Harré, Vygotsky, Bakhtin, Vico, Wittgenstein: Academic Discourses and Conversational Realities

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In *Personal Being*, Harré (1983) claims that “the primary human reality is persons in conversation” (p. 58). And in *Exploring the human Umwelt* (Harré, 1990), he goes on to criticize a certain model of conversation — Argyle’s (1990) “coordinated interaction model (CIM)” — by claiming that

“conversation cannot itself be something to be understood under [such a model] because it is itself that model. By that I mean that so far as anyone has ever been able to ascertain, there are only two human realities: physiology and discourse (conversation) — the former an individual phenomenon, the latter collective” (p. 345).

Now actually, I happen to agree with Harré’s claims here wholeheartedly. As I shall argue, conversation is a kind of ultimate reality for us. We cannot turn it around to understand its nature in terms of any particular models, theories, rules, or conventions, for, unless we can discuss such entities conversationally, we have no way of justifying to each other that we are indeed applying them aright. Thus they cannot themselves be a prior condition for such joint discussions; rather, they must be a consequence of them. In other words, the intelligible shaping or structuring of such discussions must be due to other means. But, is this what Harré in fact means in his claims above? If “discourse considered in a broad sense [includes] all sorts of symbolic manipulations according to rules” (Harré, 1992a, p. 7), does he mean that conversations should also be understood in that way too? What does he think is implied in his claim conversation is a primary human reality?

In a previous appreciation of his work (Shotter, 1990), I collected together many of the properties Harré has ascribed to conversational realities, so I will not repeat that list now. What I want to do here is to explore their properties.
further, and to show that such realities exist in a world that currently, in terms of our present cognitive-representational construal of the nature of knowledge, is utterly strange to us, even though remarkably it is the world of our own everyday life. Indeed, it is a world that we cannot even imagine — if, that is, to imagine something means to be able to contemplate an overall ‘mental picture’, or a mental representation of it, for it is the primary ‘background’ of human activity from out of which mental representations emerge and in which they are grounded. Thus Harré is right, conversation cannot itself be something to be understood in terms of a model because it itself provides the ‘grounds’ (or, works to create the ‘space’) in terms of which all ‘models’ are in fact seen as such, and their links to what they are meant to be models of, are justified. Yet without some kind of account of its nature, and how the lives of different peoples are ‘rooted’ in different ‘conversational backgrounds’, we have no way of investigating further the crucial anthropological, political, and ethical questions we now face. We do not know how to compare the worth of different kinds of human ‘Unwelten’ (Harre, 1990; Shotter, 1984), and the different forms of human being they might and do make available to us.

OUR ‘BASIC’ WAYS OF TALKING

Let me begin by collecting together a number of comments about the relation of language to perception: In his Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, Rorty remarks that “it is pictures rather than propositions, metaphors rather than statements, which determine most of our philosophical convictions ... [And] without the notion of the mind as a mirror, the notion of knowledge as accuracy of representation would not have suggested itself” (1980, p. 12). In other words, what Rorty is pointing to here, is how in some unexplained manner certain ways of talking and communicating ‘shape’ not only our ways of looking at the world, but also our ways of thinking, speaking, acting, and evaluating, in fact, a whole “living ideology” (Billig et al., 1988; Volosinov, 1973). Indeed, by the time we develop into socially competent, self-conscious adults, it is as if a ‘semantic engine or mill’ of some very general kind is at work within us somewhere, homogenizing everything we encounter to fit into a particular world order, into ‘our’ world. It is as if what surrounds us, what we see as immediately ready-to-hand within it, Heidegger (1967) claims, “is grounded in something we have in advance — in a fore-having” (p. 191). For we find our ordinary, everyday understanding is always unique to, and ‘rooted’ or ‘situated’ in a particular, concrete context, a context in which we experience a particular structure of passions and feelings, cravings and desires, as well as identifications and recognitions, and so on. As Garfinkel (1967, p. vii) puts it, our ways of talking and acting come to work, from within themselves, to make “those same activities visibly-rational-and-reportable-for-all-practical-purposes, i.e.,

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"accountable", as organizations of commonplace everyday activities" (1967, p. vii). In other words, certain ways of talking have to do, not with possible ways in which we might represent states of affairs in our surroundings, but with how we respond to what occurs around us in a direct and immediate way.

My reasons for beginning with this collection of comments are three-fold: 1) The first is simply to emphasize the claims of those such as Rorty and Garfinkel, that certain ways of knowing and talking — in a moment, I shall call them 'embodied' ways — are 'basic' for us in that they primarily work create, maintain, reproduce and transform certain modes of social and societal relationships. They 'open up' to us, so to speak, different forms of human being (and by the same token, 'close off' others). In this view, it is not the primary function of these responsive forms of talk to represent the world. If in our experience, it seems undeniable that at least some words do in fact stand for things, they only do so, I argue, from within a form of social life already constituted by ways of talking in which these words have been already used in some other, nonrepresentational way — "... to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life" (Wittgenstein, 1953, no. 19). Thus the entities they represent are known, not for what they are in themselves, but in terms of their 'currency' or their significance in our different modes of social life, that is, in terms of what is deemed sensible for us to do with them in the everyday, linguistically structured circumstances of their use. They have their being only within the form of life we (the whole community) conversationally sustain between ourselves. Hence, the difficulty we have in formulating and testing any "theories" of the nature of these 'basic' ways of talking; we do not know properly how to doubt them. That is, we do not know how to formulate any intelligible doubts about their nature without relying upon them for the intelligibility of our formulations.

It is impossible to overemphasize the role of responsive forms of talk (in contrast to representational forms). This kind of talk is never mere talk: it is not just responsive to its circumstances, but it must be responsive to them, i.e., speakers are, so to speak, answerable to the others around them for the positions they take. Furthermore, those to whom it is addressed are not merely responsive either; they must be responsive, or else their replies will be unintelligible and/or illegitimate. I emphasize these issues here in an attempt to forestall the criticism, often levelled at the social constructionist stance that I shall advocate below, that it is tantamount to the claim that 'saying makes it so', that 'anything goes'. While representational talk may be mere talk or idle talk, not 'just anything' goes in responsive talk.

