as highly probable according to Waltz. In this light, we can make the following observations:

- (a) To say – in Waltz’s new terminology – that highly constant probabilistic correlations obtain ‘with a lesser sense of necessity’ than invariant correlations, is just a roundabout way of saying that these correlations obtain with a probability of less than 100% that falls within an upper range, and does not add any extra information about

the nature of probabilistic correlations or the confidence with which they can be stated.

- (b) Given the established use of the term 'necessary relation' in the philosophy of science to characterise relationships between variables whereby if  $a$  occurs then  $b$  must occur, Waltz's novel use of the word 'necessity' as a relative term to compare invariant and probabilistic correlations in terms of their respective probabilities, is liable to give the misleading impression that probabilistic correlations are more similar in to invariant correlations than they are – perhaps to the tune of making probabilistic correlations appear more certain and reliable.

At this point, one might ask: if the expression 'a lesser sense of necessity' when applied to probabilistic correlations is just a way of saying that these correlations obtain with a probability that falls within an upper range, and does not add any new information about them, then why does Waltz use this expression in the first place, given that it is an awkward turn of phrase that is liable to mislead? In the absence of a legitimate reason for Waltz's employment of this expression, I think we have grounds to suggest that there is a bias in Waltz's description towards the sorts of invariant correlations that he calls 'absolute laws'. This bias is manifest in Waltz's use of the word 'necessity' as a relative term to characterise the probability values with which non-universal correlations obtain, which serves no practical explanatory purpose and furthermore misleadingly implies that probabilistic correlations are just weaker versions of correlations that are 'necessary' in the conventional sense of being absolutely invariant.

Having identified this bias in Waltz's description, there are various ways in which we could proceed using the modified 'Wittgenstein-inspired' method of criticism I outlined in the last chapter. It should be noted that the passage from Waltz is not an ideal example to practise on, since Waltz is no longer alive, meaning that we cannot offer representations of his work for his consideration and acknowledgement. Nevertheless, we can still imagine how we would offer such representations to Waltz

if he were still with us; and we can also address ourselves to contemporary IR scholars who would endorse Waltz's description of laws in *A Theory of International Politics*.

One way in which could proceed is by saying – analogously with Wittgenstein's approach in *PI* §1 – that we seem to find in Waltz's description a 'particular picture' of a scientific law, according to which scientific laws are essentially statements of necessary relations between variables. To this we could add the suggestion that it is possibly because Waltz is under the influence of such a 'picture' that he is led to characterise the probability of highly constant (but not invariant) correlations using the expressions 'strong imputation of necessity' and 'lesser sense of necessity'; because although these expressions mean nothing more in this context than that the relevant correlations obtain with relatively higher or lower probabilities that fall within a certain range, using the word 'necessity' to describe these probabilities allows Waltz to appear to attribute a characteristic property of absolute laws to probabilistic correlations, and to thereby present probabilistic correlations as though they were just versions of invariant correlations.

Now, this is a characterisation of Waltz's account that we would not be able to assert definitively as being an accurate historical representation of what Waltz's was thinking, or how he came to describe probabilistic correlations in terms of 'necessity'. Nevertheless, it is a characterisation that allows us to neatly sum up the apparent bias in Waltz's description, as well as the false impressions that readers might get from Waltz's misleading use of the term 'necessity', which we could invite Waltz and other like-minded IR scholars to consider with a view to acknowledgement. If these scholars could be brought to acknowledge the relevant 'picture' of a law (i.e. the picture of a law as an absolute correlation) as being at the root of their temptation to characterise probabilistic correlations in terms of 'necessity', then they may subsequently be persuaded to relinquish this picture, which would manifest itself in a modification in these scholars' phraseology, so that instead of using obfuscating expressions such as 'strong imputation of necessity' and 'lesser sense of necessity' to

characterise probabilistic correlations, they are able to describe these correlations more straightforwardly on their own terms (i.e. in terms of relative probabilities).

A related set of problems concerning Waltz's use of terminology can be identified in the following passage – cited critically by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke – where Waltz gives his account of what a theory is:

“If a theory is not an edifice of truth and not a reproduction of reality, then what is it? A theory is a picture, mentally formed, of a bounded realm or domain of activity. A theory is a depiction of the organization of a domain and of the connections among its parts (cf. Boltzmann 1905). The infinite materials of any realm can be organized in endlessly different ways. A theory indicates that some factors are more important than others and specifies relations among them. In reality, everything is related to everything else, and one domain cannot be separated from others. Theory isolates one realm from all others in order to deal with it intellectually.” (Waltz, 1979: p.9)

Recall that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke criticised this passage for its representational account of theory, and its supposed tacit commitment to the RVL. As we saw in previous chapters, this anti-representationalist line of criticism did not hold water. However, we might say that Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke were on the right track insofar as this passage is indeed problematic; only not for the reasons that these scholars gave. I will now attempt to explain some of the problems that arise due to Waltz's use of terminology in this passage, from the perspective of the interpretation of Wittgenstein's later philosophy developed in the previous chapter.

The first line, “a theory is not an edifice of truth”, is apparently a restatement of Waltz's previous contention that a theory is not simply a set of laws or established hypotheses; for example, when Waltz writes that “rather than being mere collections of laws, theories are statements that explain them” (Waltz, 1979: p.5), and that “hypotheses about the association of this with that, no matter how well confirmed, do not give birth to theories. Associations never contain or conclusively suggest their own explanation” (See Waltz, 1979: p.8). As such, this is a reasonable assertion that could be argued for with reference to various examples of what are regarded as ‘theories’ in the so-called natural sciences.

However, Waltz's next assertion that a theory is "not a reproduction of reality" is not so straightforward – especially given that Waltz immediately afterwards states that a theory is a "picture" of a domain. Since in many cases what we call a 'picture' can also be regarded as a 'reproduction' of something, it is not clear what Waltz's basis is for distinguishing between 'pictures' and 'reproductions', and rejecting the claim that a theory is a 'reproduction' of reality while allowing his own claim that a theory is a 'picture' of some domain. Waltz does not say much more about what it means for a theory to be a 'picture' according to him, except that it is "mentally-formed" and that it is a "depiction of the organisation of a domain and of the connections among its parts" (Waltz, 1979: p.9). What the difficulty here boils down to is that Waltz does not specify what regarding theory as a 'reproduction' of reality, and regarding a theory as a 'picture' of reality, would amount to, such that one can see how the latter conception is relevantly different from the former so as to be superior to it. This means that, as the passage stands, we cannot properly evaluate these claims of Waltz's without speculating further about what Waltz means by his application of the terms 'reproduction' and 'picture' in this context.

The situation here could be aptly summed up with reference to Wittgenstein's remark in *PI* §13:

"If we say, 'Every word in the language signifies something', we have so far said nothing *whatever*; unless we explain exactly *what* distinction we wish to make. (It might be, of course, that we wanted to distinguish words of [the primitive language imagined in §8] from words 'without meaning' such as occur in Lewis Carroll's poems, or words like 'Tra-la-la' in a song.)"

The crux of Wittgenstein's point in this remark is that terms like 'signify', 'meaning', 'nonsense' and so on do not just have one meaning, but can be used in multiple different senses, some of which may diverge from or even contradict each other. As a result, words that can be said *not* to 'signify' in one sense, e.g. by virtue of being made up, could at the same time justifiably be said to 'signify' in another sense, e.g. by virtue of performing an entertaining or aesthetic role. The upshot of this is that if



one is going to make a claim to the effect that ‘all words signify something’, or to attempt to establish a distinction between words that ‘signify’ and words that do not, it is first necessary to specify in which sense one is using the word ‘signify’; because otherwise not only is it unclear what is being asserted, but also one’s claim or distinction will be constantly open to contradiction from people employing the term ‘signify’ in an alternative but equally valid sense. A similar issue arises with Waltz’s vague use of the terms ‘reproduction’ and ‘picture’.

Reading the passage from Waltz through the lens of her interpretation of the *Tractatus* and the RVL, Fierke interprets Waltz’s contrast between ‘reproduction’ and ‘picture’ in terms of a distinction between “isomorphic correspondence” (which Waltz allegedly rejects), versus the idea that theories correspond to an essential underlying order or ‘logic’ of reality (Fierke, 2002: p.336). ‘Reproduction’ and ‘depiction’ under Fierke’s interpretation thus refer to distinct forms of correspondence – ‘reproduction’ being one-to-one correspondence, and ‘picturing’ being ‘essential’ correspondence – as rival ways in which theories can be thought to relate to reality. However, there is nothing in Waltz’s own writing to confirm this interpretation of his distinction between ‘reproduction’ and ‘picturing’, and even some passages to contradict it, for example when Waltz writes that “we can never say with assurance that a state of affairs inductively arrived at corresponds to something objectively real” (Waltz, 1979: p.5). What Waltz *does* mean more specifically by calling a theory a ‘picture’ thus necessitates further investigation if we are to critically evaluate his claims in a more in-depth way than simply declaring them vague.

When Waltz writes that a theory is a mentally-formed ‘picture’ of the organisation of a domain, he cites a collection of essays by Ludwig Boltzmann, thereby indicating that he takes himself to be at least in partial agreement with Boltzmann on this point.<sup>127</sup> If we look at the essays of Boltzmann’s that Waltz cites, we find a number of relevant passages that with caution can be taken as indicative of the kind of thing that Waltz

---

<sup>127</sup> We should note that this is a conjecture that it is left to the reader to make, and that Waltz himself does not spell out the relevant aspects of Boltzmann’s work and how they relate to his own account.

means when he says that a theory is a ‘picture’ in contrast to a ‘reproduction’. One such quote is found in Boltzmann’s 1901 essay ‘On the Development of the Methods of Theoretical Physics in Recent Times’:

“Hertz makes physicists properly aware of something philosophers had no doubt long since stated, namely that no theory can be objective, actually coinciding with nature, but rather that each theory is only a mental picture [*Bild*] of phenomena, related to them as sign is to designatum. ... From this it follows that it cannot be our task to find an absolutely correct theory but rather a picture that is as simple as possible and that represents phenomena as accurately as possible.” (Boltzmann, 1974 [1901]: p.90-91)

Here Boltzmann makes a contrast between thinking of theories as objective in the sense of ‘coinciding’ with nature – which he rejects – and thinking of them as simplified ‘mental pictures’ which represent the phenomena to which they relate as best they can. This could be the distinction that Waltz is trying to make when he writes that a theory is not a ‘reproduction’ of reality but rather a “picture, mentally formed” (Waltz, 1979: p.9).<sup>128</sup> Elsewhere in the same essay, Boltzmann provides a specific example of a scientific theory that is intended as, and functions as, a kind of ‘picture’ in the sense in which he is using this word:

“Whereas it was perhaps less the creators of the old classical physics than its later representatives that pretended by means of it to have recognised the true nature of things, Maxwell wished his theory [of electromagnetism] to be regarded as a mere picture of nature, a mechanical analogy as he puts it, which at the present moment allows one to give the most uniform and comprehensive account of the totality of phenomena.” (Boltzmann, 1905: p.83)

---

<sup>128</sup> To be fair to Waltz, it is worth noting that even in Boltzmann one finds some of the same kind of vagueness and conflation of meanings that obstructs understanding and evaluation of Waltz’s claims concerning the manner in which theory does and does not represent reality. For example, in the passage quoted above it is not fully clarified what ‘coinciding with nature’ would mean, and there is also an obscure shift from talking about theories as *depicting* or *modelling* nature (as suggested by the German *Bild*), to characterising the relationship between theories and nature as akin to that between a “sign” and “designatum”, which implies representation of a different kind, such as naming, substitution, or symbolism. While these different forms of representation can of course have various manifestations, some of which – depending on the particular case in question – can occur alongside depiction, they are not *necessarily* equivalent to, or accompaniments of, depiction in the various senses of this word.

Here we have another clue as to what Boltzmann means, more specifically, when he refers to theories as ‘pictures’ of nature, provided by Boltzmann’s reference to Maxwell’s use of the term “mechanical analogy” to characterise his theory of electromagnetism. In two important papers, ‘On Faraday’s Lines of Force’ and ‘On Physical Lines of Force’, Maxwell explains this characterisation in detail:

“By a physical analogy I mean that partial similarity between the laws of one science and those of another which makes each of them illustrate the other. ... The changes of direction which light undergoes in passing from one medium to another, are identical with the deviations of the path of a particle moving through a narrow space in which intense forces act. This analogy, which extends only to the direction, and not to the velocity of motion, was long believed to be the true explanation of the refraction of light; and we still find it useful in the solution of certain problems, in which we employ it without danger, as an artificial method. The other analogy, between light and the vibrations of an elastic medium, extends much farther, but, though its importance and fruitfulness cannot be over-estimated, we must recollect that it is founded only on a resemblance *in form* between the laws of light and those of vibrations.” (Maxwell, 2013 [1855]: p.157)

“In the *Cambridge and Dublin Mathematical Journal* for January 1847, Professor William Thomson has given a ‘Mechanical Representation of Electric, Magnetic, and Galvanic Forces,’ by means of the displacements of the particles of an elastic solid in a state of strain. In this representation ... the absolute displacement of any particle, considered with reference to the particle in its immediate neighbourhood, will correspond in magnitude and direction to the quantity of electric current passing through the corresponding point of the magneto-electric field. The author of this method of representation does not attempt to explain the origin of the observed forces by the effects due to these strains in the elastic solid, but makes use of the mathematical analogies of the two problems to assist the imagination in the study of both.” (Maxwell, 2013 [1862] p.453)

Here at last we have a detailed explanation of what it might mean, in a particular case, for a theory to be said to be a ‘picture’ of reality in the sense in which Boltzmann suggests, and which Waltz cites when making his own claim to this effect in his *Theory of International Politics*. In the above passages, Maxwell refers to his theory of electromagnetism and the theory of light that preceded it as being based

on two different 'analogies': the first being an analogy between the refraction of light and the directional movement of particles under certain conditions, and the second being an analogy between light and the vibrations of an elastic medium (Maxwell himself experimented on blocks of fish gelatine and films of gutta percha (see Maxwell, 2013 [1850]: p.55)). According to Maxwell neither of these 'analogies' is strictly true, in that light is not a particle in the traditional sense, and neither is it a vibration in an elastic solid. Nevertheless, representing light *as though* it were a particle enables predictions to be made concerning the direction and angle of its refraction; while representing light as a vibration in an elastic medium enables many problems to be solved and predictions to be made concerning not only the behaviour of light, but also other phenomena concerning magnetism and electricity. Maxwell suggests that the success of these analogies depends on certain formal similarities that happen to obtain between the typical behaviour of light, particles, and vibrations under certain conditions; however he is careful to note that the similarity is partial and may only apply to certain aspects of the phenomena in question (for example, to direction and not to speed). It is worth pointing out that Maxwell conceives of this formal similarity as a *mathematical* one, which is accordingly to be expressed in mathematical terms (such as Maxwell's own famous 'field equations').

Now that we have more of a handle on what it means to claim in Boltzmann's sense that theories 'depict' a domain, we can consider the rest of the passage on p.9 of Waltz's *Theory of International Politics*, and its proposed relevance for IR, in this light. In the passage in question, as well as stating that a theory is a 'picture' of reality, Waltz claims more specifically that a theory is "a depiction of the organisation of a domain and of the connections among its parts," and that "a theory indicates that some factors are more important than others and specifies the relations among them" (Waltz, 1979: p.9). Using the example of Maxwell's theory of electromagnetism discussed above, we can ask: what, in this specific case, would count as the 'parts', 'connections' and 'organisation' of the domain? If we take the 'domain' in this case to be the particular collection of phenomena to do with light, magnetism, and electricity with which Maxwell's theory deals, then perhaps the 'parts' might be considered to be the particles of the imaginary elastic medium by

analogy with whose vibrations the relevant phenomena are mathematically modelled. However, then again, one might equally say that the 'parts' in this case are the individual instances of the photic, electrical or magnetic phenomena that the theory purports to explain via analogy. Here we encounter a troublesome issue in seeking to understand how Waltz's account of 'theoretical depiction' might apply to Maxwell's theory of electromagnetism; in that although it might be possible – using Waltz's terminology – to characterise the relationship between Maxwell's theory and the theorised phenomena in terms of the 'depiction of the organisation among parts of a domain', there is not an unambiguous candidate for what would count as the 'parts' of the domain in this case.

