

Achievement and Completion: Dispositions in the Middle Works of Sartre and Wittgenstein

Timur UÇAN

Bordeaux Montaigne University

Unité Mixte de Recherche Sciences, Philosophie, Humanités

Abstract

This article proposes a reflexion about the place and eventual contribution of dispositions to our understandings, explanations, and conceptions of actions by a comparative study of the conceptions of dispositions of Wittgenstein and Sartre in their middle works. Dispositions have indeed been traditionally assumed as providing middle grounds for knowledge as a whole. However, accounting for a difficulty with respect to our expressions of dispositions can serve to elucidate that the actualist conception of possibility and correlative coercive conception of necessity criticized by Sartre and Wittgenstein are superfluous and misleading. Although expressions of dispositions are relatively sufficient to account for some of our reasonings and practices, naive dispositionalism poses difficulties which need to be addressed. Both Sartre and Wittgenstein elucidate that solving such difficulties involves accounting for disposition as action. For, although dispositions can be relatively abstracted from contexts and circumstances, thusly proceeding leaves us with a thin or tenuous concept of dispositions as propensions or inclinations. By contrast, accounting for the thickness displayed by the concept of disposition involves, both according to Sartre and to Wittgenstein, the achievement of the elucidation of the relevance of the practice of disposition to our conceptions of dispositions.

Keywords: achievement, action, completion, disposition, possibility

المخلص

تقترح هذه المقالة محاولة للتفكير في مكانة الاستعدادات ومساهمتها النهائية في فهمنا وتفسيراتنا ومفاهيمنا للإنجاز من خلال دراسة مقارنة لمفاهيم الاستعدادات لدى كل من فييتجنشتاين وسارتر في أعمالهما الوسطى. لقد كان من المفترض تقليدياً أن توفر الاستعدادات أرضية مشتركة للمعرفة ككل. ومع ذلك، فإن تفسير الصعوبة فيما يتعلق بتعبيراتنا عن الاستعدادات يمكن أن يساعد في توضيح كيف أن المفهوم الفعلي للإمكان والمفهوم القسري المترابط للضرورة الذي انتقده سارتر وفييتجنشتاين غير لزومي ومضلل. وعلى الرغم من أن التعبير عن الاستعدادات كافٍ نسبياً لتفسير بعض منطقتنا وممارساتنا، فإن الاستعداد الساذج يفرض صعوبات تحتاج إلى دراسة. ويوضح كل من سارتر وفييتجنشتاين أن حل مثل هذه الصعوبات يتطلب تفسير الاستعداد باعتباره فعلاً. لأنه على الرغم من أن الاستعدادات يمكن تجريبها نسبياً من السياقات والظروف، إلا أن المضي قدماً يترك لنا مفهوماً رقيقاً أو ضعيفاً للاستعدادات باعتبارها نزوعات أو ميولاً. وعلى النقيض من ذلك، فإن تفسير السمك الذي يظهره مفهوم الاستعداد يتضمن، وفقاً لسارتر وفييتجنشتاين، تحقيق توضيح مدى أهمية ممارسة الاستعداد لمفاهيمنا عن الاستعدادات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإنجاز، العمل، التمام، الاستعداد، الإمكان

Résumé

Cet article propose une réflexion sur la place et l'éventuelle contribution des dispositions à nos compréhensions, explications et conceptions de l'action par une étude comparative des conceptions des dispositions de Wittgenstein et de Sartre dans leurs œuvres intermédiaires. Les dispositions ont en effet été traditionnellement supposées fournir des fondements médians à la connaissance conçue comme un tout. Cependant, expliquer une difficulté par rapport à nos expressions de dispositions peut servir à élucider que la conception actualiste de la possibilité et la conception coercitive corrélative de la nécessité critiquée par Sartre et Wittgenstein sont superflues et égarantes. Car, si les expressions de dispositions sont relativement suffisantes pour rendre compte de certains de nos raisonnements et pratiques, le dispositionnalisme naïf pose des difficultés qui ont besoin d'être adressées. Sartre et Wittgenstein élucident tous deux que la résolution de telles difficultés engage de rendre compte de la disposition comme action. Car, bien que les dispositions puissent être relativement abstraites des contextes et des circonstances, ainsi procéder nous laisse avec un concept mince ou ténu de dispositions comme propensions ou inclinations. En revanche, la prise en compte de l'épaisseur affichée par le concept de disposition implique, selon Sartre et Wittgenstein, la réalisation de l'élucidation de la pertinence de la pratique de la disposition pour nos conceptions des dispositions.