2) This is another view, then, of the function of language. I do not want to argue that the view of language as representational is wrong, only that it is one-sided. Seeking to explain everything to do with communication in its terms, has led us to ignore these other more 'instructive', 'responsive' forms of talk. Here, I shall assume that their primary function is to 'give shape' to, to coordinate, and
to account for, diverse social action (Mills, 1940). Indeed, at any one moment, certain ways of talking seem to be so pervasive (and persuasive), that although there are clearly many other important spheres of human activity, they dominate our form of life in the following (judgmental) sense: Given that people must mutually judge and correct each other as to the 'fittingness' of their actions to what they take their ultimate reality to be — if, that is, they are to sustain those realities in existence by continually remaking them in their everyday, social activities — then, it is in this kind of talk that all such ultimate judging and evaluating, i.e., final accounting, must take place. Indeed, as Wittgenstein (1953, no. 242) insists, "if language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments..." And, to the extent that we make certain kinds of judgments about certain ways of talking, without hesitation, routinely, as part of who we are, so to speak, as a part of our taken-for-granted, everyday practices, I feel justified in calling such ways of talking our 'basic' ways.

3) And my third reason for collecting together the remarks above, is to motivate exploration of the following questions: What must we, and the nature of our 'basic' ways of talking (and knowing) be like, for it to be possible for us to find ourselves limited by the 'pictures' implicit in our ways of talking, for 'metaphors' to be influential in and upon our philosophical convictions? What is the nature of the urge we feel, as academics, to arrive at a supposed accurate 'picture' of an event or circumstance? How do ordinary people, without the supposed 'disciplines' available to us academics, make what they are talking about "rationally-visible?" And I raise these questions because the answer to them, I feel, is not to be found by us submitting ourselves to the requirements of any academic discourses, but doubly, in us grasping in some other way (see below) the nature of our own everyday, conversational realities: For, we both need i) to understand (describe) how and why such forms of talk are so fundamental to our ways of being in the world, and, ii) describe how we can find within conversation itself — but not in disciplinary discourses (Foucault, 1972) — the resources we require to perspicuously describe their own nature, i.e., to describe conversational knowing in a way that reveals important connections between things that would otherwise go unnoticed (cf. Harré's comment above about conversation being its own model).

In discussing the differences between conversational realities (CR's) and disciplinary discourses, I want essentially to compare two epistemologica paradigms, a monological and a dialogical version: i) In our classical (monological) paradigm, we think of individual people as getting to know about objects, visually, at a distance. ii) In the other (dialogical) paradigm, as I shall describe it, people first get to know something of each other, and then from within whatever relationship they might have formed between them, they reach out, so to speak, to make contact with their surroundings, and negotiate between them how those contacts might best be linguistically formulated. Ir
our classical paradigm, we tend to think of proper knowledge as being in the heads of individuals, as being representational, systematic, ahistorical, as formulated in visual (metaphorical) terms, as separate from the knower, and as being about objects existing over against the knower. Under the influence of this paradigm, we feel the urge to explain the forming and the sustaining of disciplinary discourses in terms of systems of rules and conventions, in terms individuals can ‘picture’. Instead, I shall attempt to account for our disciplinary practices as a special kind of practice based in texts. I shall claim that they have their origins within our everyday, embodied (nontextual) conversational practices, and are sustained conversationally in people’s spontaneous, responsive relations to each other. Where, by contrast with our classical paradigm, the kind of knowledge involved in this dialogical form of knowing is social (i.e. ‘between’ not ‘within’ individuals), nonrepresentational, unsystematic, historical, formulated in nonvisual metaphors, embodied or incorporated in people and in their practices, and is formative of the relations between them.4

We do and know how to do things within these kinds of practices: others respond with sympathy to our cries of pain, or with passion to our talk of love, or with concern to our talk of problems, or interest or disdain to our talk of how such conversational talk might work. It is this kind of talk that has been rendered so rationally-invisible to us by our tendency to ‘see’ everything within our classical paradigm. It is to its further exploration that I now turn.

THE SENSUOUS, NONCOGNITIVE NATURE OF EVERYDAY, HUMAN CONVERSATION: KNOWING OF THE THIRD KIND

In discussing the nature of CR’s and their distinction from (disciplinary) discourses, I want to argue for the importance within them of a third, extraordinary form of nonrepresentational, embodied or sensuous, practical-moral knowledge. As such, it is quite distinct from either Ryle’s (1949, Ch. 2) “knowing-that”, for it is knowledge we are unaware of possessing, except in practice, but neither is it like his “knowing-how” (knowledge of a craft of skill), for it is knowledge in common with others. It is a separate, special kind of knowledge, sui generis, which is prior to both, and, in being linked to people’s social and personal identities, determines the available forms of these other two kinds of knowledge. I term it a “knowing from within”.5 It is a kind of knowing which takes into account (and is accountable within) the social situation (Unwelt) within which it is known. It is a ‘practical’ form of knowledge in terms of which people are able to influence each other in their being rather than just in their intellects, i.e., to actually ‘move’ them rather than just ‘giving them ideas’.

Given our current ‘basic’ ways of talking, however, we cannot easily grasp the nature of such knowledge. Indeed, to the extent that we cannot “command a clear view” (Wittgenstein, 1953, no. 122) of its overall nature, we cannot
rationally imagine or systematically represent it. Further, because it cannot be represented (or formed) as an object of knowledge within a normative or disciplined form of talk, i.e., within a discourse, its nature, for us, is extraordinary. Yet, even so... if not as a "model" of itself (note again the terms of Harre's claim above), then at least as a metaphor of itself... if not from within a discourse, then at least from within conversation itself (note Harre's equivocation between discourse and conversation in his bracketing of the latter)... it is still possible, I think, to elucidate its nature. And that is what I want to attempt to do below.

At this point, I want to turn to the work of one of Harre's heroes (and of mine): Lev Semenovich Vygotsky. He also, like Rorty and Garfinkel, talks of language as working to influence people's perception: As he (the generic male child!) grows up, says Vygotsky (1978, p. 32) "the child begins to see the world not only through his eyes but also through his speech". In fact, what Vygotsky emphasizes in his work, is that initially, words work in non-cognitive, formative ways to 'shape' our unreflective, embodied or sensuous ways of looking and acting. Indeed, this has always been one of his main messages, but held 'captive' by the picture of knowledge as representation, there has been a widespread failure to appreciate this — even to the extent of suggesting Vygotsky himself failed to appreciate the importance of sensuous, embodied knowledge also (Takatori, 1991).