Likewise, there are various possibilities for what one might term the 'connections' in this scenario. For example, if one were to identify the 'parts' of the domain as the individual photic, electrical, or magnetic phenomena that the theory purports to explain, then one might identify the 'connections' as the hypothesised regular ways in which changes in the behaviour of one of these phenomena, such as the direction of the light, affects changes in the behaviour of other phenomena, such as electrical charge. However, one might just as well identify as 'connections' the formal similarities that can be drawn mathematically between the electromagnetic/ photic phenomena that the theory purports to explain, and the individual phenomena with which these are analogised (i.e. various phenomena relating to vibrations in an elastic medium). Finally, the term 'organisation' might be an impressionistic way of summing up the 'connections' between the 'parts' of the domain (whatever these are considered to be); or it could be a reference to the overall formal similarity between the phenomena under explanation and the phenomena with which they are analogised, which is expressed abstractly in mathematical terms such as in Maxwell's field equations.

That there are such various possibilities left open for what Waltz's terms 'parts', 'connections' and 'organisation' might mean when applied to a particular theory, such as Maxwell's theory of electromagnetism, illustrates how – despite significant efforts to unpack Waltz's account of theoretical 'depiction' – the details of this

account remain elusive and therefore not amenable to assessment. As with the initial difficulties encountered with Waltz's use of the terms 'reproduction' and 'depiction', this elusiveness can be traced to Waltz's failure to specify a particular sense in which he is using terms such as 'part', 'connection', and 'organisation' in relation to theories and their domains. Again, this difficulty can be aptly characterised using one of Wittgenstein's remarks in the *PI*:

"But what are the simple constituent parts of which reality is composed? – What are the simple constituent parts of a chair? – The pieces of wood from which it is assembled? Or the molecules, or the atoms? – 'Simple' means: not composite. And here the point is: in what sense 'composite'? It makes no sense at all to speak absolutely of the 'simple parts of a chair'.

Again: Does my visual image of this tree, of this chair, consist of parts? And what are its simple constituent parts? Multi-colouredness is *one* kind of compositeness; another is, for example, that of an open curve composed of straight bits. And a continuous curve may be said to be composed of an ascending and a descending segment.

If I tell someone without any further explanation, 'What I see before me is not composite', he will legitimately ask, 'What do you mean by 'composite'? For there are all sorts of things it may mean!' – The question 'Is what you see composite?' makes good sense if it is already established what kind of compositeness – that is, which particular use of the word – is in question. If it had been laid down that the visual image of a tree was to be called 'composite' if one saw not just a trunk, but also branches, then the question 'Is the visual image of this tree simple or composite?' and the question 'What are its simple constituent parts?' would have a clear sense – a clear use. ...

To the *philosophical* question 'Is the visual image of this tree composite, and what are its constituent parts?' The correct answer is: 'That depends on what you understand by 'composite'.' (And that, of course, is not an answer to, but a rejection of, the question.)" (*PI* §47)

In this remark Wittgenstein suggests that claims to the effect that 'X is composed of constituent parts' or 'X is not composite' do not have a clear and unambiguous meaning until it has been established in which particular sense the terms 'composite' and 'simple' are being used; since there are various things that these terms *could* mean in a given case, and without further guidance we would not know which, if any, of the options that occur to us are intended. In contexts where such terms are not

ordinarily used, or are being used in an unusual way, this would mean establishing ('laying down') and clearly explaining the new usage. The same can be said of Waltz's references to the 'organisation', 'connections' and 'parts' of a theorised domain, and also of his use of other similar terms such as 'factors' and 'relations' when making general claims about theories and how they work (Waltz, 1979: p.9). The problem here is not – as Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke suggested – that Waltz has mistakenly characterised the nature of theories and how they relate to their subject matter, but rather that Waltz has provided a characterisation using novel terminology whose use he has not adequately clarified. The appropriate response to Waltz's account is thus not to contradict it, but rather to demonstrate that it cannot be either agreed or contradicted with in the absence of such clarification.

The kind of terminological ambiguities identified so far in Waltz's initial account of how theories function persist into his subsequent discussion of which types of theories and methods are appropriate for studying IR. In Chapter 4 of *Theory of International Politics*, he writes:

“From Chapter 1 we know how theories are constructed. To construct a theory we have to abstract from reality, that is, to leave aside most of what we see and experience. Students of international politics have tried to get closer to the reality of international practice and to increase the empirical content of their studies. Natural science, in contrast, has advanced over the millennia by moving away from everyday reality and by fulfilling Conant's previously mentioned aspiration to lower 'the degree of the empiricism involved in solving problems.' Natural scientists look for simplicities: elemental units and elegant theories about them. Students of international politics complicate their studies and claim to locate more and more variables. The subject matters of the social and natural sciences are profoundly different. The difference does not obliterate certain possibilities and necessities. No matter what the subject, we have to bound the domain of our concern, to organise it, to simplify the materials we deal with, to concentrate on central tendencies, and to single out the strongest propelling forces.” (Waltz, 1979: p.69)

In this paragraph, despite acknowledging “profound differences” between the subject matter of the so-called 'natural' and 'social' sciences, Waltz insists on

providing a uniform characterisation of how theories are created using the concepts of ‘bounding’, ‘organising’, ‘simplifying’, ‘materials’, ‘tendencies’ and ‘forces’. In addition to the problem of insufficient terminological clarification discussed above, this account falls foul of the consideration that even if Waltz were to clarify specific senses in which he is using these terms, it would be unlikely for the same specific sense to be applicable to all of the various subject matters and theories that his account purports to summarise. For example, the term ‘force’ as it is used in physics – to mean something that changes the motion of an object with mass – will not be directly applicable to the subject matter of international politics, though it may be used in a metaphorical or partially analogical sense (and, even then, such analogies should be treated with extreme caution). Similarly, what ‘simplification’ amounts to in the case of different theories and subject matters, even within the ‘natural sciences’, is likely to vary. What ‘simplification’ involves in the case of evolutionary theory, may be quite different from what it involves in the case of astrophysics, for example. Waltz’s account could thus be said to trade on an illusion that something general or common is being stated about theory-creation – we might call this illusion a ‘picture’ of theorising – which is generated by the use of multifunctional terminology without committing to a particular one of the different senses in which these terms would apply to an actual case. In this respect, Waltz follows the earlier musings of James B. Conant, whose book *Modern Science and Modern Man* (1952) he quotes in the above passage. The relevant paragraph from which the quote is taken reads as follows:

“The parallel [between the biological sciences and] the social sciences, I suggest, is worth considering. All the sciences concerned with human beings that range from the abstractions of economics through sociology to anthropology and psychology are, in part, efforts to lower the degree of empiricism in certain areas; in part they are efforts to organize and systematize empirical procedures. Whether or not in each of the divisions or subdivisions a Pasteur has yet arisen is not for me to say. But if he has, his contribution has been the introduction of some new broad concepts, some working hypotheses on a grand scale that have been fruitful of further investigations. It would seem important to distinguish, if possible, the advances connected with such broad working hypotheses, which are the



essence of a science, and the continued efforts to improve human society by empirical procedures.” (Conant, James B., 1952: p.76)

In all probability we have here one of the primary textual sources from which Waltz adopts the vague use of terms such as ‘organisation’, ‘abstraction’, and so on, as concepts that can provide an apparently uniform account of science and scientific progress which appears capable of encompassing disciplines such as economics and IR alongside ‘natural’ sciences such as biology and physics. It is understandable how the above account – coming as it does from an eminent chemist – might easily be taken up by a scholar such as Waltz on the strength of James B. Conant’s scientific credentials and authority. One might be inclined to think: if we are to trust anyone’s judgement about what science is and how it progresses, then certainly we should trust the word of a practising chemist who uses scientific theories and methods on a daily basis. However, when reading such ‘philosophical’ accounts it is important to be cautious not to place too much store in the author’s authority as a scientist, especially when the generality of the statements involved reaches far beyond the author’s area of specialism.

Wittgenstein writes in one of his notebooks that “the popular scientific writings of our scientists are not the expression of hard work but of resting on laurels” (Wittgenstein, 1998: p.48e, MS 125 21r: 1942). What Wittgenstein seems to be suggesting here is that we should recognise a distinction between the ‘scientific’ writings of scientists, as expressions of detailed scientific work undertaken by the author,<sup>129</sup> and scientists’ more ‘popular’ musings about what they do, which borrow glory from – or ‘rest on the laurels’ of – the hard work that underwrites their scientific credentials. While this does not necessarily mean that the popular writings of scientists should be rejected as illegitimate, it does caution against accepting such writings at face value purely on the strength of the author’s reputation as a scientist. In support of this caution we should consider that even when a scientist is intimately acquainted with the specific procedures and so on employed in their area of

---

<sup>129</sup> This work could, for example, take the form of systematic experiments and analysis of the results, as published in scientific journals, though there are of course other forms of scientific ‘work’ that could count as well.

research, this does not necessarily mean that they will be proficient at providing a general description of these procedures *en masse* – let alone a description of these procedures that also applies to the particularities of other subjects such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics and so on.

Furthermore, with regard to the philosophy of mathematics, Wittgenstein warns that mathematicians are wont to “go astray” when they try to “talk about calculi in general” because “they forget the particular stipulations that are the foundations of each particular calculus”, and that “the philosopher only marks what the mathematician casually throws off about his activities” (Wittgenstein, 1974 [1933]: p.369). Similarly, it is quite conceivable that scientists’ more general reflections about science may be ‘casually thrown off’ with insufficient efforts made to preserve the specific details – especially divergences – of the individual methods, theories and so on with which the scientist operates expertly on a day-to-day basis. Again, this is not to say that the reflections of scientists cannot be used to justify or contest observations concerning scientific practice and language-use; rather that when appealing to scientists in this way, we should focus on those reflections that are grounded in specific examples related to the author’s area of expertise (such as Maxwell’s observations concerning the theories of light and electromagnetism, discussed previously), and not accord undue authority to scientists’ vaguer statements about science especially where these appear to erase important details and distinctions.

Returning now to Waltz: despite providing a uniform account of how theories in the so-called natural and social sciences function, Waltz recommends that the domain of international politics is more suited to “a systemic” approach than “the analytic method of classical physics” (Waltz, 1979: p.12). The ‘systemic’ theory of international politics that Waltz goes on to develop is heavily reliant on the concept of ‘structure’, which he develops from the work of Kaplan and other past political ‘scientists’. Waltz explains Kaplan’s account of systems and systemic structures as follows:

“Within a given system, different ‘causes’ may produce the same effect; in different systems, the same ‘causes’ may have different consequences. The effect of an organisation, in short, may predominate over the attributes and interactions of the elements within it. Short of predominating, a system’s structure acts as a constraint on the system’s units. It disposes them to behave in certain ways and not in others, and because it does so the system is maintained.” (Waltz, 1979: p.58)

Waltz argues that “the repeated failure of attempts to explain international outcomes analytically—that is, through examination of interacting units—strongly signals the need for a systems approach. If the same effects follow from different causes, then constraints must be operating on the independent variables in ways that affect outcomes” (Waltz, 1979: p.68-9). To construct a ‘systems theory’ of international politics, according to Waltz, thus “requires conceiving of an international system’s structure and showing how it works its effects” (Waltz, 1979: p.69).

Unlike some of the other concepts examined so far, Waltz provides a fairly comprehensive explanation of the sense in which he is using the term ‘structure’ in relation to theories of international politics:

“I use the word ‘structure’ only in its second sense. ... In the second sense structure designates a set of constraining conditions. Such a structure acts as a selector, but it cannot be seen, examined, and observed at work. ... Freely formed economic markets and international-political structures are selectors, but they are not agents. Because structures select by rewarding some behaviours and punishing others, outcomes cannot be inferred from intentions and behaviours. ... Structures are causes, but they are not causes in the sense meant by saying that *A* causes *X* and *B* causes *Y*. ... Because *A* and *B* are different, they produce different effects. In contrast, structures limit and mould agents and agencies and point them in ways that tend toward a common quality of outcomes even though the efforts and aims of agents and agencies vary. ... In itself a structure does not directly lead to one outcome rather than another. Structure affects behaviour within the system, but does so indirectly. The effects are produced in two ways: through socialisation of the actors and through competition among them.” (Waltz, 1979: p.73-4)

Waltz proceeds in Chapter 5 to explain further what he understands by the 'structure' of the international political system, by way of contrast with the 'structure' of domestic politics. He writes:

“The parts of domestic political systems stand in relations of super- and subordination. Some are entitled to command; others are required to obey. Domestic systems are centralised and hierarchic. The parts of international-political systems stand in relations of coordination. Formally, each is the equal of all the others. None is entitled to command; none is required to obey. International systems are decentralised and anarchic. The ordering principles of the two structures are distinctly different, indeed, contrary to each other.”  
(Waltz, 1979: p.88)

Effectively, then, what Waltz calls the anarchic 'structure' of international politics is the alleged fact that there is no institutionally established hierarchy among individual nation states, so that in principle all states are on an equal footing with regard to how they are authorised to act. According to Waltz this 'structure' serves as a constraining condition on the interactions of states by favourably affecting the outcome of certain actions and negatively affecting others, and in this sense is similar to the sorts of things that are called 'structures' in other related disciplines such as economics, political theory and anthropology. Bracketing for now the question of whether Waltz is right that states are on a 'formally equal footing' and that this constrains their interactions in significant ways, we might ask what the academic advantage is of using the term 'structure' to refer to this alleged in-principle equality, as opposed to simply calling it a 'constraining condition' and leaving it at that. After all, as Waltz acknowledges, the formal equality of nation states is not a 'structure' in the same sense as a domestic political 'structure', which according to him is largely constituted by the established organisational hierarchy of official governmental roles with specific authorised powers and responsibilities (Waltz, 1979: p.81).

It is hard to escape the conclusion that, against Waltz's intentions, the main function of his novel use of the term 'structure' in the context of international politics is a rhetorical rather than a theoretical one, and that it is the rhetorical function of such terms that enables Waltz to characterise the operation of his theory in terms that

make it appear to fit an established template of enquiry that had already gained mainstream acceptance in other disciplines such as economics. Indeed, it is Waltz's application of the term 'structure' to international politics which crucially enables him to maintain that his theory falls under the uniform account of theory-creation he developed using Boltzmann's philosophy of physics, according to which all theories – regardless of their subject matter – depict the 'organisation' of a domain and the connections among its parts. If Waltz were to characterise the principle of international anarchy as a 'constraining condition' rather than as a 'structure', then it would become much harder for Waltz to make out that his theory of international politics is involved in the same kind of epistemic enterprise as theories in the so-called natural sciences. This observation supports the suggestion that Waltz's use of the term 'structure' in relation to international politics serves a primarily rhetorical purpose as opposed to a useful theoretical function, and thereby fuels a misleading 'picture' of how theories generally, and – more specifically – theories in IR, work.