This is not so, and in fact, cannot be so. For Vygotsky's main project is to show how we come to be able to plan, direct, control, and to organize our own "higher mental functions or processes", how we develop from creatures functioning under the control of our surrounding (social) circumstances to functioning under our own control. And we come to be able to do this, he claims, as we come to incorporate within ourselves the forms of talk that others use in controlling, directing, and organizing our behavior for us. "All the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals," he says (1978, p. 57). They do so, not because of a representational, referential use of language, but because of its affective, sensory function. Indeed, even a cursory reading of Thought and Language (Thinking and Speech) makes it clear that Vygotsky took seriously Marx's first thesis on Feuerbach[T]that reality has been incorrectly "conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation not as sensuous human activity practice..." (Marx and Engels, 1970, p. 121). Indeed, without the sensory, sensuous, or affective function of words, to 'move' people to perceive and act in different ways, his whole project falls to the ground.

Thus it comes as no surprise, in attempting at the outset to clarify the nature of the problem as he sees it, to find him saying that "when we approach the problems of the interrelation between thought and language... the first question that arises is that of intellect and affect" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 10). If they are separated, then, he says, "the door is closed on the issue of the causation of origin of our thoughts..." (ibid.), for we are unable to understand "the
motive forces that direct thought into this or that channel" (ibid.). Hence, the approach he adopts "shows that every idea contains a transmuted affective attitude toward the bit of reality to which it refers" (ibid.). In other words, the affective attitude which provides the thoughts and ideas of an individual with their dynamic, i.e., with their particular motives and valencies⁶ thus linking them to each other and their surroundings in a particular way, is a transmuted version of a social relationship. But of what kind?

Well, quite literally, of an "instructional" kind; we come to 'instruct' ourselves as others instruct us: They 'point things out to us' ("Look at this!"); 'change our perspective' ("Look at it like this"); 'order' our actions ("Look at the model first, then at the puzzle pieces"); 'shape' our actions ("Turn it over, then it will fit"); 'remind' us ("Think what you did last time"); "What do you already know that's relevant?"); 'encourage' us ("Try again"); 'restrain' us ("Don't be too hasty"); 'evaluate' for us ("That's not right", "Don't do that, that's greedy"); 'set our goals' ("Try to put these pieces together to match that [pointing at a model]"); 'count' ("How many will it take?"); 'measurements' ("Will that fit properly?" "Just compare"); make us 'check' our descriptions ("Is that right?" "Who else says so?" "What's the reason for your belief?"); and so on, and so on, for no doubt a countless number of functions.

These are the means Vygotsky has in mind when he says (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 102, my emphasis) that "the main question about the process of concept formation — or, about any goal-directed activity — is the question of the means by which the operation is accomplished ... To explain the higher forms of human behavior, we must uncover the means by which man learns to organize and direct his behavior." And, "our experimental study proved that it was the functional use of the word, or any other sign, as means of focussing one's attention, selecting distinctive features and analyzing and synthesizing them, that plays a central role in concept formation" (ibid., p. 106). "Learning to direct one's own mental processes with the aid of words or signs is an integral part of the process of concept formation" (ibid., p. 108). In other words, what one has learned to do in thinking conceptually, is, in Vygotsky's terms, not to compare the configuration of a supposed mental representation with the configuration of a state of affairs in reality, but something else much more complicated: one has grasped how to organize and assemble in a socially intelligible way, i.e., a way which makes sense to the others around one, bits and pieces of information dispersed in space and time in accordance with 'instructions' they provided, and which now a supposed 'concept' provides.

On this view, rather than a self-contained, simply subjective activity within an individual — dealing with merely inner, cognitive 'pictures' which may, or may not, be accurate representations of an outer reality — thinking conceptually becomes a special social practice. And furthermore, it becomes a practice in which speech, thought, and feeling are, at least at first and for the
most part, interlinked with their surrounding circumstances in "a dynamic system of meaning" (Vygotsky, 1986, pp. 10-11). Only gradually, and probably as a result of the effects of becoming literate — in which, "in learning to write, the child must disengage himself from the sensory aspect of speech and replace words by images of words" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 181) — can we learn to think like academics, and develop modes of formal, decontextualized rationality, i.e., to think in wholly representational terms. Influenced by this 'picture' of what thinking is, the traditional methods fail "to take into account the perception and the mental elaboration of the sensory material that gave birth to the concept. The sensory material and the word are both indispensable parts of concept formation" (Vygotsky, 1986, pp. 96-7). How might we do better? What kind of account of speech communication would afford us the possibility of linking words to sense, of elucidating the relation of linking words to feeling?

BAKHTIN'S 'DIALOGIC' THEORY OF THE RESPONSIVE UTTERANCE

It is at this point that I would like to turn to Bakhtin's work upon the dialogic nature of speech communication, and to explore what I would like to call the primary rhetorical-responsive function of utterances — an account in which the representational-referential function of speech becomes a secondary and derived function. Bakhtin takes utterances, rather than sentences, as the basic unit of dialogic speech communication. He feels that the claim, made by such linguists as Saussure (followed by Chomsky, of course) that the single sentence, with all its individuality and monologic creativity, can be regarded as a completely free combination of forms of language, is not true of utterances. Actual utterances in a dialogue must take into account the (already linguistically shaped) context into which they are directed. Thus for him: "Any concrete utterance is a link in the chain of speech communication of a particular sphere. The very boundaries of the utterance are determined by a change of speech subjects. Utterances are not indifferent to one another, and are not self-sufficient; they are aware of and mutually reflect one another ... Every utterance must be regarded as primarily a response to preceding utterances of the given sphere (we understand the word 'response' here in the broadest sense)."

Each utterance refutes, affirms, supplements, and relies upon the others, presupposes them to be known, and somehow takes them into account ... Therefore, each kind of utterance is filled with various kinds of responsive reactions to other utterances of the given sphere of speech communication" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 91).

Listening too must be responsive, in that listeners must be preparing themselves to respond to what they are hearing. Indeed, "... when the listener perceives and understands the meaning (the language meaning) of speech, he simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude toward it. He either agrees
or disagrees with it (completely or partially), augments it, applies it, prepares for its execution, and so on. And the listener adopts this responsive attitude for the entire duration of the process of listening and understanding, from the very beginning — sometimes literally from the speaker's first word" (p. 68). And the speaker too, instead of a passive understanding that "only duplicates his [or her] own idea in someone else's mind" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 69), the speaker too talks with an active expectation of a response, an agreement, sympathy, challenge, criticism, objection, obedience, and so on.

In other words, the rhetorical-responsive form of understanding at work in the practical conduct of a dialogue, is very different in kind from the representational-referential form of understanding required of a reader of a text, concerned with what the text is 'about': speakers, unlike readers, must be almost continuously sensitive to the intervention of another 'voice'. Indeed, with this in mind, I want to add another component to this 'responsive' or 'bodily reactive' account of an utterance's meaning: The idea — following Michael Billig's (1987) work upon the rhetorical nature of speech communication — that such reactions or responses are not, of course, always acceptable to, or accepted by others. They respond to what we say or do with criticisms, with challenges to justify ourselves, and we must show how our actions 'fit in with' their's (Mills, 1940). Acceptable responses must be negotiated within a context of argumentation. Hence my designation of this theory as not just responsive, but as rhetorical-responsive.

The rhetorical-responsive view of the speech process opens up for study, then, those dialogical or interactive moments when there is a 'gap' between two (or more) speaking subjects. This is its most important function. It draws our attention to the fact that, no matter how systematic the speech of each may be while speaking;" when one person has finished speaking and the other can respond, the bridging of that 'gap' is an opportunity for an utterly unique, unrepeatable response, one that is 'crafted' or 'tailored' to fit the unique circumstances of its utterance." Indeed, it is "on the boundary between two consciousnesses, two subjects" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 106), that the life — whatever it is that is 'living' in the communicative act — is manifested.

Thus we can appreciate, as Volosinov (1973, p. 68) says, that: "What the speaker values is not that aspect of the form which is invariably identical in all instances of its usage, despite the nature of those instances, but that aspect of the linguistic form because of which it can figure in the given, concrete context, because of which it becomes a sign adequate to the conditions of the given, concrete situation. We can express it this way: what is important for the speaker about the linguistic form is not that it is a stable and always self-equivalent signal, but that it is an always changeable and adaptable sign" (Volosinov, 1973, p. 68). In fact, given both Billig's and Bakhtin's view — that even within the speech, or the writing, of a single individual, many 'voices' can be at work, such 'gaps' can be found, prompting us to affectively react to what they have to say" — the turn to a
'dialogical' account of the speech process opens it up to a whole new realm of discursive activities to study. It is in the creative work of semiotically linking ourselves, meaningfully, both to each other and to our surroundings, that we also socially construct our identities.

CONVERSATION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE 'SENSUS COMMUNIS' AND METAPHOR

The 'formative' or 'form-giving' stance toward the nature of language emphasized in the rhetorical-responsive account, as distinct from the emphasis upon its referential function in other accounts, is, as I see it, an aspect of just one strand in what is coming generally to be known as the social constructionist movement (Harre, 1986, 1992b; Gergen, 1985). Very roughly, this strand can be characterized in terms of its focus upon "words in their speaking", to contrast with another strand which focusses upon characteristics of "already spoken words". This latter, postmodern and/or poststructuralist strand is influenced primarily by the writings of Derrida and Rorty, and emphasizes already existing, decontextualized systems of conventionalized meanings and usages; while the first — in its dialogical, not its monological, individualistic, romanticist form — is primarily influenced by Wittgenstein, Vygotsky, and Bakhtin, and emphasizes the unique, social, relational (and intrapersonal) functions of situated language use. It is from within this dialogical strand of the movement that I want to make the following remarks about the study of conversation and the nature of our 'basic', embodied forms of talk.

Elsewhere (Shotter, 1986, 1991), I have discussed Vico's account of the origin's of a culture's 'common sense' (sensus communis). Briefly here: The social processes involved, he claims, are based not upon anything pre-established either in people or their surroundings, but in socially shared identities of feeling they themselves created in the flow of activity between them. These, he calls "sensory topics", — "topics" (Gr. topos = "place") because they give rise to "commonplaces", i.e., to shared moments in a flow of social activity which afford common reference, and "sensory" because they are moments in which shared feelings for already shared circumstances are created. A paradigm situation here, is everyone running to take shelter from thunder: everyone's responsive reaction to the fear expressed in the character of people's bodily activities, gives a shared sense to an already shared circumstance. It is at this point that he introduced the idea of an "imaginative universal": In the case of thunder, this is Jove, the image of a giant being, speaking giant words. But one can easily imagine other such shared circumstances in which shared feeling, expressed in the same responsive, bodily reactions might occur — the birth of a child, the death of a group member, and so on; and later, perhaps, to more secondary matters, including the matters mentioned by Harré (1992b), like: i) truth telling; ii) mutual recognition (valuing of known over unknown persons);
iii) reverence through ritual (the value of sustaining invented social forms), etc. Thus these first anchor points are to do, not with 'seeing' in common, but with 'feeling' in common, with the 'giving' or 'lending' of a shared significance to shared feelings in an already shared circumstance. In other words, the first mute language is the immediate responsive-representation in gesture of a moment or place of common reference, where the gesture functions metaphorically, not to refer to something already known about, but to indicate an 'is', to establish a 'something' with common significance.

What Vico outlines above then, is a poetic image, a metaphor, in terms of which one might understand the mute, extraordinary, common sense basis for an articulate language — where such a basis constitutes the unsystematized, primordial contents of the human mind, its basic paradigms or prototypes. These are the feelings or intuitions — the sensory topics or commonplaces that make up the basis of a community's sensus communis — in terms of which our first words can have their sense, and against which, much later, the adequacy of our concepts may be judged.

Vico was particularly interested in what might be called "civic rhetoric" and the problem of what constituted good government (Mooney, 1985; Schaeffer, 1990), but he developed his views against a background within which the tradition of rhetoric was under attack by the new "geometric method" of reasoning promoted by the Cartesians. And to an extent, his arguments constitute a counter-attack upon it, for he saw it as completely inimical to his concerns. In his On the Study Methods of Our Time (first pub., 1709), he defends rhetoric on many grounds, but particularly upon the necessity for eloquence in one's speech: For, says Vico, quoting Cardinal Ludvico Madruzzi, "Rulers should see to it not only that their actions are true and in conformity with justice, but that they seem to be so [to everyone]" (Vico, 1765, p. 36). In other words, those who are satisfied with abstract truth alone, and do not bother to find out whether their opinion is shared by the generality of people, cause political calamities. Thus, not only should politicians judge human actions as they actually are, rather than in terms of what they think they ought to be, they should also — in terms of the sensus communis — be able eloquently to persuade the people of their judgment's correctness. But how might such persuading be done? What is involved in us accepting (if not the absolute truth) the truth of a claim relative to our current circumstances?

Here we are back again at our original problem — the understanding of that speech which, rather than simply influencing us in our intellects, 'moves' us to accept its claim in our very being — but now in a somewhat stronger position to confront its nature: The problem arises when we give reasons for any claims we may make; for why should these reasons be accepted as a proof of the claim?