At this point someone might raise the consideration that perhaps Waltz consciously intended his account of theory and use of terms such as 'structure', 'law' etc. to perform a rhetorical function, and as such, criticisms of the precision, appropriateness and/or academic usefulness of his terminology do not have much bite. There are two responses to this. Firstly, Waltz explicitly sets himself high standards of terminological clarity and criticises other academics for their unclear or misleading use of key terms. For example, on the first page of his *Theory of International Politics* Waltz laments the way in which "students of international politics use the term 'theory' freely, often to cover any work that departs from mere description", and asserts that "the aims I intend to pursue require that definitions of the key terms *theory* and *law* be carefully chosen" (Waltz, 1979: p.1). Later on Waltz identifies "the first big difficulty" as being to state "theories with enough precision and plausibility to make testing worthwhile" (Waltz, 1979: p.14), and criticises previous IR scholars for their unclear use of the term 'polarity':

“‘Polarity,’ moreover, is variously defined in terms of countries or of blocs. ‘Poles’ are counted sometimes according to the physical capabilities of

nations or of alliances, sometimes by looking at the pattern of national interrelations, and sometimes by awarding or denying top status to those who get or fail to get their ways. Unless the confused, vague, and fluctuating definitions of variables are remedied, no tests of anything can properly be conducted.” (Waltz, 1979: p.15)

Waltz’s point in this passage is that we cannot evaluate the plausibility of a theoretical claim that has not been expressed with enough clarity for us to understand what it is that is being claimed. Ironically, this is the very problem that readers of Waltz’s *Theory* come up against with regard to Waltz’s general claims regarding how theories work (as discussed earlier in this section). Concerning his definition of ‘structure’, Waltz writes that “the problem is to develop theoretically useful concepts to replace the vague and varying systemic notions that are customarily employed— notions such as environment, situation, context, and milieu. Structure is a useful concept if it gives clear and fixed meaning to such vague and varying terms” (Waltz, 1979: p.80).<sup>130</sup>

A specific IR theorist who Waltz strongly criticises on terminological grounds is Kaplan. Although Waltz is inspired by Kaplan’s systemic approach, he writes that “Kaplan has failed to develop the concepts that would permit him to bend the recalcitrant materials of international politics to fit the precise and demanding framework of a systems approach” (Waltz, 1979: p.53). An example of this, according to Waltz, is the way in which “Kaplan merges, or confuses, international systems with their environment”, with the result that “the reader has to puzzle through an answer for himself” as to where the international system ends and its environment begins (Waltz, 1979: p.53). Later, Waltz writes the following with regard to Kaplan’s account of the dynamic between subsystems within the international system:

---

<sup>130</sup> Another concept whose prior inadequate application Waltz highlights within the study of politics is that of ‘power’: “We are misled by the pragmatically formed and technologically influenced American definition of power – a definition that equates power with control. ... That definition may serve for some purposes, but it ill fits the requirements of politics. To define ‘power’ as ‘cause’ confuses process with outcome. To identify power with control is to assert that only power is needed to get one’s way.” (Waltz, 1979: p.191)

“Here, as so often, Kaplan’s language is loose and imprecise to the point of misleading the reader. On one and the same page, he writes of subsystems sharing dominance and of essential subsystems entering ‘into an equilibrium somewhat like that of the oligopolistic market’ (1964, p.17). The mind boggles at the thought of subsystems being dominant, let alone sharing dominance. What could subsystems’ dominance *be* other than the negation of a systems approach? An oligopolistic market, moreover, is not one in which firms dominate the market but rather one in which, contrary to the notion of dominance, the extent to which firms affect the market and are in turn affected by it is indeterminate.” (Waltz, 1979: p.54)

Finally, Waltz provides a damning criticism of Kaplan’s use of the term ‘feedback’:

“By [Wiener’s] definition, feedback operates only within an organisation; that is, the notion of feedback has no precise, distinct, technical meaning outside of a hierarchic order. ... Kaplan’s, and everybody’s, favourite example of a thermostat regulating a furnace so as to keep the temperature within a narrow range is consistent with Wiener’s definition and with what it entails – a controller and a controlled instrument producing a given result. But in international relations, what corresponds to such notions? Nothing! Kaplan simply uses the word without worrying about its formal appropriateness. ... His work is more an approach and a taxonomy than a theory. But the approach is full of puzzles that, because of contradictions and conceptual inadequacies, the reader cannot solve.” (Waltz, 1979: p.57)

Passages such as the above demonstrate that Waltz views the vague, empty, inconsistent or inappropriate application of concepts within IR as serious flaws, and consequently it would be the height of hypocrisy if Waltz were himself to be intentionally taking advantage of such features of language-use in order to accomplish a deliberate rhetorical aim, such as inflating the apparent significance and scientific credentials of his own theoretical account.

The second response that can be made to the suggestion that Waltz may be purposefully using certain terminology in a vague, non-committal manner to accomplish a rhetorical aim, is that even if this *were* the case, it would not make the features of Waltz’s language-use criticised so far in this chapter any less problematic in terms of the misleading impressions that they convey to the reader. It does not

follow that simply because an author's aim is to produce a misleading impression of their own work, that criticisms of the means by which they produce this impression have no bite. In any case, as we have already established, it does not appear that Waltz is deliberately misleading his reader, and so this is not the situation that we are faced with here.

In conclusion: Waltz's novel uses of terms such as 'law', 'picture', 'structure', 'organisation', 'parts', 'connections' and so on, do not succeed in performing the academic function that Waltz apparently intends them to fulfil; namely, to provide a general account of the relation of theories to their subject matter that can encompass IR alongside theories of the so-called 'natural sciences', which in turn can provide a basis for developing a more 'scientific' theory of IR. Instead, the role that these terms succeed in playing in Waltz's account can be seen as a rhetorical or aesthetic one, which gives the impression that various epistemic techniques and procedures employed in IR are more similar to the sorts of procedures employed by natural scientists than they are. In this light one could put it to Waltz that his extensions of the terms 'law', 'picture', 'structure' and so on are biased towards maintaining a certain impression of IR as a 'science'; that these biased tendencies of language-use are characteristic of a certain 'picture' of what science is and what IR should strive to become, and that Waltz's own commitment to such a 'picture' may be what has led him to develop and employ his terminology in this way. Of course, this latter characterisation is something that would have to be acknowledged by Waltz and cannot be assumed in the absence of such acknowledgement.

Nevertheless, what we *can* say is that regardless of Waltz's own motivations, his terminological extensions do not bear out the impression of science and IR that they appear to articulate.

Having demonstrated how the recommendations outlined in the last Chapter might be implemented with regard to particular biases that are present in Waltz's *Theory of International Politics*, I will move on to consider how they might also be applied to Wendt.



### ***Wendt on Unobservable Entities and 'Inner Structures'***

In his *Social Theory of International Politics*, Wendt seeks to articulate a version of 'scientific realism' that can be used as a framework for theorising about IR. A central topic that Wendt addresses in this context is the ontological status of relevant 'social' phenomena, such as 'states', in comparison with the sorts of phenomena studied by the natural sciences.<sup>131</sup> Wendt acknowledges some important differences between what he calls 'social kinds' and 'natural kinds', one of which is that unlike 'natural kinds', 'social kinds' are constituted to a significant degree by people's ideas and practices (Wendt, 1999: p.71). Nevertheless, Wendt argues that many 'social kinds' are still constituted *to some extent* by objective 'mind-independent' factors that are causally effective, and which 'resist' denials or misrepresentations of their existence. Therefore, Wendt claims that it is possible to develop theories of IR along the lines of the sorts of theories produced in the natural sciences.

Wendt's argument relies heavily upon certain alleged similarities between 'social' and 'natural' phenomena.<sup>132</sup> One such similarity alleged by Wendt, is that the

---

<sup>131</sup> Wendt has very recently published another book entitled *Quantum Mind and Social Science: Unifying Physical and Social Ontology* (2015), in which he argues that human beings and their actions can be understood as 'quantum phenomena'. The arguments that Wendt puts forward in support of this proposal are numerous and complex, and for this among other reasons I will not attempt to grapple with this latest contribution in detail here. Another reason is that, as Wendt himself observes, *Quantum Mind* is predominantly a work of philosophy, which does not directly address IR ("unlike my first book, which was half philosophy and half IR, this one is all philosophy" (Wendt, 2015: p.2)). Nevertheless, it should be noted that this book's main thesis that "human beings are walking wave functions" (Wendt, 2015: p.3 & p.37) is extremely dubious, as is Wendt's insistence that he intends this "not as an analogy or metaphor, but as a realist claim about what people really are" (Wendt, 2015: p.3). A good indication of the dubiousness of this central claim is found in the physicist Philip Moriarty's 2016 blog post on Wendt's book, where Moriarty observes that if human beings were literally 'wave functions' then "we would diffract when we walk through doorways" and "would be able to tunnel through walls without expending any energy" (Moriarty, 2016). Of course one could argue that the dubiousness of this one outlandish claim made in the introduction – although it is presented as the book's central thesis – does not automatically render the rest of Wendt's more complex arguments invalid; and that it is still necessary to carefully unpick and examine these arguments before a proper verdict on Wendt's contribution can be reached. While in my opinion Wendt's project is still misconceived, I agree that it requires a thorough and carefully reasoned explanation as to why it should be rejected which adequately takes into account all of the arguments made in the book. This constitutes the third main reason why I will not attempt a proper evaluation of Wendt's book here, since doing so would require a much longer discussion than can be accommodated in this thesis.

<sup>132</sup> An alternative Wittgenstein-inspired criticism of this aspect of Wendt's approach could be made using Peter Winch's *The Idea of a Social Science* (1958) and subsequent developments of Winch's arguments by philosophers and sociologists. However, to properly explicate and evaluate the

epistemic status of social/political entities such as ‘the state’ is equivalent to that of unobservable entities such as ‘electrons’ that are hypothesised in the natural sciences. He writes:

“Is it *reasonable* to infer the existence of electrons as the cause of certain observable effects, given that electron theory is our best satisfactory explanation for those effects yet might turn out later to be wrong? Is it *reasonable* to infer the existence of the state from the activities of people calling themselves customs officials, soldiers, and diplomats, given that state theory is our best satisfactory explanation of these activities yet might turn out to be wrong? Philosophers call such reasoning ‘inference to the best explanation,’ (IBE) and much of the debate about realism turns on attitudes toward it. Realists argue that IBE is warranted, pointing out that even though as a form of induction it lacks the certainty we gain through deduction, it is at the heart of scientific method and is used routinely in everyday life.” (Wendt, 1999: p. 62-3)

Another similarity alleged by Wendt is that both ‘social’ and ‘natural kinds’ are to some degree “self-organising”, in the sense that they possess an “internal structure” that to a certain extent makes them what they are. He writes:

“What scientific realists claim is that the behaviour of things is influenced by self-organizing, mind-independent structures that constitute those things with certain intrinsic powers and dispositions. Discovering those structures is what science is all about, which is itself essentialist in this weak sense. Implicit in this attitude is the belief that things *have* internal structures, which is debatable if they are unobservable, and perhaps doubly so in the case of social kinds. My point is that whether an object has an internal, self-organizing structure should be treated as an empirical question, not ruled out a priori by epistemological scepticism. ... Few today would doubt that dogs, water, and even atoms have essential properties. More would doubt that states and state systems do, but I want the reader to be open to the possibility.” (Wendt, 1999: p.64)

I will now examine these two alleged similarities more closely.

---

applicability of Winch’s arguments to Wendt and other IR scholars would require a whole PhD in itself, and would take the focus of the discussion in quite another direction away from the central aims of this thesis. Therefore, having indicated it as a potentially fruitful parallel avenue, I will not here address the relevance of Winch for criticising scholars such as Wendt.

In the context of experimental physics – which, according to remarks like *PI* §412 would count as an ‘everyday’ context – an electron is called ‘unobservable’ not simply because it is a hypothesised entity, but because if it does exist it is so small that we would be unable to perceive it by unaided human vision, touch, smell etc. In this way, the term ‘unobservable’ when applied to electrons means ‘too small to perceive using our bodily senses’. Now: could the same be said about ‘the state’? Would one want to say that the state is ‘unobservable’ in the sense that it cannot be perceived by our bodily senses because it is too small? I suspect – and hope – that Wendt would join me in replying to this question in the negative. This would amount to an acknowledgement that the term ‘unobservable’ does not have the same meaning when Wendt applies it to ‘the state’ as it has when it is applied to a concept like ‘electron’.

What else could the adjective ‘unobservable’ mean when applied to the concept of ‘the state’, if not that it is too small to be perceived? This is a question to which Wendt does not give an answer. The upshot of this is that Wendt is urging us in the name of ‘reasonableness’ to agree to the inference that ‘the state exists as an unobservable entity’ as a “best possible explanation” (Wendt 1999: p.52), without clarifying what it would mean for something to be ‘unobservable’ in the new sense. In the absence of such a clarification Wendt’s inference is empty, and therefore we cannot either endorse or reject it. If the term ‘unobservable’ does not mean the same when applied to ‘the state’ as it does when applied to electrons (i.e. that the relevant item is unobservable because it is too small to be perceived), then this also means that ‘unobservability’ cannot be cited as a shared feature of ‘electrons’ and ‘the state’ which would justify treating states as similar to electrons in the context of academic study. Hence Wendt’s use of the term ‘unobservable’ to characterise both ‘electrons’ and ‘the state’ is misleading in a similar way to Waltz’s application of the term ‘necessity’ to both invariant and probabilistic correlations, in that it gives the impression of a common attribute where there is not one.

Let us turn now to Wendt’s second alleged similarity, to the effect that both natural and social kinds have ‘internal structures’ that can be ‘discovered’ by science. Recall

that according to Wendt, an 'internal structure' is a "self-organising, mind-independent" structure that "constitutes [something] with certain intrinsic powers and dispositions" (Wendt, 1999: p.64). In the third chapter of his book, Wendt provides the following list of examples of how 'internal structures' constitute natural and social kinds:

"Water is constituted by the atomic structure H<sub>2</sub>O; human beings are constituted by their genetic structures; doctors are constituted (in part) by the self-understandings that define the social kind known as 'doctor'; states are constituted (in part) by organisational structures that give them a territorial monopoly on organised violence." (Wendt, 1999: p.83)

This is a somewhat variegated list, which deserves some unpicking. As a substance, water can be said to be 'constituted' by the atomic structure H<sub>2</sub>O in the sense that a sample of pure water consists entirely of hydrogen and oxygen atoms arranged in H<sub>2</sub>O molecular configurations. However, the human body does not consist entirely of 'genetic' structures in the sense in which water consists of H<sub>2</sub>O – e.g. a human body is not a body of DNA in the sense that a body of water is a body of H<sub>2</sub>O – and so even if we assume for the sake of argument that a human being is equivalent to a human body, the sense in which one says that the human body is constituted by 'genetic structures' will be different from the sense in which one says that water is constituted by H<sub>2</sub>O. Presumably what Wendt means when he says that the human body is constituted by 'genetic structures', is that the DNA within human cells plays a crucial role in various biochemical processes involved in the creation, development and maintenance of the human body, and that as a result certain characteristic features of bodily appearance and function can be accounted for with reference to the properties of the DNA. Thus, 'constitution' in this context means something much more complex than it does in the case of water being 'constituted' by H<sub>2</sub>O.

Now we come to the trickier case: "doctors are constituted (in part) by the self-understandings that define a social kind known as 'doctor'". Wendt's placement of this statement in a sequence where it comes straight after statements to the effect that 'water is constituted by H<sub>2</sub>O' and 'human beings are constituted by genetic

structures', implies that this is just another example of how things in general are constituted to a greater or lesser extent by 'mind-independent' structures that make them the sorts of things they are. However, let's stop at this point and consider: Are doctors constituted by self-understandings in the same sense that water is constituted by H<sub>2</sub>O? Well, put it this way: is 'self-understanding' a type of molecule of which a substance could be composed? The obvious answer to this seems to be no. Likewise we could ask: are doctors constituted by self-understandings in the same sense that human bodies are constituted by genetic structures? Again, given that a 'self-understanding' is not a bit of genetic material such as a nucleotide or strand of DNA that could be a part of a biochemical process, the answer to this would seem to be no. In what sense, then, does Wendt think that a doctor is 'constituted' by the self-understandings that define a social kind known as 'doctor'?