They are accepted, suggests Vico (here following Aristotle, actually: Rh.1356a96–1356b18), not because we as speakers supply a demonstrable proof, a full syllogistic structure which our listeners are passively compelled
(logically) to accept. But because in their incomplete, enthymemic structure, we offer initially unconnected premises that (most of) our audience will be able to connect up for us — and feel that it is they who have ‘seen’ the point! They themselves make the connection by drawing upon the (perhaps in themselves inarticulable) *topoi* in the *sensus communis* already existing between them and us as speakers. Hence, for Vico, the importance in rhetoric, of what he calls the “art of topics” [*ars topic*. Where ‘argument’ in this art “... is not ‘the arrangement of a proof, as commonly assumed, what in Latin is known as *argumentatio*; rather, it is that third idea which is found to tie together the two in the issue being debated — what in the Schools is called the ‘middle term’ — such that topics is the art of finding the middle term. But I claim more: Topics is the art of apprehending the true, for it is the art of seeing all the aspects or *loci* of a thing that enable us to distinguish it well and gain an adequate concept of it. For judgments turn out to be false when their concepts are either greater or lesser than the things they propose to signify...” (Vico, 1988, p. 178 ... although I have preferred Mooney’s, 1985, p. 134 translation here). So, the special nature of the speech that we use here, works to create the ‘space’, in which a ‘proof’ can come into existence as such.

... immediately a ‘showing’ — and for this reason ‘figurative’ or ‘imaginative’, and thus in the original sense ‘theoretical’ [*theorin* — i.e., to see]. It is metaphorical, i.e., it shows something which has a sense, and this means that to the figure, to that which is shown, the speech transfers [metapherein] a signification; in this way the speech which realizes this showing ‘leads before the eyes’ [*phainesthai*] a significance.” This, says Grassi, is *true rhetorical speech*; it is non-conceptual, moving and indicative; it does not just function persuasively, but practically: the metaphor is central to it. In transferring significance from the *sensus communis* to what is said, a metaphor makes ‘visible’, or ‘shows’, listeners a common quality that is not rationally deducible. As such, it cannot be ‘explained’ in any way (either from within an academic discourse, or in any other way); indeed, it is the speech which is the basis of all rational thought. Thus, it is with such a way of talking that we must begin all our investigations.“

**METAPHORS AND MODELS: CONVERSATION AND DISCOURSE**

If we turn now to the task of distinguishing between *conversation* and *academic discourse*, it is perhaps already obvious how the two will differ: not so much in terms of the differential emphases put on demonstrable proofs (although it is clearly less in conversation), as upon the degree to which — in an academic discourses — we do not range over all the *topoi* available in a people’s common sense, but focus upon a particular ‘subject matter’. While the subject-matter of conversations is wholly contingent upon their circumstances, the subject-
matters of disciplines is pre-determined. And furthermore — and this is of outstanding importance — the subject matter of a disciplinary discourse can be 'surveyed' (Wittgenstein) by an individual in rational contemplation as the subject-matter of a conversation cannot. Indeed, we can define an academic discourse as a rational body of speech or writing, a set of ordered statements, that provides a way of representing, for the purposes of disciplined, academic inquiry, a particular kind of knowledge about a topic (a topos), i.e., not just knowledge this is 'accountable', that can be rendered 'rationally-visible' on the spot, when required, but also knowledge which enables us “to see how things [within the subject matter of the discourse] hang together.”19 This is made possible by the discourse being systematized around, not just a single focal topic, but a ‘literalized’ (Rorty, 1989)20 version of it that provides the ‘basis’ for a special type of orderly language game, one ‘within’ which rational persuasion is possible (in a way, Rorty claims, is impossible in ordinary conversation).

But, following Wittgenstein (1953), there is not one, but two ways, in which we might attempt to investigate and assemble the properties of a supposed ‘subject matter’ to ‘see’ how they ‘hang together’: 1) in terms of a model (or a grammatical picture”), or, 2) in terms of a “perspicuous representation”.

Let me discuss both these in turn: 1) The important point about a model (or a grammatical picture) is this: because one knows ahead of time that all its parts do as a matter of fact hang together in an orderly way, it seems that it is only the laws or principles of the order in which they do so that is in question. It is thus possible with a model — say, for example, the ‘picture’ of the mathematical set as a container or enclosure — to introduce an idea with a few illustrated examples, and then to assume that the idea is completely understood in its full generality.22 But as Bloor (1975, pp. 121-2) illustrates, this is far from the truth. Although it may seem — with the ‘picture’ of a bounded area as a model of the mathematical set in mind — that the assertion “the whole is greater than the part” is an undeniable, conceptual tru th, this is not so. For as soon as we come to consider the case of an infinitely long series of integer numbers, we realize that we can put the endless series of even numbers in one-to-one correspondence with the integers in a way which will never break down. But the series of even numbers is ‘contained in’ the series of integers, isn’t it? As Bloor shows, this ‘contradiction’ was transmuted into a ‘definition’ (of what it is for a set to be infinite) by a ‘renegotiation’: it became perfectly intelligible to think that when a part is ‘similar’ to the whole, then the set is infinite — taking the image of one-to-one correspondence now as the ‘picture’ of what ‘similarity’ is.

In mathematics, we make many such models: For instance, we can mentally ‘look’ at the points on a straight line and can imagine at least a number of them stretching off in either direction, and assume, that wherever on the line we might look, they would be everywhere the same. Thus, as individuals, we can construct a ‘view’, a God’s-eye view of the line, and assume what it ‘must’ be like everywhere along its length, i.e., the order will continue on everywhere the same.

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These moves in mathematics, and in many other spheres are perfectly benign, as long as the phenomena being dealt with, genuinely are in fact orderly, and the problem is just to find the form of their order; they allow us to act — indeed, they channel us (as individuals) into acting — in a way which conforms to that order ahead of time. But this is precisely Wittgenstein's point: when the phenomena of interest to us are not already orderly, when they are — like the everyday life of human beings — somewhat chaotic, or only partially ordered, then we run into trouble. And, of course, a significant part of Wittgenstein's philosophical effort went into showing the consequences of such 'bewitchments'.

It is not our purpose here, however, to explore such 'bewitchments' further, but to question how else might we proceed, if not in terms of 'grammatical pictures' or models? His answer is, in terms of 'perspicuous representations' — a way of making sense of things that we are unable to do on our own, a way that relies upon people 'seeing' things in the same way as each other.