Elsewhere, Wendt argues that "the existence of social kinds depends on the interlocking beliefs, concepts, or theories held by actors"; that social kinds are "categories" invented by people which "create or 'make up' a certain kind of person and its associated social possibilities"; and that "before the emergence of the shared ideas that constitute them (if not the actual words themselves), these social kinds did not exist" (Wendt, 1999: p.70-71). Wendt states that this "is true of witches, doctors, and states" (Ibid.). In light of such passages, it seems that when Wendt says that doctors are partially constituted by self-understandings, he means that the ability of people to become 'doctors', and to perform the various actions associated with being a doctor, depends upon their community's collective acceptance and recognition of 'doctorhood' as a certain kind of social role – and that without the prior establishment of the idea and practices of 'doctorhood' within a community, individuals would be constrained in their ability to become doctors and to do the sorts of things that doctors do.

Now, the above is a situation that could be summed up – using a new extended use of the concept of 'constitution' – in terms of doctors being 'constituted' by shared ideas and understandings. However, the social situation which would be summed up by this expression in the case of 'doctorhood' is significantly different from the

situation concerning the molecular composition of water that is summed by the expression 'water is constituted by H<sub>2</sub>O'; which is – as I have explained – in its turn quite different from the situation that is summed by the expression 'human beings are constituted by genetic structures'. In addition, if 'doctorhood' is meant to be an example of a social kind that is constituted by an 'internal structure', then it is not clear in this case what the 'internal structure' would be. In the example of H<sub>2</sub>O constituting water, the 'internal structure' is the molecular structure of H<sub>2</sub>O; and in the example of genetic structures constituting human beings, the 'internal structure' is presumably the molecular structure of genetic material such as DNA, RNA and so on. So what on earth could the 'internal structure' of the social kind 'doctor' be?

In Chapter 1, Wendt mentions "patterns of friendship or enmity" and "institutions" as the "kinds of ideational attributes or relationships that might constitute a *social* structure" (Wendt, 1999: p.16); while elsewhere he picks out the "ideational aspect of social structure" and describes this as "a distribution of knowledge" shared among individuals, citing Hutchins' concept of "socially distributed cognition" (Wendt, 1999: p.140; Hutchins, 1991). However, again: patterns of friendship and enmity, institutional organisations, distributions of knowledge or ideas, and so on, are substantially different from molecular structures such as H<sub>2</sub>O and DNA. Indeed, one might say that a 'social structure' conceived in Wendt's sense is as different from a molecular structure as an emotional bond is from a covalent bond. Accordingly, whereas one can say that H<sub>2</sub>O and DNA are 'internal' structures in the sense that they are contained 'within' a substance or organic body (such as a cell), it is difficult to see how the sorts of things Wendt identifies as 'social structures' can count as being "internal" in a relevantly similar sense.

Finally we can consider the most significant example in Wendt's list, which is that "states are constituted (in part) by organisational structures that give them a territorial monopoly on organised violence" (Wendt, 1999: p.83). In Chapter 5, Wendt gives a detailed account of what he means by 'organisational structures' in relation to the state. There Wendt identifies five 'essential' features that "all states in all times and places have in common," which include having "an organisation

claiming a monopoly on the legitimate use of organised violence”, and having “an organisation with sovereignty” (Wendt, 1999: p.202). Wendt qualifies that by ‘organised violence’ in this context, he means “the coordinated use of deadly force”, and observes that modern states typically “divide up their coercive potential into two organisations, a police force for internal security and an army for external” (Wendt, 1999: p.204). At that point there may be various complex distinctions made, for example between “local, provincial, and national police; army, navy, air force” etc. However, Wendt proposes that what gives these organisations a “monopoly” on the legitimate use of organised violence is not that they have a single, centralised ‘leader’, but rather that they are (a) “*non-rivals* in the sense that they do not settle their disputes ... by force”, and (b) “*unified* in the sense that each perceives a threat to others as a threat to itself, so that all defend against it together” (Wendt, 1999: p.205). When it comes to the question of ‘sovereignty’, Wendt makes a distinction between “internal sovereignty” whereby “the state is the supreme locus of political authority in society” (Wendt, 1999: p.206), and “external sovereignty” which “denot[es] the absence of any external authority higher than the state” (Wendt, 1999: p.208).

From the above we can see that when Wendt refers to the ‘organisational structures’ of a state, he is talking about things like coordinated security forces – such as army and police agencies – and about the right and ability of the state to exercise political authority both over its population and in interactions with other states’ representatives. Again, Wendt is perfectly welcome to characterise these typical features of modern states in terms of the ‘constitution’ of states by their ‘organisational structures’. However, if what this means is that having a coordinated security force and exercising sovereignty are defining characteristics of ‘statehood’, then it is, again, significantly different from the sense in which water can be said to be constituted by H<sub>2</sub>O, the sense in which the human body can be said to be constituted by genetic ‘structures’, and even from the sense in which Wendt suggests that ‘doctorhood’ is constituted by a community’s shared ideas of what it is to be a ‘doctor’.

As with Waltz's application of the term 'structure' to characterise the constraining conditions under which nation states operate, Wendt's account of natural and social kinds as both being to some extent 'constituted by their internal structures' is not problematic in a straightforward sense. It is not that it is *incorrect* to use the expression 'constituted by an internal structure' to characterise the manner in which 'doctorhood' can be seen to be defined and made possible by the shared ideas and practices of a community, even though the sense in which these shared ideas and practices can be called an 'internal structure' may need further explanation. Likewise, it is not *incorrect* to refer to states' security forces and political sovereignty as an 'internal structure' by which states are 'constituted'. However, what *is* problematic is the way in which Wendt groups these examples together with the examples of H<sub>2</sub>O 'constituting' water and genetic molecules 'constituting' the human body, and presents these diverse cases as though they were instances of a general overarching sense in which things can be said to be 'constituted by their internal structures'. It is to just such a misconceived general sense of 'structure' that Wendt appeals when he attributes to scientific realism the idea that "science is successful because it gradually brings our theoretical understanding into conformity with the deep structure of the world out there" (Wendt, 1999: p.65), and argues that "in sum, the ontology of social life is consistent with scientific realism" because "social kinds are materially grounded, self-organising phenomena with intrinsic powers and dispositions that exist independently of the minds and/or discourse of those who would know them" (Wendt, 1999: p.75-6).

Although, as I have allowed, it is possible to apply the word 'structure' to the various examples that Wendt lists – i.e. to H<sub>2</sub>O, DNA, shared/distributed ideas, organised security forces and the capability or right to exercise political sovereignty – the word 'structure' has a more or less different sense when applied to each of these cases, as would the expression 'constituted by its internal structure'; and hence it would be misleading to subsequently refer to these cases as though they were instantiations of a common underlying 'structure of reality' to which scientific theories can and should conform. Here one can say that Wendt's summing up of these various cases in similar terms has the effect of minimising or papering over significant differences between



them, which Wendt himself would acknowledge if he were to methodically consider in each case what his use of the terms 'constitution' and 'internal structure' could mean.

Again, we can illuminate the situation further using the following remark from Wittgenstein's *PI*:

“Imagine someone's saying: 'All tools serve to modify something. Thus the hammer modifies the position of the nail, the saw the shape of the board, and so on.' —And what is modified by the rule, the glue-pot, the nails? —'Our knowledge of a thing's length, the temperature of the glue, and the solidity of the box.' —Would anything be gained by this assimilation of expressions?”  
(*PI* §14)

In this remark, Wittgenstein imagines someone who makes a general claim that “All tools serve to modify something”, and as justification for this claim cites two examples of tools whose operation can be described in terms of 'modification'. To describe these tools' functions in terms of 'modification' is not too much of a departure from the way in which the word 'modification' is ordinarily used, although what 'modification' amounts to in the case of the hammer is different from what it amounts to in the case of the saw. However, where the problem with this strategy becomes most apparent is with the introduction of the next three examples of the rule, the glue-pot and the nails. One *could* describe measuring the length of something as a 'modification of our knowledge of a thing's length', keeping glue in a pot as a 'modification of the temperature of the glue', and nailing a box together as a 'modification of the box's solidity'; however this would involve extending the employment of the word 'modification' beyond its usual application in order to re-describe the examples in such a way that they fit the general statement that 'all tools serve to modify something'. Such an extension of the application of the word 'modification' would not necessarily be wrong; however Wittgenstein questions what is gained by this “assimilation of expressions”, since hammering a nail into a board remains just as different from pouring glue into a pot even after we have characterised both in terms of 'modification'. If 'modification' is just a more vague way of describing what happens in each case than 'pouring', 'hammering',

‘measuring’, etc., which does not have any benefit over these forms of expression other than to enable the generalisation ‘All tools serve to modify something’, then there is no compelling reason why we should accept this new mode of describing the operation of tools.

In light of the above we could suggest that Wendt is a bit like the person imagined by Wittgenstein in *PI* §14, to the extent that is apparently under the impression that by describing various cases of what he calls ‘natural’ and ‘social kinds’ in terms of their ‘constitution by internal structures’, he is somehow articulating some common feature that all these cases share to some degree. However, in parallel with Wittgenstein’s example, we could say that what he has accomplished is simply an ‘assimilation of expressions’ for describing these cases, by way of a novel extension of the application of the words ‘constitution’ and ‘structure’ beyond their usual employment. In view of this we could question what this assimilation of expressions achieves, and propose to Wendt that he is perhaps caught up in a misunderstanding of the implications of his own use of language, which – if he were aware of it – would lead him to abandon this terminological extension.

As I have suggested, we could present to Wendt our observations concerning the diversity between the examples he describes as being ‘constituted by their internal structures’, together with the reminder that the ability to apply to describe various cases using a common expression does not necessarily imply that they have something in common, in order to allow Wendt the opportunity to consider whether he is labouring under a misapprehension to the effect that his ‘assimilation of expressions’ amounts to an identification of a general phenomenon of ‘structure’ or ‘structural constitution’. As we have seen, such a misapprehension certainly appears to be expressed by the general claims that Wendt makes about ‘social’ and ‘natural kinds’ and about their ability to be studied from a perspective of scientific realism.

Alternatively, we could also characterise this misapprehension in terms of being held captive by a ‘picture’ in one of the two senses I outlined in Chapter 3. For example, we could suggest that certain analogies between the different cases that Wendt

groups together can induce us to imagine something that is *like* a material structure only somehow immaterial that guides the actions and interactions of people involved in international politics; and put it to Wendt that he has perhaps visualised such an imaginary model, and that this is what leads him to continue to describe diverse social and political phenomena in terms of 'structure' and 'constitution by internal structures'. Or, we could characterise Wendt's mode of description in terms of captivity to a particular picture of 'structure' as the underlying essence of reality, where this is to be understood as a way of highlighting that there is no good reason why someone who is *not* committed to an explicit claim to this effect should go to such efforts to characterise hugely diverse cases in terms of their being 'constituted by internal structures'. Which of these is the better strategy would have to be decided based on which is most likely to have a transformative effect upon Wendt and his supporters, in terms of persuading them to relinquish the misleading forms of expression they are wont to adopt involving the concepts of 'structure' and 'constitution'.

### **4.3 An Alternative Wittgensteinian Approach to Criticising Wendt**

So far in this chapter, I have used the interpretation of selected remarks from later Wittgenstein's philosophy developed in the last chapter to conduct an in-depth critical analysis of Waltz's and Wendt's extended use of terminology, noting the role that the latter plays in generating and maintaining a misleading impression of the significance and general applicability of the accounts that Waltz and Wendt provide of theories and how they relate to their subject matter. This, however, is not the only way in which the remarks from Wittgenstein's later philosophy that inspired the ARO could potentially be used to criticise scholars such as Waltz and Wendt, and hence I will now take some time to explore one of these alternate possible applications with regard to Wendt's account of 'scientific realism', and to consider how it compares with the approach I have developed.

Wendt's version of 'scientific realism' in *Social Theory of International Politics* relies heavily on the work of Roy Bhaskar (see, e.g., p.50, fn. 9; p.69; p.143), and as a result,

it is potentially vulnerable to criticisms of Bhaskar's so-called 'critical social theory'. An influential criticism of Bhaskar which makes use of Wittgenstein's critical application of the term 'picture' in the *PI* (the starting point for both the ARO and my own strategy of critical analysis), is found in Nigel Pleasants' 1999 book *Wittgenstein and the Idea of a Critical Social Theory*. The criticisms that Pleasants makes in this book could therefore provide a basis for an alternative way in which the relevant passages of Wittgenstein's later philosophy could be brought to bear critically upon Wendt's approach to IR. In this sub-section I will briefly sketch out some of the possible criticisms that could be made of Wendt on this basis, and contrast and compare Pleasants' Wittgenstein-inspired approach with that I have demonstrated so far in this chapter.<sup>133</sup>

In *Wittgenstein and the Idea of a Critical Social Theory*, Pleasants aims to show how "Wittgenstein's critique of traditional theory can be extended *a fortiori* to critical social theory" (Pleasants, 1999: p.10). Pleasants focuses his criticisms on the work of Giddens, Bhaskar and Habermas, although he suggests that they may apply more widely. The main aspects of Bhaskar that Pleasants targets are the former's so-called 'transcendental realism' and 'transformational model of social activity', which are also key aspects on which Wendt draws in his *Social Theory of International Politics*. Pleasants explains that his principal strategy in criticising Bhaskar et al is "to tackle ... the theoretical 'pictures' which captivate critical social theorists", and that he aims to do this "in a manner similar to Wittgenstein's 'deconstructions' of the pictures which dominate traditional philosophical thought" (ibid.).

A principal line of criticism that Pleasants uses Wittgenstein's concept of a 'picture' to pursue is that Bhaskar's 'transformational model of social activity' is committed to a flawed 'picture' of individual agency as inherently (rather than electively) free. This is a commitment that Pleasants suggests Bhaskar shares with Giddens and Hayek, and he explains it as follows:

---

<sup>133</sup> The justification for concentrating on a possible extrapolation of Pleasants' Wittgenstein-inspired criticisms of Bhaskar, as opposed to Wittgenstein-inspired criticisms of Wendt that already exist (such as Smith, 1999), is that Pleasants draws specifically on the remarks in Wittgenstein's later philosophy concerning 'pictures' that the ARO was inspired by, and whose reinterpretation formed the basis for the replacement critical approach that I have developed in this thesis.

“For Giddens and Hayek ... individuals exercise their freedom ‘routinely’ without necessarily being consciously aware that they are doing so. This conception of freedom differs from more traditional, rationalist ‘subject-centred’ views, where freedom is identified with consciously reasoned choice and intentioned action. The crucial difference is that the theory of tacit knowledge grounds freedom and autonomy in individuals’ powers of *agency*, not their conscious choices. Agency is seen to be the ontologically basic condition of individual action: ‘agency refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place’ (Giddens 1984:9). A corollary of this conception of agency ... is that ‘at any point in time, “the agent could have acted otherwise”’ (Giddens 1979:56). ... This proposition expresses the (intuitively compelling) conviction that individuals possess ‘free will’, and do not live in a deterministic (social and natural) universe.” (Pleasants, 1999: p.99-100)

Pleasants asserts that this ‘picture’ of agency is fundamental to Bhaskar’s and Giddens’ ontologies of individual and social life, where it is presented by these theorists as “a necessary precondition for the very existence and continuance of ‘social structures’” (Pleasants, 1999: p.100).