2) One of the metaphors Wittgenstein introduces in *Philosophical Investigations* for our language, is of it as a somewhat disorderly city, we can see it as an ancient city, as "a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight and regular streets and uniform houses" (1953, no. 18). And that he sometimes himself saw it in just this way is evidence by the fact that, just after saying that "a main source of our failure to understand is that we do not command a clear view of the use of words . . ." (1953, no. 122), he went on to say, "a philosophical problem has the form: 'I don't know my way about'" (1953, no. 123).

But how might talk of our language as being like an ancient city be of any help to us? No identifiable ancient city is mentioned, and ancient cities in general lack any already well known order. So, if it is the case that an ancient city is a good metaphor (one among a number of others he offers) for our language, what does it teach us about its character? Well, if we cannot command a clear view of its street plan (from a vantage point outside it, or from a map), we can still get to know quite a lot about it from living within it . . . Vico's point! We can get to know certain prominent landmarks. And by approaching them from different directions, use them as fixed points of reference for more adventurous excursions. But to be sure of its character, however, we must fill in details of the streets and houses inbetween (for we cannot assume an already given order); and this will take time. We might need, in fact, to dig down and to investigate some of the archeological layers, and so on. In other words, as a metaphor of our language, it may not tell us all we want to know about it, but it does suggest to us, nonetheless — at least, to those of us who know what it is like to live in a city — quite a number of important points about how we might get to know about our knowledge of our own language better.

In Wittgenstein's terms, it functions as a "perspicuous representation", where the point of such a representation is that it
produces just that understanding which consists in 'seeing connections'. Hence the importance of finding and inventing intermediate cases.

The concept of perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks the form of account we give, the way we look at things” (1953, no. 122).

And as for Wittgenstein (and for Vico), so for us. Those metaphors which 'touch' upon the sensory topics making up our embodied common sense, can, in a “joint action” between us and those who present them, open up for us a 'space' in which we can 'see' as they see, i.e., make sense, and give the same kind of form to our feelings as they give to theirs.

We are now in a position to distinguish between a conversational reality and the 'reality' of an academic discourse: An academic discourse provides the individuals socialized into it with the possibility — after enough hermeneutical work upon the discipline's texts — of them being able to build up a systematic mental image of the discipline's 'subject matter', of them being able, so to speak, mentally to 'survey' it. This ability is what they have to display if they are to pass their examinations. It may be a fictitious 'reality', a possible reality, but like any good science fiction novel, one can get a 'sense' of its nature from within the texts of the discipline. Indeed, we can get a 'sense' of what activities it would support if it were truly real; thus, from within it, we can discover further 'facts' in its support. Hence, our possibility of 'testing' it. Thus it is in this sense that an academic discourse can be said to represent a supposedly underlying, or otherwise hidden, reality . . . a reality with an essence. Where, as Wittgenstein (1953, no. 92) says, this 'essence' is "not something that already lies open to view and that becomes surveyable by a rearrangement, but something that lies beneath the surface. Something that lies within, which we see when we look into the thing, and which analysis digs out.” Thus, academic discourses, to adapt Foucault's expression (see note 2), form as systematic objects the objects of which they speak, i.e., form them as mental representations. And we cannot emphasize too much the part played by texts in this process: all academic work begins with reading texts (and teachers talking conversationally about how such reading might be done), and in the writing of further texts (and conversations about how that might be done also). It is by reference to the textually formed subject matter of the discipline that teachers 'police' its boundaries.

By contrast, while the participants in everyday conversations may have a 'sense' of what they are talking about, even a 'joint sense', speakers do not 'police' or 'discipline' their talk in terms of single grammatical pictures. If one figure of speech proves unintelligible, another is tried. If there is an order in conversation, then it is one of a very different kind to that available in a God's-eye view, a surveyable order, subordinate to subject matter of the discipline. In a conversation, people do know what they are talking about, but as Garfinkel (1967, p. 40) puts it: i) 'The matter talked about' is an event that is developing

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and developed within the course of the conversation producing it; furthermore, ii) those producing it, know in practice, i.e., from within this development, both the 'how' and the 'what' of its production; indeed, iii) in being (responsively) aware of each other's (responsive) understanding in the process, they know how to play their own part in its further development. And they can do all this without any reference to any inner mental representations, to any inner theories; their 'embodied' linguistic reactions are sufficient. Although no rules or standards obtained outside conversations can be used to decree what is rational within them, this does not mean (as the classical paradigm suggests) that there are no standards to which those involved in conversations can be held answerable: the point of all the discussion above has been to show that, responsively, what can be said at each moment in a conversation is not arbitrary, a matter of 'mere' talk. In their conversational talk with each other, in being answerable for their own stance within the conversation, and in needing to address themselves to the others around them, speakers must, morally, take account of their situation in their moment-by-moment voicing of their talk. Their success in doing this will be marked by the responses of those around them. In such a world as this, drowning men will still die, furniture will still feel solid when thumped, and bricks resist kicking. But the significance of such events will still be as much open to 'construction' and thus discussion, as they are at the moment.\footnote{24}

**WHAT IS REAL FOR SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM**

In the light of the above, I would now like to examine the present state of Harré's art as set out in both Harré (1990) and Harré (1992b). Below, I have set out nine statements. They summarize, I hope, important aspects of his investigatory stance. After each one I have appended a comment:

1. In *Harré* (1990, p. 301), Harré talks of "experimental apparatus and the advancing techniques of observations as prosthetic extensions of or as 'organs' added to our perceptual systems."

This, as I see it, is the most important idea of all. What we know about the 'otherness' around us is revealed to us 'in' 'relations', or 'differences' between an instrument-assisted outflow of activity and the incoming result. This gives rise to a 'two-way flow' psychology: to do with (i) a prosthetic outflow of activity, out from people towards their already partially structured surroundings, in which they can 'give' or 'lend' them further structure, thus to investigate them further; and (ii) an inflow of activity in the other direction, back from an already partially structured environment into the people within it; and (iii) the relations between these two processes, which they must interpret hermeneutically to grasp the nature of the situation within which their current activity is 'grounded'. However, Harré needs explicitly i) to acknowledge Vygotsky's notion of...
"psychological instruments or devices"; ii) the fact that these can be linguistic; and iii) that we cannot only hermeneutically interpret speech, but that we can act and perceive through our words, prosthetically. That is, some of our instruments are semiotic instruments.

Thus, in our investigations of conversational realities, we can make use of the knowledge of conversation we already have as a prosthetic extension (practical resource) for our own further investigations of its nature. By acting and seeing through that knowledge — like blind persons probe the terrain ahead of them as they walk with their sticks — we can be both selective in our questioning of ourselves, and, make sense of the resulting answers we give. However, as a full metaphor — not yet literalized into a 'picture' or model — our practical knowledge of conversation is not at all like the blind person's stick, an already, fully realized object, to be used in just one, correct way. In fact, as the background from out of which what we say has its function, we cannot as such make it an object of thought and debate.

2. In a psychology of this kind, we can drop the term 'world' and substitute 'Umwelt': that region of the world which is available to a species in virtue of its capacity to make and to notice differences within it, in terms of the activities it 'allows', 'afford' or 'permits' (Gibson, 1979).

Indeed, everything we do, and everything we discover enlarges, or articulates further our contact with our Umwelt, and it is from with that Umwelt that we can reach out to make some kind of contact with what is beyond it — unlike a framework, it has no well-defined boundaries.

3. The ontological basis for all our psychology, for all the kinds of objects we can deal with, and our ways of dealing with them, must be found in joint actions and the persons who perform them.

This follows from the fact that our Umwelt is a product of joint action.

4. What is common to all versions of social constructionism: all psychological phenomena and the beings in which they are realized are produced discursively, i.e., conversationally.

While this is true, in slipping and sliding between conversation and discourse, Harré fails to clarify the paradigm, monologic or dialogic, in terms this claim should be interpreted: the effects of each need to be distinguished.

5. Societies are only sustained by those within them communicating in 'accountable' ways.

While this is true for what might be called 'dominant social orders'. Conversational ways of talking can still be intelligible to participants without being 'accountable' in the
dominant sense of what it is to be rational. Hence the possibility of marginal peoples speaking accountably, in a way utterly at odds with dominant discourses.

6. Not all systems of discursive practice can provide a viable form of human life: i) truth telling; ii) mutual recognition (value of known persons); iii) reverence (value) through ritual (sustaining of invented social forms).

Indeed, it is of the utmost importance to investigate this issue further: the Vico-Collingwood thesis of common humanity suggests that not all our ways of relating ourselves to each other can produce human communities sustainable over many generations.

7. I am responsible for at least some of my actions — there is a distinction between what ‘I’ do and what merely happens.

This is crucial in all societies. But it is a distinction that is an outcome of a whole range of ‘instructional’ activities. Harré (1983) has characterized the space in which such activities occur as a “Vygotskian space” within which there are various “zones of proximal development” (to use Vygotsky’s term). All involve “joint action” (Shotter, 1980, 1984) in one or another of its forms.

8. A transcendental condition of possibility (and moral maxim) for the possibility of joint action is: listening to the other as an equal participant in a conversation.

This is a necessity if, to repeat Vico’s (1988, p. 178) remarks above, we are “to distinguish [something] well and gain an adequate concept of it”, and not to impose a concept upon it that is either greater or lesser than the thing it is supposed to signify.

9. What is real for social constructionists is the moral intransigencies experienced in conversation: material ‘affordings’ are known to us through ‘moral’ affordings, i.e., from within the relationships we establish with those around us.

For no matter how many stones we may kick, or claims we may make that “drowning men still die”, the final court of appeal is from within a conversational reality. Our ways of knowing are relational ways, and from within different forms of life (relational forms), we acquire different knowledges.

CONCLUSION: PSYCHOLOGY AND THE DEMISE OF THE EPISTEMOLOGY PROJECT

Although the “epistemology project” — the idea that knowledge is to be seen as the correct representation of an independent reality — is currently under attack,
not all are agreed as to where, precisely, the main force of that attack should be focussed. 1. Some (such as Rorty, 1980), see epistemology as primarily concerned with providing foundations for claims to knowledge. Thus on this interpretation, overcoming epistemology simply means abandoning "a desire for constraint", a desire which, in the vocabulary of the epistemological project itself, is "a desire to find 'foundations' to which one might cling, frameworks beyond which one must not stray, objects which impose themselves, representations which cannot be gainsaid" (PMN, p. 315). 2. While others, and here I have in mind Charles Taylor (1984, 1987, as well as Heidegger, 1977, and Foucault, 1970) have a different, and ultimately more radically important focus. They see the commitment to knowledge as representation, as always involving the inner 'depiction' or 'picturing' of an outer reality as the central feature of the epistemological tradition. Where, as Taylor (1984, p. 18) points out, a corollary of this view that is important for us — given our interest in conversation — is that we "construe our awareness and understanding of each other on the same representational model ... in terms of a theory that I hold about you and the meaning of your words".

With whom should we align ourselves? Well, if we do away with shared frameworks, shared beliefs, shared values; if we give up appealing to the reality of objects (i.e., we stop kicking stones); if we make no more appeals to conceptual truths, can we still find some 'foundations' for ourselves? In fact, the answer seems to be "Yes: in the sensus communis of the human Umwelt." We are not limited, as Rorty seems to think, to simply trying to make the other guy's way of talking "look bad", and our own "look good". There is a 'basis' for our talk, a 'background' from within which we make sense of our lives, a realm of knowledgeable activity which is sustained, not simply by a form of practical-technical knowledge, nor by a form of theoretical-conceptual knowledge, but a third kind of practical-moral knowledge of the non-conceptual kind. The study of this third, background, sphere of human activity is not easy. "We cannot," as Taylor (1987, p. 477) points out, "turn the background from which we think into an object for us." We face a new task, whose excellence consists in that of attempting "to articulate the background of our lives perspicuously" (p. 481) — where, as Wittgenstein (1953, no. 122) puts it, "a perspicuous representation [i.e., the provision of an apposite metaphor or image] produces just that understanding which consists in 'seeing connections'".

Harre, in insisting "the primary human reality is persons in conversation", has confronted us with a problem that won't go away, but which cannot be solved with available 'theories' or 'methods': the problem of how a common "sense" is established and sustained, the problem of specifying its conditions of possibility. Lacking a systematic representation of its nature, interested only in what we, as individual academics, can 'picture', we have failed to 'see' its importance; the nature of the social process involved in its creation and sustenance have been 'rationally-invisible' to us. It has been all but destroyed in well meaning projects.
that, because they must be justified within the prevailing 'rationality', work to intensify monologic, systematic, theoretical, surveyable 'realities' of the individual mind, realities which can be thought, but in which people cannot live. Rom Harré's perspicuous representations of its fundamental, irreplaceable nature are a small step in the opposite direction, at least a hint of another way.