One problem that Pleasants identifies with this “ontological picture” is that no attempt is made to justify the assumption – central to the idea of undetermined agency – that ‘an agent could always have acted otherwise than they did’, which is simply presented by Bhaskar and Giddens as “an obvious and indisputable fact of personhood” (Pleasants, 1999: p.114). Pleasants uses Wittgenstein’s criticisms of G.E. Moore’s ‘commonsense realism’ to argue that Bhaskar makes the same mistake as Moore in trying to use everyday truisms to ‘prove’ the truth of a philosophical thesis. Pleasants argues: “like Wittgenstein, I do not claim that Bhaskar might be wrong about his (and our) [everyday experience of our] ability to ‘act otherwise’”; however, following Wittgenstein’s response to Moore’s example of ‘here is a hand’, Pleasants argues that this ‘experience’ does not constitute knowledge of the kind that would be required to support a thesis to the effect that agency is inherently ‘undetermined’ (Pleasants, 1999: p.114). He writes:

“According to Wittgenstein, such subjective certainties cannot be expressed as knowledge claims in the philosophical sense, ‘where “I know” is meant to mean: I *can’t* be wrong’ (Wittgenstein 1975: §8). Apart from the difficulty of providing a meaningful context for the claims ..., there seems to be no way in which they could be either verified or falsified. ... Wittgenstein does not simply negate the realist’s proposition that ‘physical objects exist’ (or that ‘agency is real’ ...); he does not say that these ‘things’ *do not exist* or are *not real*. Rather, he argues that both the realist and the sceptic misuse the verb ‘to know’.” (Pleasants, 1999: p.115)

Another problem identified by Pleasants with the ‘picture’ of agency to which Bhaskar, Giddens and Habermas adhere, is the tension between the “inherent counterfactual” that individuals could always have acted otherwise (ibid.), and the “Enlightenment faith in the possibility and desirability of objectively valid scientific knowledge” about ‘social’ affairs that these critical social theorists apparently all share (Pleasants, 1999: p.6). In Bhaskar’s case, Pleasants observes that he “insists that human agency is ‘real’ – that is, agency really is as it commonsensically seems to be: ‘free’ and ‘undetermined’. ... However, he also (1989a: 100) maintains that ‘everything happens in accordance with physical laws. Thus Bhaskar advocates both indeterminism and compatibilism—an unlikely combination” (Pleasants, 1999: p.105).

According to Pleasants, Bhaskar’s general ontology of ‘transcendental realism’ attempts to resolve this apparent tension by establishing that “causality exists and acts at a ‘deep’ level of reality—which transcends the possibility of direct sensory experience” (Pleasants, 1999: p.106). It is meant to achieve this by showing “firstly, that ‘the world is stratified and differentiated’ (ibid.: 5), and secondly, that certain powers, mechanisms and structures *must* exist as the condition of possibility for the ‘manifest phenomena’ of experience” (ibid.). These tenets of transcendental realism are manifest in Bhaskar’s ‘transformative model of social action’ in the guise of his “causal theory of mind,” which purports to reconcile “physicalism and hermeneuticism” with respect to psychological and social phenomena (Pleasants, 1999: p.106-7). Thus “against physicalism, Bhaskar upholds the ‘reality’ of reasons, meanings and concepts (the preoccupation of hermeneuticism); and against

hermeneuticism he insists that reasons, etc. *causally* generate individual agency.... But the universe is, in Bhaskar's terminology, inherently 'open' –that is, undetermined. Hence human action—*along with every other kind of event*—is caused but not 'determined'" (Pleasants, 1999: p.106-7).

Pleasants criticises Bhaskar's attempted resolution of indeterminism and compatibilism with respect to psychological and social phenomena by appealing to later "Wittgenstein's critique of the 'name-object' picture of language" (Pleasants, 1999: p.108). According to Pleasants, Bhaskar's identification of 'reasons' as 'causes' involves mistakenly treating reasons as 'quasi-objects' "bestowed with causal powers" (ibid.). Pleasants suggests that this "rests on a beguiling linguistic confusion" identified by Wittgenstein, whereby "when theorists see that 'a substantive is not used as what in general we should call the name of an object', an obvious move is to make the substantive into 'the name of an aethereal object'" (Pleasants, 1999: p.108; Blue Book: 47). Drawing on Wittgenstein's *Blue Book*, Pleasants argues that it is problematic to treat 'reasons' as causally-effective quasi-objects, because while "actions can always be made out to be *in accordance with* some reason or reasons, it is quite a different matter to contend that some particular reason or reasons was actually implicated in the genesis of an act" (Pleasants, 1999: p.108). Paraphrasing Wittgenstein, Pleasants suggests that when we 'make out' that an action was in accordance with some reason, we are providing a post-hoc, hypothetical rationalisation of the activity in question. This kind of rationalisation is quite different from 'identifying the cause' of some action, not least because "what looks like the 'real reason' for an act from one point of view ... may well look quite different from another perspective" (Pleasants, 1999: p.109).<sup>134</sup> In this light, Pleasants suggests "Bhaskar's assertion that 'intentional human behaviour... is always caused by reasons' is just a rationalist myth created by his own symbolism" (ibid.).

---

<sup>134</sup> According to Pleasants, Wittgenstein does not claim that acts are never motivated by reasons; but rather that rationalising an action in terms of 'reasons' is not *generally* equivalent to identifying the cause of an action, and that the instances in which such rationalisations *do* amount to causal explanations of actions are few and far between (ibid.).

Another way in which Pleasants claims that Bhaskar's 'picture' of individual agency is "incoherent" is that it "is unable to show *how* individuals 'could have acted otherwise', and that 'agency is real'" (Pleasants, 1999: p.109). As an example, Pleasants quotes a passage from Bhaskar's *The Possibility of Naturalism*, where Bhaskar tries to explain how social and psychological phenomena can be indeterminate while still being able to be brought under the umbrella of a naturalistic model of causation:

"It is an error of the greatest magnitude to suppose that what is going to happen in the future is (epistemically) determined before it is (ontologically) caused. For, when it is caused it will be caused by the action of bodies, preformed, complex and structured, possessing powers irreducible to their exercise, endowed with various degrees of self regulation (and transformation), in thorough-going interaction with one another, and subject to a flow of contingencies that can never be predicted with certainty."  
(Pleasants, 1999: p.109; Bhaskar, 1989: p.87)

Pleasants' verdict is that "despite its foreboding language, this passage says no more than that physical, social, and psychological phenomena are *extremely* complex", and hence it does not succeed in explaining how social and psychological phenomena can be both inherently 'indeterminate' and yet, at the same time, universally 'caused' (Pleasants, 1999: p.109).

This is part of a further problem that Pleasants' identifies concerning the distinction that Bhaskar makes between the 'transitive' realm of knowledge, and the 'intransitive' realm of ontology. According to this distinction, the 'transitive' realm of knowledge is relativistic, fallible, variable and contingent; while the 'intransitive' realm of ontology is "strictly non-relativistic", and "consists of objects, powers, mechanisms, structures and relations which operate and endure" regardless of the state of our knowledge about them (Pleasants, 1999: p.110). This distinction is what allows Bhaskar to claim in the passage quoted above that phenomena are 'ontologically' caused and yet 'epistemically' undetermined. Yet Pleasants observes that the ability to make this claim is reliant on the specialist way in which Bhaskar uses the word 'determined'. When Bhaskar asserts that events are not



epistemologically 'determined', he apparently uses this word to mean "predictability of outcomes". However, Pleasants points out that this is not the way in which the word 'determined' has traditionally been used in the philosophical debates concerning free will on which Bhaskar draws, where it has more typically been used to mean that every event is universally (and ontologically) caused. In other words, Bhaskar's novel use of the word 'determined' allows him to appear to make the paradoxical claim that phenomena are both caused and yet in a sense uncaused; however, when you unpack his terminology, his claim simply amounts to saying that phenomena are causally determined but epistemically unpredictable. As Pleasants comments, this is entirely consistent with Hume's 'compatibilist' view of causality which Bhaskar rejects, and which his version of transcendental realism is meant to replace (Bhaskar, 1989: p.16-18).

Likewise, Pleasants finds issues with Bhaskar's use of the terms 'emergence' and 'irreducibility'. Bhaskar claims that 'mind' is an 'emergent power' which is 'irreducible' to physical matter, in the sense that it cannot be regarded as nothing more than "physical properties of the human organism" (Pleasants, 1999: p.110-111). In the course of setting out this claim, Bhaskar contends that psychological phenomena such as agency, intentionality, belief, desire etc. are ontologically distinct from the physical matter out of which they emerge, though they are "causally generated" by it (Pleasants, 1999: p.111). However, Pleasants argues that "Bhaskar's 'ontologisation' of the concept 'emergence' is riven with perplexities that are just as puzzling as those produced by the ontological pictures that he rejects" (ibid.). For example, Pleasants asks, "what does it mean to say that certain phenomena 'cannot be reduced to' the phenomena from which they emerge", in an *ontological* as opposed to an epistemological sense (ibid.)? In addition, Pleasants questions: if mental powers are 'causally generated' by physical matter, "how, then, is freedom and agency preserved if we have to accept that 'ontological' emergence is just a totally non-explicable, 'irreducible' fact?" (Pleasants, 1999: p.111). Pleasants identifies a parallel issue with Bhaskar's account of 'social structures' as 'emerging from' but remaining 'irreducible to' people (Pleasants, 1999: p.112), according to which there is "an ontological hiatus between society and people" (Bhaskar, 1989:

p.33). Effectively, Pleasants proposes, this amounts to the endorsement of a contradictory claim to the effect that “social structure both has a *sui generis* real, separate existence from people” and at the same time “does not exist independently of people” (Pleasants, 1999: p.112-3).

The above criticisms are the main ways in which Pleasants uses later Wittgenstein’s philosophy to argue against the ‘pictures’ of agency, mentality and social phenomena that lie at the heart of Bhaskar’s version of critical realism. Some of the same or similar aspects of Bhaskar’s work that Pleasants finds problematic are also found in Wendt’s *Social Theory of International Politics*, and hence there is scope for adapting Pleasants’ critique to apply to Wendt. So, for example, Wendt apparently shares Bhaskar’s difficulty of maintaining that social structures are ‘irreducible’ to people, while also claiming that social structures ‘emerge from’ people’s interactions. He writes:

“In sum, concrete individuals play an essential role in state action, instantiating and carrying it forward in time, but state action is no more reducible to those individuals than their action is reducible to neurons in the brain. Both kinds of agency exist only in virtue of structured relationships among their elements [i.e. individual neurones or people], but the effect of those structures is to constitute irreducible capacities for intentionality. These capacities are real, not fictions.” (Wendt, 1999: p.221)<sup>135</sup>

Similarly, Wendt struggles to reconcile his commitment to the idea that social phenomena are constituted by people’s actions and dialogues, with the ‘realist’ tenet that social and natural phenomena are both subject to causality:

“Elements from the description and relational theory need to be incorporated when dealing with social kinds. However, in the realist view social life is continuous with nature, and as such science must be anchored to the world via the mechanisms described by the causal theory.” (Wendt, 1999: p.58)

---

<sup>135</sup> Like Bhaskar, Wendt characterises the emergence and irreducibility of social structures in terms of ontology, writing that “the state is ontologically emergent” (Wendt, 1999: p.221).

Thus, like Bhaskar, Wendt could be said to subscribe to an ontology according to which social phenomena both do and do not have an independent existence from the (causal) natural realm. On the one hand, Wendt insists that social kinds are ontologically 'irreducible' to natural kinds; however, on the other hand, he argues that "material forces" play a role "in constituting social kinds", and that were it not for the fact that social kinds are "materially grounded" in certain genetic or intrinsic material properties, "there would be no social kinds at all" (Wendt, 1999: p.72). Wendt's solution for how the alleged dependence of social phenomena on the 'material' can be reconciled with their "irreducible emergent properties" (Wendt, 1999: p.143) is to suggest that natural kinds serve to *constrain* social kinds to varying extents without fully 'determining' them (Wendt, 1999: p.72). Nevertheless, Wendt concludes: "in the last analysis a theory of social kinds must refer to natural kinds, including human bodies and their physical behaviour, which are amenable to a causal theory of reference" (ibid.). Like Bhaskar, Wendt refers to the causal naturalistic 'underpinnings' out of which social phenomena emerge as the "deep structure" of reality (Wendt, 1999: p.49).

Based on Wendt's apparent absorption of some of the tensions in Bhaskar's philosophy, it seems that Pleasants' Wittgenstein-inspired criticisms of Bhaskar's flawed 'pictures' of agency and ontology could without much difficulty be extended to apply to the above features of Wendt's account. Such an approach could be a potentially valid alternative or supplement to the critical application of Wittgenstein's later philosophy to IR that I have developed in this and the last chapter. However, there are some relevant differences between Pleasants' critical approach and my own which would impact upon the methodological status and justifications of the criticisms that Wittgenstein's philosophy would be used to make in each case.

Firstly, Pleasants does not explicitly acknowledge the possibility of various applications and indexes of the word 'picture' as it is used in Wittgenstein's *PI*, but instead provides one singular definition of what a 'picture' is according to later Wittgenstein (Pleasants, 1999: p.304). This means that unlike the application I have developed, Pleasants' application could be vulnerable to a criticism that he does not

allow for variety among Wittgenstein's uses of the term 'picture' in the *PI*, or for alternative interpretations of these uses, and that by oversimplifying the employment of this term to a single sense he has disguised the full potential of this aspect of Wittgenstein's philosophy to be used to provide a *range* of strategies for criticising academic work.

Secondly, Pleasants' definition of later Wittgenstein's concept of a 'picture' differs somewhat from the two main senses of the term that I identified in the last chapter as being at play in the *PI*. He writes:

“A philosophical picture, in Wittgenstein's sense, is a theoretical representation which has lost its representational status and has been reified into a peculiarly compelling portrayal of the essence of some phenomenon. Such pictures are really only metaphors, analogies, models and representations, but they are experienced as knowledge of the essence of reality-in-itself...

Many of the 'pictures' which occupy Wittgenstein's attention are not really *pictures* in the usual sense—they are reified representations of states of affairs which cannot really be pictured at all. Or, rather, what can be pictured is just an aspect, or part of the whole phenomenon, which somehow seems to stand for such complex phenomena as 'language', 'mind', 'self', etc.”  
(Pleasants, 1999: p.3-4)

According to Pleasants' definition, a 'picture' is a “compelling portrayal of the essence of some phenomenon” which is “experienced as knowledge of the essence of reality-in-itself”, but which is actually only a metaphor, analogy, model or representation (Ibid.). Pleasants suggests that typically the phenomena that are apparently portrayed by such 'pictures' either cannot be visualised at all, or only visualised in part due to their size or complexity. In the latter case, a 'picture' of a part of a phenomenon is passed off as a portrayal of the 'essence' of the whole.

Pleasants' definition, as summarised above, partially overlaps with the first sense of Wittgenstein's use of the term 'picture' in the *PI* that I unpacked in 3.2, which was based on remarks where Wittgenstein apparently uses the term 'picture' to mean an imaginary image, model or scene that we are induced to envisage by certain forms of

expression. Where Pleasants' definition differs from mine, however, is that my interpretation is accompanied by a clarification of the methodological justification for attributing a 'picture' in this sense to other scholars; as well as an explanation of an alternative complimentary sense in which Wittgenstein's critical use of the term 'picture' in the *PI* can be understood – i.e. as the identification of a pattern of bias that is apparent within a text. This in turn means that Pleasants' critical application of Wittgenstein's term 'picture' is restricted to making speculative claims to the effect that certain philosophers or theorists are committed to particular 'models' or 'portrayals' of phenomena.