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NOTES

1 Representations are not grounded in yet further representations, but in the knowledgeable grasp we have of the world as socially competent agents within it. If we need some vocabulary for the discussion of its status in relation to our other forms of knowledge — of i) already existing, real things, or ii) of nonexisting, fictitious things — we might claim it relates to iii) a third imaginary realm of only partially existing entities, entities on the way to coming into existence (Shotter, 1990, 1991).

2 The notion of an account as distinct from a theory, will be crucial in what follows (and will come to occupy a more and more prominent place as the article develops): as I see it, while a theory may represent or picture a state of affairs, an account (among other functions) works practically, to draw our attention to features of our circumstances that would otherwise go unnoticed.

3 In Foucault's terms, discourses are "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (1972, p. 49), i.e., form them as objects of rational contemplation and debate.

4 While it may be about those relations also, it can only be about them in the sense of referring to the already existing relationship, or, to a relationship that might exist. Referential talk is talk about things at a distance from them, so to speak. While it may help speakers to make judgments, to form plans, to decide ahead of time upon a course of action regarding a relational state of affairs, it is not formative of the actual relations between people.

5 It is the kind of knowledge one has, not only from within a social situation, a group, or an institution, and which thus takes into account (and is accountable within) the social situation within which it is known. It is also knowledge that one has from within oneself as a human being and as a socially competent member of a culture — hence I know 'from the inside', so to speak, what it is like to be involved in conversation. So, although I may not be able to reflectively contemplate the nature of that knowledge as an inner, mental representation, according to the questions asked, I can nonetheless call upon it as a practical resource in framing appropriate answers.

6 Here we might also talk of formative or architectonic tendencies ... a bit of extra vocabulary is always useful.
7 That is, the complex affective and communicational intentionalities in actual acts of speaking, intentionalities which change and ‘temporally develop’ as an utterance is executed, must be replaced by something merely imaginable: an already completed, spatialized image.

8 In this view, the emergence of “representation” is due to the fact that, as linguistic competency increases, one becomes more adept in constructing a network of intralinguistic references to function as a context into which to direct one’s utterances. In other words, there is a move away from a reliance upon the sense of one’s speech, i.e., a reliance upon a referent in the immediate, shared context, and a move toward a reliance upon meaning and syntax, i.e., upon links within what has already been, or, with what might be, said. In essence, this is a decrease of reference to what ‘is’ with a consequence increase of reference to what ‘might be’, an increased reference to an hermeneutically constructed imaginary (or theoretical) world.

As a result, what is said requires less and less grounding in an extralinguistic context — for it can find its supports almost wholly within a new, intralinguistically constructed context. Thus one can tell people about (represent to them or give them an account of) situations not actually at the moment present. Such a consequence requires, however, the development of methods for warranting in the course of one’s talk (i.e., giving support to) one’s claims about what ‘might be’ as what being what ‘is’ — one must learn to say, for instance, when making a claim about a state of affairs, that others saw it that way too, and so on. By the use of such methods and procedures, adults can construct their statements as factual statements, and adult forms of speech can thus come to function with a large degree of independence from their immediate context.

9 The single sentence is, of course, a unit of linguistic analysis, not an ‘ordinary’ unit of speech communication.

10 This responsive theory of primary meaning could equally well have been attributed to G. H. Mead. In Mind, Self and Society he claims:

“The mechanism of meaning is present in the social act before the emergence of consciousness on awareness of meaning occurs. The act or adjutive response of the second organism gives to the gesture of the first organism the meaning it has” (pp. 77–78).

11 Although, here too, Bakhtin points out that other ‘voices’ are at work: “The word cannot be assigned to a single speaker. The author (speaker) has his own inalienable right to the word, but the listener has his rights, and those whose voices are heard in the word before the author comes upon it also have their rights (after all, there are no words that belong to no one)” (Bakhtin, 1986, pp. 121–122).

12 In the past, I have talked of these ‘dialogical moments’ in terms of the “joint action” (Shatter, 1984). I now feel Bakhtin’s designation of them as dialogical is to be preferred.

13 Indeed, the talk of a single person may exhibit what Bakhtin calls “hidden dialogicality”, i.e., “… although only one person is speaking … [each] uttered word responds and reacts with its every fiber to [an] invisible speaker, points to something outside itself, beyond its own limits, to the unspoken words of another person” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 197).

14 In an interactive process Harré (1992) and I (Shotton, 1980, 1984) call “joint action”.

15 We will see the connection to Wittgenstein in a moment.

16 Rorty (1989, p. 19) approves of “the Davidson claim that metaphors do not have meanings . . .”, and takes it as implying that we cannot therefore argue for new ways of talking, for meanings as such, he claims, can only come “from the interior of a language
game" (ibid., p. 47). Thus all we can do is to try to make vocabularies we don't like "look bad" (ibid., p. 44). If Vico and Grassi are right, this is nonsense; the presentation of a new metaphor is an argument.

17 Grassi notes that the term 'metaphor' is itself a metaphor, as it is derived from the verb *metapherein* 'to transfer' which originally described a concrete activity.

18 As C. W. Mills (1940) said now more than 50 years ago, "the differing reasons men give for their actions are not themselves without reasons . . . What we want is analysis of the integrating, controlling, and specifying functions a certain type of speech fulfills in socially situated actions" (p. 439).

19 Rorty (1982, p. xiv) quotes Sellars as claiming that philosophy is the "attempt to see how things, in the broadest possible sense of the term, hang together, in the broadest possible sense of the term."


21 Edward (1982) also discusses the forming of a 'grammatical picture' in terms of the 'literalizing' of a metaphor. Those who know this excellent book will recognize how much I have benefitted from it.

22 "The basic evil of Russell's logic, as of mine in the *Tractatus*, is that what a proposition is illustrated by a few commonplace examples, and then pre-supposed as understood in full generality" (Wittgenstein, 1980, I, no. 38).

23 "Mere description is so difficult because one believes that one needs to fill out the facts in order to understand them. It is as if one saw a screen with scattered colour-patches, and said: the way they are here, they are unintelligible; they only make sense when one completes them into a shape. — Whereas I want to say: Here is the whole. (If you complete it, you falsify it.)" (Wittgenstein, 1980, I, no. 257).

24 Opponents of social constructionism seem to think that thumping furniture is in itself an effective argument against it. They seem to think that constructionists are claiming that 'mere' talk is enough to make things 'real' to the recipients of such talk. However, far from constituting good reasons for arguing against social constructionism, such antics seem to me only to indicate that opponents are committed, and think constructionists are also committed, to the view that the only function of language is representation. Such 'thumpings' have little bearing upon the reality of such things as promises, cravings, and other such relational entities.

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