Examples of such claims are when Pleasants refers to "the pictures which dominate traditional philosophical thought" (Pleasants, 1999: p.10), when he identifies the 'picture' of the essence of language in *PI* §1 as a picture which "has exercised enormous influence on philosophers, from Plato to Wittgenstein himself in his early work" (Pleasants, 1999: p.3), and when he refers to this picture as one that "is deeply embedded in the minds of philosophers" (Pleasants, 1999: p.17). In contrast to Wittgenstein's own carefully qualified judgements, such claims could be seen as problematic due to their uncompromising generality and lack of methodological justification. As with Pin-Fat and Fierke, the boldness and overgeneralisation of Pleasants' claims regarding others' commitments to certain 'pictures' is apparently connected with his black-and-white interpretation of *PI* §1. Rather than acknowledging the subtle but important distinctions marked by Wittgenstein between the 'description', 'picture' and 'idea' introduced in *PI* §1, Pleasants glosses the remark as providing "an account of 'a particular picture of the essence of human language'" (Pleasants, 1999: p.3), and summarises this 'picture' by an edited quote that artificially conflates Wittgenstein's separate descriptions of the 'picture' and 'idea' in *PI* §1:

"This picture ... provides a generalised, universal model of *the* essential function of language: 'individual words in language name objects—sentences are combinations of such names... Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands.'" (Pleasants, 1999: p.16)

Pleasants subsequently refers back to this as the “‘name-object’ picture of language” (Pleasants, 1999: p.16), and goes on to sum up Wittgenstein’s supposed “objections” to this picture. In addition, despite the fact that Wittgenstein himself does not attribute the ‘picture’ he describes in *PI* §1 to any actual philosophers, Pleasants claims that this particular picture has influenced multiple philosophers throughout history from Plato onwards (Ibid.).

From the above, it can be seen that Pleasants’ application involves an interpretation of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy that is very much like that employed by Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke, who use it to mount an anti-representationalist objection to ‘positivist’ approaches to IR. However, Pleasants’ application of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy is also relevantly different from the ARO, in that Pleasants does not use his interpretation of *PI* §1 to directly attribute the “‘name-object’ picture of language” to Bhaskar with a view to arguing that the latter is allegedly committed to this problematic ‘picture’ of language (although he does argue that Bhaskar is committed to other problematic ‘pictures’). In other words, despite certain similarities between the interpretations of *PI* §1 employed by Pleasants and the ARO, Pleasants’ application of his interpretation differs from that of the ARO in that Pleasants does not use his interpretation to mount an anti-representationalist objection. This means that although Pleasants’ interpretation of *PI* §1 is somewhat problematic, the problems with this interpretation do not impact the validity of Pleasants’ criticisms in the way that they do with the ARO.

To summarise: Pleasants’ critical application of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy to Bhaskar could, with certain modifications, be extended to provide an alternative route for using remarks such as *PI* §§1-5 to criticise Wendt. However, some important modifications and additions to Pleasants’ application would first be necessary, such as providing a methodological justification for attributing ‘pictures’ to others, and toning down claims to the effect that certain philosophers or other scholars are committed to specific ‘pictures’ of phenomena. In the case of my application of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy developed in this thesis, these are

issues that have had to be addressed and overcome. While Pleasants' *interpretation* of later Wittgenstein's use of the term 'picture' is problematic for some of the same reasons that I identified earlier with the interpretation employed by the ARO, the objections that Pleasants uses this interpretation to make are not necessarily vulnerable to the same criticisms as those I made of the ARO; although Pleasants' critical use of the term 'picture' does need some further clarification. The application that I have developed in this thesis could be of help to Pleasants in this regard, since Pleasants' comments to the effect that Bhaskar is committed to a certain 'picture' of individual action, and so on, could be qualified and rephrased so as to be understandable in terms of either or both of the two senses of Wittgenstein's use of the word 'picture' that I outlined in the last chapter. In this way, Pleasants' critical application of Wittgenstein's later philosophy to Bhaskar amounts to a promising basis for a potentially complimentary line of objection to IR scholars such as Wendt, for which support could be provided by the novel aspects of the interpretation and application of Wittgenstein's philosophy developed in this thesis.

#### **4.4 Potential Relevance for Recent and Future Work in IR**

Having demonstrated the applicability of my Wittgenstein-inspired strategy of therapeutic criticism to the work of Waltz and Wendt, and having compared this strategy with a potential alternative one based on Pleasants' Wittgensteinian objections to Bhaskarian 'critical realism', I will complete this chapter by briefly considering the potential relevance of my approach for more recent and future work in IR, specifically by contemporary 'neo-realist' scholars who have been inspired by Waltz. The purpose of this subsection is not to provide a full account of the criticisms that can be made of these works, but rather to indicate by way of a specific example how the sorts of critical analyses that I have so far provided of Waltz and Wendt might be extended and brought to bear upon more recent contributions.

The reader may note that Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* is now thirty-seven years old, and on this basis may wonder whether and how the critical observations of

Waltz's *Theory* provided in this chapter are of relevance to current scholarship. An initial response to this concern is that despite its age, Waltz's *Theory* is obviously still considered to be relevant within IR, as is attested to by the fact that scholars such as Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke still address themselves to it. However, in addition to its role as the emblem of a historical tradition in opposition to which various contemporary IR scholars define their approach, Waltz's *Theory* also exerts a more substantial influence upon current debates and contributions through the inspiration it continues to provide for contemporary 'neo-realists' hoping to carry forward Waltz's dream of a 'scientific' theory of IR. A prime example of the latter is Adrian Hyde-Price (see Hyde-Price, 2007; 2008; 2012; 2016), a self-confessed follower of Waltz who, in his most recent essay, seeks to use a modified version of Waltz's structural theory of IR to provide a 'neo-realist' analysis of the evolution of NATO since the Cold War (Hyde-Price, 2016: p.41). I will use this essay as an example to suggest how my Wittgensteinian analysis of Waltz might be applicable to such contributions by contemporary 'neo-realist' scholars.

In his 2016 essay Hyde-Price hails Waltz as an intellectual hero of IR, writing:

"Kenneth Waltz's great achievement was to develop a parsimonious and deductive theory that established neo-realism as a distinctive research paradigm able to generate cumulative knowledge. 'The contribution of the realist paradigm to the development of a scientific study of international relations', John Vasquez (1998: 39) has written,

has been, first, to point out that science must be empirical and theoretical, not normative and narrowly historical, and second, to provide a picture of the world (i.e. a paradigm) which has permitted the field to develop a common research agenda and to follow it systematically and somewhat cumulatively." (Hyde-Price, 2016: p.54-5)

More specifically, Hyde-Price spells out the Waltzian underpinnings of his approach as follows:

"Neo-realism focuses on the structural pressures that 'shape and shove' the behaviour of states in the international system. Neo-realism is also an explicitly parsimonious theory that seeks to provide



elegant theoretical explanations to the ‘big questions’ of international politics, such as the causes of war and the conditions of peace.” (Hyde-Price, 2016: p.44)

With regard to his specific topic of interest, Hyde-Price identifies two main ‘structural pressures’ as having shaped the development of the NATO alliance: “the continuing primacy of American power ... and the process of ‘continental drift’ which has characterised transatlantic relations since the end of the East-West conflict” (2016: p.41). Hyde-Price subsequently proceeds to give an explanation of how the way in which NATO has developed since the Cold War with reference to these two ‘key trends’.

From the passages quoted above, we can see that Hyde-Price shares Waltz’s premise that one can provide a general account of how ‘theories’ work regardless of subject matter, and that such an account reveals certain characteristic features of successful theories that can be used to create a ‘scientific’ theory of IR. Features of Waltz’s theory that Hyde-Price identifies as ‘scientific’ are its elegance, parsimony, empiricism, objectivity and attempt to go “beyond mere description” to get at more general “underlying” factors impacting the course of events (Hyde-Price, 2016: p.44, 54 & 55). In addition, Hyde-Price adopts Waltz’s extended use of the term ‘structure’ to refer to the various constraints on states’ behaviour and interactions (Hyde-Price, 2016: p.44). With respect to these inherited commitments, it is apparent that the same critical observations I made earlier concerning Waltz’s generalisations about how ‘theories’ work, and his extended application of the term ‘structure’, are also directly applicable to Hyde-Price; namely, that the vague and flexible application of terminology such as ‘explanation’, ‘parsimony’, ‘structure’ etc. in these contexts does not constitute the identification of genuine commonalities between theories in the so-called ‘natural sciences’ and Waltz’s theory of IR, but rather achieves a rhetorical effect of producing the impression that such commonalities obtain where they may not. Since Hyde-Price, like Waltz, does not appear to be intentionally striving to achieve such a rhetorical effect, one may suggest – as with Waltz – that Hyde-Price has inadvertently found himself expressing his aims and approach in terms that incline to a general ‘picture’ of theorising and of IR which he would perhaps not

endorse, were he first to examine in detail the diverse senses that these terms would have in specific cases falling under his account.

At this juncture one may ask how such critical observations affect the substance of Hyde-Price's research into NATO's expansion since the Cold War. To answer this question: regardless of any rhetorical illusions generated by his meta-theoretical remarks, what Hyde-Price actually writes about NATO and the reasons for its manner of development is a well-researched and historically informed piece of political analysis. As such, Hyde-Price's explanation is not automatically rendered invalid by problems associated with the terms that he uses to characterise the nature of this explanation and its relation to other 'theoretical' endeavours. That said, these problems do have implications for the perceived status and authority of Hyde-Price's account, in that once these problems have been acknowledged, it is no longer possible for Hyde-Price to claim superiority for his explanation as being more 'scientific' than others on the back of his or Waltz's meta-theoretical account of neo-realism.

In other words, Hyde-Price's explanation gains no genuine scholarly advantage over other explanations of NATO's development simply by virtue of being described as 'scientific', nor by its employment of terminologies that can also be employed in more or less varying senses in the so-called 'natural sciences'. Correspondingly, Hyde-Price's analysis does not stand to lose anything except a superficial impression of ascendancy if the meta-theoretical remarks that frame it were to be omitted, and if its explanatory statements referencing the 'structural pressures' of international politics were re-cast in terms of the specific political trends and events which are glossed by this phrase, such as growing American dominance and the loosening of transatlantic security arrangements (Hyde-Price, 2016: p.52). Rather, the academic value of Hyde-Price's explanation would continue to rest on its intrinsic merits; on factors such as the range and reliability of historical sources cited, the plausibility of the motives and views ascribed to relevant actors, and so on.<sup>136</sup> In this light, a

---

<sup>136</sup> For example, the prevalent view of NATO's purpose that Hyde-Price attributes to its members in the years immediately following the Cold War (Hyde-Price, 2016: p.49).

primary benefit of applying the Wittgenstein-inspired technique of critical analysis developed in this chapter to the work of current IR scholars such as Hyde-Price can be seen to consist in dissipating the rhetorical 'fog' created by the meta-theoretical statements infiltrating the politico-historical explanations that these scholars provide, so that the academic content of their contributions can be more clearly evaluated and engaged with on its own terms.

## Chapter 5 Conclusion

The main achievement of the preceding chapters has been to arrive at a novel and sophisticated way of using Wittgenstein's later philosophy to critically examine so-called 'positivist' and other approaches to IR, which takes its lead from the remarks of later Wittgenstein's that inspired the ARO as expressed in the work of Kratochwil, Pin-Fat and Fierke, while overcoming the problems identified with this line of objection. The approach I have recommended to replace the ARO is different from this line of argument in many respects. Firstly, it is not 'against' any particular view or theory of language; rather, it targets problematic patterns in the way that particular IR scholars are inclined to think and write about their subject matter.<sup>137</sup> Secondly, it does not involve making authoritative contradictions or counterclaims against academic theses; rather it involves making critical observations about the language-use of particular scholars, which are designed to be 'therapeutic' in the sense that they are addressed to these scholars for their assent with the aim of bringing them round to a realisation about the aims and functioning of their own uses of language.<sup>138</sup> Thirdly, it does not involve making universal claims about the 'nature' of language – for example, that it is 'socially constructed,' or that it determines how and what we perceive – although it does involve making some modal suggestions about the sorts of effects language can have on us in certain situations, for example, by suggesting that it can sometimes stimulate our imagination, or conjure certain 'pictures' before our minds.<sup>139</sup> Finally, it does not involve denying the legitimacy of ordinary or routine practices of language-use in which people can successfully form and test hypotheses, can make empirical or factual claims, can be certain of something, and so on, but instead involves trying to clarify situations in which IR scholars might be using these and similar terms in contexts where they are not

---

<sup>137</sup> This avoids the difficulty of having to come up with a coherent conception of a general 'view' of the kind that could be held implicitly by various philosophers and other scholars throughout history, as well as the risk of committing to a potentially 'essentialist' claim to the effect that all 'positivist' scholars share some specific commitments or assumptions in common (see 2.2: Problem 2).

<sup>138</sup> This 'therapeutic' aspect of the approach avoids the problem of unfairly committing IR scholars to 'implicit' assumptions and claims that they do not overtly endorse.

<sup>139</sup> However, these can be regarded as part of a 'therapeutic' vocabulary which is used for freeing scholars from patterns of speech that they would rather not be caught up in, which is – as mentioned above – justified by its effectiveness.

successful in performing a function (or at least, not the function which they are purportedly intended to fulfil).<sup>140</sup>

Above all, the approach I have recommended is crucially different from the ARO in that it is not against 'positivist' approaches to IR *in principle*. For after all, how could we possibly say, in advance of every future effort, that one cannot produce a theory in IR that makes a clear distinction between 'objective' and 'subjective'; which focuses on 'data' and 'data analysis'; which involves searching for general laws to explain specific events, and so on? For one thing, terms such as 'objective', 'subjective', 'data', 'analysis' and so on do not themselves have fixed or singular meanings, and so it is entirely possible that further definitions and usages will emerge over time which may be legitimately employed within IR. For another, as we can learn from the example of Wendt's appeal to Durkheim's conception of the 'objectivity' of social facts (see 2.2, under Problem 7), it is always possible for scholars and theorists to redefine their terminology and complexify their accounts in such a way that it avoids any specific objections we might make. That is why it is important to clarify the tendencies and motives that fuel the development and elaboration of the relevant accounts in the first place, which is a primary reason that later Wittgenstein can be seen in the opening of the *PI* to begin by turning his attention to the ways of describing and thinking about language that he imagines *precede* the formation of philosophical accounts and theories of meaning (see Chapter 3, 3.1).

While the approach I have recommended is not against 'positivist' approaches to IR in principle, it can be used to criticise (or critically examine) existing 'positivist' approaches in various ways that could result in their being abandoned or reframed. As we saw in Chapter 4, Waltz and Wendt, in seeking to endow their recommended approach to IR with 'scientific' credentials, extend the application of terms that have typically been applied in contexts relating to 'natural sciences' such as physics and biology, so that they can be applied to the sorts of phenomena that might be studied in IR. Thus Waltz extends the application of the term 'necessary law' so that it can be

---

<sup>140</sup> Thus it avoids the ARO's problems of making unsupported and self-contradictory universal claims, having an inconsistent stance towards everyday linguistic practices, and committing to problematic strong forms of linguistic relativism (see 2.2: Problem 5, 6 and 7).

applied to probabilistic correlations, and 'structure' so that it can be applied to the constraints under which nation states operate, while Wendt extends the application of the expression 'constitution by internal structure' so that it can be applied to 'states'. As I noted in Chapter 4, these terminological extensions are not straightforwardly wrong or incorrect, though they are liable to create misleading impressions about the new cases to which the words are applied based on their previous applications, and also more readily enable over-simplifications and over-generalisations to be made concerning the variety of cases that now fall within the modified scope of the relevant terms.

However, the key question that we should ask scholars who extend their terminology in such a manner is this: what is the *purpose* of extending the use of terms like 'necessary law' and 'structure' so that they can be applied to the sorts of subject matter one might encounter in IR? This is a question that IR scholars who seek to extend terms in the way that Waltz and Wendt do should seriously put to themselves and try to answer honestly. *If* the answer is that the purpose of extending the application of such terms to encompass the subject matter of IR is to enable the development of a 'scientific' theory of IR which is as successful as the sorts of theories that we use in biology and physics, then this is unfortunately not a purpose that is going to be achieved by re-describing the subject matter of IR using new terminology. As I pointed out in the case of Waltz's use of the term 'necessary law', while it is possible to coin a new sense of 'necessary' that allows this term to be applied to probabilistic correlations, this does not make those correlations any more certain or more similar to universal correlations than they already are. Similarly, while it is possible as Wendt does to extend the use of the expression 'internal structure' so that it refers to the coordinated security forces of a state, this does not make those security forces any more like H<sub>2</sub>O or DNA in terms of their properties, effects and manner of functioning, and so on.

This brings us to a point I have already tangentially touched upon in the last chapter with regard to Hyde-Price, which John Gunnell makes very well (though from a different perspective) in his 2011 article entitled 'Social Scientific Inquiry and Meta-

Theoretical Fantasy: The Case of International Relations'. In this article, Gunnell criticises the way in which IR scholars frequently appeal to the philosophy of science to provide a 'meta-theoretical' foundation for the study of international relations, on the grounds that such appeals betray a misunderstanding of the status of the philosophy of science and its relation to scientific practice. He writes:

"One of the basic problems in all of this literature has been a neglect of the issue of what kind of enterprise has been represented in the history of the philosophy of science and in its contemporary form. More specifically, there has been a lack of attention to the relationship of this field to scientific practices and particularly to social science. Little is gained in social science by importing and becoming mortgaged to philosophical debates, such as that between realism and anti-realism. What is important is less making a choice between realism and conventionalism as theories of theory than recognising that the philosophy of science is not the key to successful science." (Gunnell, 2011: p.1465-6)

According to Gunnell, the problem with appealing to philosophies of science to provide a foundation for studying IR is that philosophies of science do not relate to actual scientific practices as their *foundation*, but rather as "transient, philosophical reconstructions" (Gunnell, 2011: p.1466). In other words, philosophies of science are *descriptive summaries* of how scientific theories and practices work, and have no power to render the practices they describe successful, no matter how they represent them.<sup>141</sup> In this light, if it is indeed Waltz's and Wendt's purpose in extending the uses of expressions such as 'necessary law', 'structure' and 'constitution by internal structure' to provide a meta-theoretical foundation for IR that will enable the development of one or more successful 'theories', then they are going to be disappointed. This realisation – if it is enabled alongside the more specific considerations I raised earlier in Chapter 4 – should provide an even stronger impetus for scholars like Waltz and Wendt to abandon their novel terminologies, which although permitted, are both misleading and useless for the purpose for which they were coined.

---

<sup>141</sup> This is related to my earlier discussion of Wittgenstein's remark that "the popular scientific writings of our scientists are not the expression of hard work but of resting on laurels" (Wittgenstein, 1998: p.48e, MS 125 21r: 1942).

We should not be too complacent in making this observation however, since ‘positivist’ scholars of IR do not have a monopoly on creating such useless and misleading extensions of vocabulary. Indeed, this is where we – if we are ‘constructivists’, or ‘constructivist’ sympathisers (which I must confess to having been) – come to the broadening out and self-critical parts of the approach that I recommended in Chapter 4. For if we criticise scholars like Waltz and Wendt for their counterproductive extensions of terms like ‘necessary law’ and ‘internal structure’, then we have to also admit that it is in an apparently parallel way that the application of the term ‘construction’ is extended by many scholars of IR who are against a ‘positivist’ approach, and used to characterise various social and linguistic phenomena in such a way as to exempt them from a ‘scientific’ approach.

So, for example, Nicholas Onuf – one of the founders of ‘constructivism’ in IR and one of its foremost contemporary advocates – expresses the “fundamental proposition” of constructivism as follows:

“Human beings are social beings, and we would not be human but for our social relations. In other words, social relations *make* or *construct* people—*ourselves*—into the kind of beings that we are. Conversely, we *make* the world what it is, from the raw materials that nature provides, by doing what we do with each other and saying what we say to each other. Indeed, saying is doing: talking is undoubtedly the most important way that we go about making the world what it is.” (Onuf, 2013 [1998]: p.3)

In this passage, Onuf uses ordinary words and expressions in grossly extended novel applications to express a generalisation about – apparently – everything in the world, and how we as humans relate to it all. The application of the term ‘raw material’, which is commonly used to distinguish things like crude oil, timber, iron ore and so on from the various material products that we make from these (i.e. petrol, furniture, pokers etc.), is extended to some indefinite totality; while the concepts of ‘making’ and ‘constructing’ are widened to include speaking. Similarly to Waltz’s and Wendt’s extended use of terms such as ‘structure’, although though it is *possible* to extend the application of the terms ‘raw materials’, ‘make’ and ‘construct’ to apply to everything



in the world, these words would not have the same sense when applied to all of the various cases that Onuf uses them to encompass. Therefore, although Onuf presents the passage above as expressing a general 'proposition' which says something significant about our relation as humans to everything, due to the diversity of the senses with which this proposition would apply to individual cases under examination, the passage does not successfully achieve what Onuf apparently wants it to. Similar examples can be found in the passages I quoted from Fierke and Kratochwil in Chapter 1, Section 1.5, under Criticism 3.

The most important lesson to be learned from this, and from the thesis as a whole, then, is as follows: that regardless of whether we are 'positivist', or 'constructivist', or whether we endorse no general position with regard to the study of IR; when we are using language to write about international politics or the study of IR, as with contexts of philosophical reflection, we are in danger of developing novel patterns of expression which *seem* to function in a way that we want – to achieve something extra-ordinary that these expressions in their existing employments could not – but which are actually disguised 'ornamental' employments that not only fail to achieve our desired purpose, but serve to further obscure the topic under consideration. Therefore, we must always be on our guard to spot such patterns and take appropriate action to remedy them – not only in other people's work, but also in our own.

## Directions for Further Research

What I have accomplished in this thesis is to set out, and demonstrate, a way in which Wittgenstein's later philosophy can be used to critically examine the meta-theoretical descriptions that appear to justify 'positivist' and other approaches in IR, which overcome the problems I identified with the ARO as a line of argument that some IR scholars have previously used Wittgenstein's philosophy to make. However, this is just a fragment of several much larger projects that can be undertaken with regard to the application of Wittgenstein's philosophy to IR. One of these larger projects, mentioned earlier, is a general appraisal of the effectiveness of the various ways in which Wittgenstein's philosophy has already been applied within IR, since my evaluation in Chapter 2 only focuses on one line of objection that Wittgenstein has been used to make within the discipline. Another is to investigate more comprehensively what the implications of various aspects of Wittgenstein's later philosophy are for IR, since I focused mainly on the relevance of remarks such as *PI* §§1-5 which inspired the ARO. Finally, there is the huge task, continuing from the analysis of Waltz and Wendt in Chapter 4, of critically clarifying the various misleading patterns and forms of expression that can be identified in the work of current and future IR scholars. This is a task that I hope my thesis will enable others to join me in pursuing further.

## Bibliography

- Aalbert, Mathias. 2015. Review of *Quantum Mind and Social Science: Unifying Physical and Social Ontology* by Alexander Wendt. *International Affairs*, 91:4, pp.872-4.
- Aalberts, Tanja E. and Rens van Munster. 2008. 'From Wendt to Kuhn: Reviving the "Third Debate" in International Relations'. *International Politics*. 45, pp. 720-746.
- Ammereller, Erich and Eugen Fischer. 2004. *Wittgenstein at Work: Method in the Philosophical Investigations*. Routledge, London.
- Ahmed, Arif. 2010. *Wittgenstein's 'Philosophical Investigations': A Reader's Guide*. Continuum International Publishing, London.
- Alderson, Kai. 2000 'Beyond the Linguistic Analogy: Norm and Action in International Politics.' *Institute of International Relations, University of British Columbia*. Working Paper No. 31.
- Almond, Brenda. 1984. *Applied Philosophy: Morals and Metaphysics in Contemporary Debate*. Routledge, London.
- Anderson, R.J., A.J. Hughes and W.W. Sharrock 1986. *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*. Croom Helm Ltd., Beckenham, Kent.
- Associated Press. 'Russia a Threat to Baltic States after Ukraine Conflict, Warns Michael Fallon'. *The Guardian*. 19 February 2015.
- Baker, Gordon and Peter Hacker. 2005 [1980] a. *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Understanding. Part 1: Essays on the Philosophical Investigations*. Blackwell, Oxford.
- Baker, Gordon and Peter Hacker. 2005 [1980] b. *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Understanding. Part 2: Exegesis of §§1-184*. Blackwell, Oxford.
- Baker, Gordon and Peter Hacker. 2005 [1985]. *Wittgenstein: Rules, Grammar and Necessity. Essays and Exegesis of §§185-242*. Second edition, extensively revised by P.M.S. Hacker. Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester.
- Baker, Gordon. 2004. *Wittgenstein's Method: Neglected Aspects*. Edited by Katherine J. Morris. Blackwell. Printed and bound in the UK by TJ International, Padstow, Cornwall.
- Bhaskar, Roy. 2005 [1979]. *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences*. Third Edition. Taylor & Francis, London.

- Boltzmann, Ludwig. 1901. 'On the Necessity of Atomic Theories in Physics'. *The Monist*. 12:1, pp. 65-79.
- Boltzmann, Ludwig. 1974 [1901]. 'On the Development of the Methods of Theoretical Physics in Recent Times' in *Theoretical Physics and Philosophical Problems*, edited by Brian McGuinness. Reidel, Dordrecht.
- Boltzmann, Ludwig. 1974. 1899. 'On the Fundamental Principles and Equations of Mechanics' in *Theoretical Physics and Philosophical Problems*, edited by Brian McGuinness. Reidel, Dordrecht.
- Booth, Ken and Tim Dunne. 2012. *Terror in Our Time*. Routledge, Abingdon (Oxfordshire).
- Byers, Michael. 1999. *Custom, Power and the Power of Rules: International Relations and Customary International Law*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Carlsnaes, Walter, Thomas Risse and Beth Simmons (Eds.). 2002. *Handbook of International Relations*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Sage Publishing, London.
- Cavell, Stanley. 1958. 'Must we Mean what we Say?'. *Inquiry*. 1:1-4, pp. 172-212.
- Cavell, Stanley. 1979. *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Coetzee, Eben and Hussein Soloman. 2014. 'The "Shifting" Nature of Theory in International Relations: Why the Future of the Discipline is its Waltzian Past'. *Acta Academica*, 46:2, pp. 53-82.
- Conant, James B. 1952. *Modern Science and Modern Man*. Columbia University Press, New York.
- Cook, Roy T. 2009. *A Dictionary of Philosophical Logic*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.
- Debrix, François. 2002. 'Language as Criticism: Assessing the Merits of Speech Acts and Discursive Formations in International Relations'. *New Political Science*. 24:2, pp. 201-219.
- Diamond, Cora and James Conant. 2004 [2001]. 'On Reading the *Tractatus* Resolutely' in *Wittgenstein's Lasting Significance*, edited by Max Kölbel and Bernhard Weiss. Routledge, Abingdon (Oxfordshire), pp. 46-99.

- Duffy, Gavan; Brian K. Frederking and Seth Tucker. 1998. 'Language Games: Dialogical Analysis of INF Negotiations'. *International Studies Quarterly*. 42:2, pp. 271-293.
- Edkins, Jenny and Véronique Pin-Fat. 1995. 'Post-International Politics: An Emerging Dissident Literature?' in *The State of the Academy: New Reflections on Political Studies*, edited by R, Lekhi. Network Press, London, pp. 97-103.
- Edkins, Jenny and Véronique Pin-Fat. 1997. 'Jean Bethke Elshtain: Traversing the Terrain Between' in *The Future of International Relations: Masters in the Making?*, edited by Iver Neumann and Ole Waever. Routledge, London, pp. 339-360.
- Edkins, Jenny and Véronique Pin-Fat. 1999. 'The Subject of the Political' in *Sovereignty and Subjectivity*, edited by Jenny Edkins, Nalini Pesram and Veronique Pin-Fat. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder (Colorado), pp. 1-18.
- Edkins, Jenny and Véronique Pin-Fat. 2004. 'Life, Power, Resistance' in *Sovereign Lives: Power in an Era of Globalisation*, edited by Véronique Pin-Fat, Jenny Edkins and Michael Shapiro. Routledge, New York, pp. 1-22.
- Edkins, Jenny and Véronique Pin-Fat. 2005. 'Through the Wire: Relations of Power and Relations of Violence'. *Millenium: Journal of International Studies*. 34:1, pp.1-24.
- Edwards, Gemma. 2014. *Social Movements and Protest*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Farrands, Christopher. 2000. 'Language and the Possibility of Inter-Community Understanding'. *Global Society*. 14:1, pp. 79-99.
- Farrands, Christopher. 2001. 'Touching Friendship Beyond Friendship: Friendship and Citizenship in Global Politics'. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*. 26:2, pp. 143-173.
- Fierke, Karin. 1996. 'Multiple Identities, Interfacing Games: The Social Construction of Western Action in Bosnia'. *European Journal of International Relations*. 2:4, pp. 467-497.
- Fierke, Karin. 1998. *Changing Games, Changing Strategies*. Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- Fierke, Karin. 1999. 'Besting the West: Russia's Machiavella Strategy' *International Feminist Journal of Politics*. 1:3, pp. 403-434.

- Fierke, Karin. 2001. 'Critical Methodology and Constructivism' in *Constructing International Relations: The Next Generation*, edited by Karin M. Fierke and Knud Erik Jørgensen. M.E. Sharpe, New York, pp. 115-135.
- Fierke, Karin. 2002. 'Links Across the Abyss: Language and Logic in International Relations'. *International Studies Quarterly*. 46, pp.331-354
- Fierke, Karin. 2003. 'Breaking the Silence: Language and Method in International Relations' in *Language, Agency and Politics in a Constructed World*, edited by François Debrix. M.E. Sharpe, New York, pp. 66-86.
- Fierke, Karin. 2007. *Critical Approaches to International Security*. Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Fierke, Karin. 2010a. 'Wittgenstein and International Relations Theory' in *International Relations Theory and Philosophy: Interpretive Dialogues*, edited by Cerwyn Moore and Chris Farrands. Routledge, Abingdon (Oxfordshire), pp. 83-94.
- Fierke, Karin. 2010b. 'Constructivism' in *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, edited by Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki and Steve Smith. Second Edition. Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 177-194.
- Fierke, Karin. 2013. *Political Self-Sacrifice: Agency, Body and Emotion in International Relations*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Fierke, Karin. 2016a. 'Is There Life Beyond Language? Discourses of Security' in *Transformations of Security Studies: Dialogues, Diversity and Discipline*, edited by Gabi Schlag, Julian Junk and Christopher Daase. Routledge, Abingdon (Oxfordshire), pp.70-81.
- Fierke, Karin. 2016b. 'Security as Ethics: An Orthogonal Rotation from Egoism to Compassion' in *Ethical Security Studies: A New Research Agenda*, edited by Joanna Nyman and Anthony Burke. Routledge, New York, pp. 216-228.
- Fierke, Karin and Antje Weiner. 1999. 'Constructing Institutional Interests: EU and NATO Enlargement'. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 6:5, pp. 721-742.
- Fischer, Eugen and Erich Ammereller (eds.). 2004. *Wittgenstein at Work: Method in the Philosophical Investigations*. Routledge, London.
- Fodor, Jerry A. and Jerrold J. Katz. 1963. 'The Availability of What We Say'. *The Philosophical Review*. 72:1, pp. 57-71.

- Fogelin, Robert J. 2001 [1976]. *Wittgenstein: Arguments of the Philosophers*. Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, London.
- Frost, Mervyn. 1986. *Towards a Normative Theory of International Relations: A Critical Analysis of the Philosophical and Methodological Assumptions in the Discipline with Proposals Towards a Substantive Normative Theory*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Frost, Mervyn. 1996. *Ethics in International Relations: A Constitutive Theory*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Gallie, W.B. 1955. 'Essentially Contested Concepts'. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*. New Series: 56 (1955-56), pp. 167-198.
- Garfinkel, Harold. 1967. *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs (New Jersey).
- General Assembly of the United Nations. 2005 World Summit Outcome. 24 October 2005. Document Code: A/RES/60/1. <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/World%20Summit%20Outcome%20Document.pdf> (Last Accessed 07 April 2015).
- George, Jim. 1989. 'International Relations and the Search for Thinking Space: Another View of the Third Debate'. *International Studies Quarterly*. 33:3, pp. 269-279.
- Gould, Timothy. 2004. 'Restlessness and the Achievement of Peace: Writing and Method in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*' in *The Literary Wittgenstein*, edited by John Gibson and Wolfgang Huemer. Routledge, London, pp. 75-91.
- Gunnell, John G. 2011. 'Social Scientific Inquiry and Meta-Theoretical Fantasy: The Case of International Relations'. *Review of International Studies*. 37:4, pp. 1447-1469.
- Guzzini, Stefano. 2000. 'A Reconstruction of Constructivism in International Relations'. *European Journal of International Relations*. 6:1, pp. 147-82.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1968 a. *Theorie und Praxis [Theory and Practice]*. Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1968 b. *Erkenntnis und Interesse [Knowledge and Human Interests]*. Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1981. 'Modernity and Postmodernity'. *New German Critique*. 33, p.8.

- Hacker, Peter. 1986 [1972]. *Insight and Illusion*. Revised Edition. Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Hacker, Peter. 1996. *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth Century Analytic Philosophy*. Blackwell, Oxford.
- Hanfling, Oswald. 2000. *Philosophy and Ordinary Language: The Bent and Genius of our Tongue*. Psychology Press, New York.
- Harris, Errol. 2002 [1970]. *Hypothesis and Perception: The Roots of Scientific Method*. Routledge, London.
- Heath, P.L. 1952. 'The Appeal to Ordinary Language'. *The Philosophical Quarterly*. 2:6, pp. 1-12.
- Hodgson, Jacqueline and Victor Tadros. 2013. 'The Impossibility of Defining Terrorism'. *New Criminal Law Review*. 16:3, pp. 494-526.
- Hollis, Martin and Steve Smith. 1990. *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Hutchins, Edwin. 1991. 'The Social Organisation of Distributed Cognition' in *Perspectives on Socially Shared Cognition*, edited by L. Resnick, et al. American Psychological Association, Washington D.C., pp. 283-307.
- Hyde-Price, Adrian. 2016. 'NATO: A Neo-Realist Analysis' in *Theorising NATO: New Perspectives on the Atlantic Alliance*, edited by Mark Webber and Adrian Hyde-Price. Routledge, Oxford, pp. 41-60.
- Hymers, Michael. 2010. *Wittgenstein and the Practice of Philosophy*. Broadview, Ontario (Canada).
- Ish-Shalom, Piki. 'Defining by Naming: Israeli Civic Warring over the Second Lebanon War'. *European Journal of International Relations*. 17:3, pp. 475-493.
- Inayatullah, Naeem and David L. Blaney. 2004. *International Relations and the Problem of Difference*. Routledge, London.
- Jackman, Henry. 2001. 'Ordinary Language, Conventionalism and *a priori* Knowledge'. *Dialectica*. 55: 4, pp. 315-325.
- Kessler, Oliver. 2007. 'From Agents and Structures to Minds and Bodies: of Supervenience, Quantum, and the Linguistic Turn'. *Journal of International Relations and Development*. 10, pp. 243-271.



- Kessler, Oliver. 2012. 'On Logic, Intersubjectivity, and Meaning: Is Reality an Assumption we Just Don't Need?' *Review of International Studies*. 38:1, pp. 253-265.
- Kindi, Vassiliki. 1999. 'Is Wittgenstein's Resort to Ordinary Language an Appeal to Empirical Facts?' *Metaphilosophy*. 29: 4, pp. 298-305.
- Klabbers, Jan. Review of *The Status of Law in World Society: Meditations on the Role and Rule of Law*, by Friedrich Kratochwil. *The European Journal of International Law*. 25:4, pp. 1195-1208.
- Kratochwil, Friedrich. 1978. *International Order and Foreign Policy: A Theoretical Sketch of Post-War International Politics*. Westview, Boulder (Colorado).
- Kratochwil, Friedrich. 1981. 'The Humean Perspective on International Relations'. *Centre of International Studies, Princeton University, World Order Studies Program*. Occasional Paper No. 3.
- Kratochwil, Friedrich. 1989. *Rules, Norms and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Kratochwil, Friedrich. 1993. 'The Embarrassment of Changes: Neo-Realism as the Science of Realpolitik without Politics'. *Review of International Studies*. 19:1, pp. 63-80.
- Kratochwil, Friedrich. 2001. 'Constructivism as an Approach to Interdisciplinary Study' in *Constructing International Relations: The Next Generation*, edited by Karin M. Fierke and Knud Erik Jørgensen. M.E. Sharpe, New York, pp.13-35.
- Kratochwil, Friedrich. 2008. 'Constructivism: What it is (Not) and How it Matters' in *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*, edited by Donatella Della Porta and Michael Keating. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Kratochwil, Friedrich. 2009. 'Ten Points to Ponder About Pragmatism: Some Critical Reflections on Knowledge Generation in the Social Sciences' in *Pragmatism in International Relations*, edited by Harry Bauer and Elisabetta Brighi. Routledge, London, pp. 11-25.
- Kratochwil, Friedrich and Jörg Friedrichs. 2009. 'On Acting and Knowing: How Pragmatism Can Advance International Relations Research and Methodology'. *International Organisation*. 63:4, pp. 701-731.

- Kratochwil, Friedrich. 2011. *The Puzzles of Politics: Enquiries into the Genesis and Transformation of International Relations*. Routledge, Abindon (Oxfordshire).
- Kratochwil, Friedrich. 2013. 'Politics, Law, and the Sacred: A Conceptual Analysis'. *Journal of International Relations and Development*. 16, pp. 1-24.
- Kratochwil, Friedrich. 2014. *The Status of Law in World Society: Meditations on the Role and Rule of Law*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Kratochwil, Friedrich. 2016. 'Of Words and Deeds: A Reply to My Critics'. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*. 44:2, pp. 278-291.
- Kuusela, Oskari. 2008. *The Struggle Against Dogmatism: Wittgenstein and the Concept of Philosophy*. Harvard University Press, London.
- Lebow, Richard Ned. 2008. *A Cultural Theory of International Relations*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Locke, John. 1995 [1689]. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Prometheus Books, New York.
- Lynch, Michael. 1991. 'Method: Measurement – Ordinary and Scientific Measurement as Ethnomethodological Phenomena' in *Ethnomethodology and the Human Sciences*, edited by Graham Button. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 77-108.
- Lynch, Michael. 1994. 'Representation is Overrated: Some Critical Remarks about the Use of the Concept of Representation in Science Studies'. *Configurations*. 2:1, pp. 137-249.
- Mates, Benson. 'On the Verification of Statements about Ordinary Language'. *Inquiry*. 1:1, pp. 161-171.
- Maxwell, James Clerk. 2013 [1862]. 'On Faraday's Lines of Force' in *The Scientific Papers of James Clerk Maxwell: Vol. 1*, edited by W. D. Niven. Dover Publications, New York.
- Maxwell, James Clerk. 2013 [1850]. 'The Equilibrium of Elastic Solids' in *The Scientific Papers of James Clerk Maxwell: Vol. 1*, edited by W. D. Niven. Dover Publications, New York.
- May, Tim. 1999. 'Reflexivity and Sociological Practice'. *Sociological Research Online*, 4:3. <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/4/3/may.html>. (Last accessed 30 March 2015).

- Moon, Ban Ki. 2009. 'Implementing the Responsibility to Protect'. Report of the UN Secretary-General. 12 January 2009. Document A/63/677. [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/63/677](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/63/677) (Last Accessed 07 April 2015).
- Moriarty, Philip. 2015. 'We're Flattered, but Enough of the Physics Envy. It's Embarrassing Us All.' 06 February 2016. Available at <https://muirheart.wordpress.com/2016/02/06/were-flattered-but-enough-of-the-physics-envy-its-embarrassing-us-all/> (Accessed 08 April 2016).
- Mulhall, Stephen. 2001. *Inheritance and Originality: Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Kierkegaard*. Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Navari, Cornelia. 2011. 'The Concept of Practice in the English School'. *European Journal of International Relations*. 17, pp. 611-630.
- Neufeld, Mark. 1993. 'Interpretation and the "Science" of International Relations'. *Review of International Studies*. 19:1, pp. 39-61.
- Onuf, Nicholas, G. 1989. *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations*. University of South Carolina Press, Columbia (South Carolina).
- Onuf, Nicholas G. 2013. *Making Sense, Making Worlds: Constructivism in Social Theory and International Relations*. Routledge, Abingdon (Oxfordshire).
- Pin-Fat, Véronique. 1997. 'Why Aren't We Laughing?: Grammatical Investigations in World Politics'. *Politics*. 17:2, pp. 79-86.
- Pin-Fat, Véronique. 2000. '(Im)possible Universalism: Reading Human Rights in World Politics'. *Review of International Studies*. 26:4, pp.663-74.
- Pin-Fat, Véronique. 2005. 'The Metaphysics of the National Interest and the "Mysticism" of the Nation State: Reading Hans J. Morgenthau'. *Review of International Studies*. 31:2, pp. 217-136.
- Pin-Fat, Véronique. 2010. *Universality, Ethics and International Relations: A Grammatical Reading*. Routledge, Abingdon (Oxfordshire).
- Pin-Fat, Véronique. 2013. 'Cosmopolitanism and the End of Humanity: A Grammatical Reading of Posthumanism'. *International Political Sociology*. 7, pp. 241-257.
- Pin-Fat, Véronique. 2015. 'Cosmopolitanism Without Foundations' in *Politics and Cosmopolitanism in a Global Age*, edited by Sonika Gupta and Sudarsan Padmanabhan. Routledge, New Delhi, pp. 83-102.

- Pleasants, Nigel. 1999. *Wittgenstein and the Idea of a Critical Social Theory: A Critique of Giddens, Habermas and Bhaskar*. Routledge, London.
- Putin, Vladimir. 04 March 2014. 'Deploying Military Force is Last Resort but We Reserve Right'. Interview Published in *Russia Today*. <http://rt.com/news/putin-statement-ukraine-russia-743/> (Last Accessed 07 April 2015).
- Read, Rupert. 2007. *Applying Wittgenstein*, edited by Laura Cook. Continuum, London.
- Record, Jeffrey. 2003. *Bounding the Global War on Terrorism*. Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle (Pennsylvania).
- Reitan, Eric. 2010. 'Defining Terrorism for Public Policy Purposes: the Group-Target Definition'. *Journal of Moral Philosophy*. 7, pp. 253-278.
- Reus-Smit, Chris and Duncan Snidal. 2008. *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Richter, Duncan. 2004. *Wittgenstein At His Word*. Continuum, London.
- Ruggie, John Gerard. 1993. 'Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations'. *International Organization*. 47:1, pp. 139-174.
- Russell, Bertrand. 1918 [2010]. *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*. Routledge Classics, Oxford.
- Sapir, Edward. 1956. *Culture, Language and Personality: Selected Essays*. University of California Press, California.
- Schnelle, Sebastian. 2012. 'Abdullah Azzam, Ideologue of Jihad: Freedom Fighter or Terrorist?' *Journal of Church and State*. 54:4, pp. 635-647.
- Schull, C.G. 1969. 'Single-Slit Diffraction of Neutrons'. *Physics Review*, 179:3.
- Schulte, Joachim. 2004. 'The Builder's Language' in *Wittgenstein at Work: Method in the Philosophical Investigations*, edited by Eugen Fischer and Erich Ammereller. Routledge, London.
- Sharrock and Button. 1991. 'The Social Actor' in *Ethnomethodology and the Human Sciences*, edited by Graham Button. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Smith, Steve. 2000. 'Wendt's World'. *Review of International Studies*. 26: 1, pp. 151-163.

- Stern, David. 2004. *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations: An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Spegele, Roger D. 'From the Incoherence of Systems Theory to a Philosophy of International Relations'. *The Review of Politics*. 44:4, pp. 559-589.
- Spengler, Oswald. 1926 [1918]. *The Decline of the West*, translated by Charles Francis Atkinson. Knopf, New York.
- Schieder, Siegfried and Manuela Spindler (eds.). 2014. *Theories of International Relations*. Routledge, New York.
- Susskind, Leonard and Art Friedman. 2014. *Quantum Mechanics: The Theoretical Minimum*. Basic Books, Philadelphia (Pennsylvania).
- Tesař, Jakub. 2015. 'Quantum Theory of International Relations: Approaches and Possible Gains'. *Human Affairs*, 25:4, pp.486-502.
- Torsten, Michel. 2012. 'In Heidegger's Shadow: A Phenomenological Critique of Critical Realism'. *Review of International Studies*. 38:1, pp. 209-222.
- Welch, David A. 2003. 'Why International Relations Theorists should Stop Reading Thucydides'. *Review of International Studies*. 29:3, pp. 301-319.
- Wendt, Alexander. 1999. *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Wendt, Alexander. 2005. 'Social Theory as a Cartesian Science: An Auto-Critique from a Quantum Perspective' in *Constructivism and International Relations*, edited by Stefano Guzzini and Anna Leander. Routledge, New York.
- Wendt, Alexander. 2015. *Quantum Mind and Social Science: Unifying Physical and Social Ontology*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Wiener, Antje. 2007. 'The Dual Quality of Norms and Governance beyond the State: Sociological and Normative Approaches to "Interaction"'. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*. 10:1, pp. 47-69.
- Wiener, Antje. 2009. 'Enacting Meaning-in-Use: Qualitative Research on Norms and International Relations'. *Review of International Studies*. 35:1, pp. 175-193.
- Wight, Colin. 2002. 'Philosophy of Social Science and International Relations' in *Handbook of International Relations, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition*, edited by Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth A. Simmons. Sage Publications Ltd., London.

- Wight, Colin. 2006. *Agents, Structures and International Relations: Politics as Ontology*. Cambridge Studies in International Relations. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Winch, Peter. 1958. *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy*. Routledge, London.
- Wind, Marlene. 1997. 'N.G. Onuf. The Rules of Anarchy' in *The Future of International Relations: Masters in the Making? (New International Relations)*, edited by Iver B. Neumann and Ole Waever. Routledge. London and New York, pp. 410-467.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1958 [1933-5]. *The Blue and Brown Books: Preliminary Studies for the Philosophical Investigations*. Blackwell, Oxford.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1974 [1933]. *Philosophical Grammar*, edited by Rush Rhees and translated by Anthony Kenny. Blackwell Publishers, Oxford.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1998. *Culture and Value*. Blackwell Publishers, Oxford.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 2002 [1921]. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Routledge, London.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 2005 [1933 -7]. *The Big Typescript: TS 213, German-English Scholar's Edition*, edited and translated by C. Grant Luckhardt and Maximilian A. E. Aue. Blackwell, Oxford.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 2009 [1953]. *Philosophical Investigations*. Fourth Edition, Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, revised by P.M.S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte. Blackwell, Chichester.
- Zehfuss, Maja. 2002 *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality*. Cambridge Studies in International Relations. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.