Mots-clés : réalisation, action, achèvement, disposition, possibilité

Introduction

The main objective of this article is to propose a reflexion about the place and eventual contribution of dispositions to our understandings, explanations, and conceptions of actions. For this objective, I render explicit similarities, equivalences, and convergences of Sartre's and Wittgenstein's treatment of a problem related to our expressions of dispositions. Circumstantially and contextually, some mentions of dispositions are indeed unproblematically equatable with mentions of reasons. The questions "why do you do this?" and "why do you do this *in such a way*?" can be answered by means of "I *like* doing this" (or less commonly: "I *am disposed* to do this") and "I like doing this *in such a way*" (or less commonly: "I am disposed to do this *in such a way*"). That is to say, the realization of a considered action can be assumed to be, relevantly and sufficiently, both understandable and explainable. And such could not be achieved only on the basis of an agent's experience of one's own previous achievements of similar actions and of the modalities of their achievements. Such can be achieved also on the basis of the knowledge practically had by the agent who knows one's (eventual) *ways* of achieving such actions, of comparing and estimating such ways by taking into account their likeliness to be successful and satisfactory.

In this sense, even without using explicitly the concept of disposition, an agent can thusly express one's disposition to act in a (determinate) way in equivalent or similar circumstances. To this extent, the concept of disposition ought to be considered as a thick concept, a concept which displays dimensions and whose eventually inter-related applications are to be elucidated. For we ordinarily need to and do distinguish between ways in which we achieve or are achievers. Indeed, not only our past actions, but also our knowledge of, and even and importantly, our attitudes with respect to our past actions contribute to understanding, conceiving and realizing new actions, and also to the practical enrichment and deepening of experience which *sometimes* result from our actions. Mentions of dispositions can serve to account for the unities, not only of actions which are similar relatively to a given disposition, but also of (actual) ways of acting (relatively to *relations* of dispositions), of *behavioural patterns*.¹ Further and remarkably, in appropriate circumstances, we can dispose ourselves to be disposed in given ways. And, the very activity in which *disposing* consists can relevantly be means for such ends, as for example, creating or looking after a garden.

In this way, not only that dispositions can serve us to understand and explain actions, but also, as (quasi-independently-existing) units, dispositions can seem to relevantly constitute grounds for our explanations of human actions, habits, conventions, and events. Someone can indeed be said to have a disposition, that is to say, to be disposed to thinking, feeling, doing, acting in some way, even when one does *not* think, feel, do, act in that way. That latitude is shown by precisions which can be achieved with respect to our concept of disposition, as elucidated by the expressions of "internal dispositions" or "latent dispositions" whose uses are very similar to ascriptions of capacities, in philosophically relevant ways that shall be explained.

However, could dispositions have really, *as such*, sufficed, if required, to *ground* our understandings, explanations and conceptions of human actions and behaviours? For, acknowledging the ordinary thickness of the concept of disposition could not have been equatable with the philosophical move which consists in presenting (our knowledge of) dispositions *as grounds for knowledge as such, as a whole*, and also

¹ Importantly enough, the concept of behavioural pattern can be used *without* committing to, and also critically *against* behaviourism.

thereby for knowledge of human action. With this article, I will propose an elucidation of the fact that such move generates most of the difficulties its realization was or is meant to solve. And, correlatively, that both Sartre and Wittgenstein have shown the superfluity and misleadingness of such move. Our concerns with the concept of disposition and our treatments of the problems related to dispositions are, I argue, expressive of a difficulty with the apparently innocuous assumption according to which: whatever can be actual *must* first be possible, and correlatively, that the possible somehow must and cannot exist like the actual, so to speak, *as a preliminary shadow of the actual*. If the affirmation that we can explain some actions by ascribing dispositions to ourselves or to others does not generate a difficulty, the same does not hold for the claim that we do what we do because we have the dispositions we have.

To achieve such reflexion about the place and eventual contribution of dispositions to our understandings, explanations, and conceptions of actions, I will first propose a comparative study of Sartre's treatment of "the problem of the being of possibles" in *Being and Nothingness* (2003, Part II, First Chapter, iv), with Wittgenstein's treatment of a "paradox which lies in our saying that something which is indeed not the case is nonetheless possible" (2003, p. 39), so as to elucidate the proximity and convergences of their ways of addressing a central difficulty about our expressions of dispositions. Then I will propose a brief study of some convergences of the thoughts of Sartre and Wittgenstein with the ones of some philosophical pragmatists, to distinguish naive dispositionalism from philosophical pragmatism. Such distinction will serve to show the importance of the criticism of dispositionalism to account for the criticisms of causalism and metaphysicism made by Sartre and Wittgenstein. Then, in the second part of the article, I will attempt to elucidate that accounting for disposition as action, for the importance of disposition as a practice, is necessarily required according to Sartre and Wittgenstein to account for dispositions.

Before achieving such reflexion, I precise that throughout this article, I attempt to elucidate and remedy to infelicitous translation choices which have rendered quasi-'inaccessible' central aspects of Sartre's conception of action in English. Although I will not propose a complete study of the philosophical backgrounds of the approaches of Sartre and Wittgenstein, I will endeavour not to instrumentalize aspects of their thoughts. I will rather simply explicit the similarities, equivalences, and convergences of the thoughts of Sartre and Wittgenstein with respect to the problem previously formulated, to make the following independent contribution.

1. A Central Difficulty about our Expressions of Dispositions

It's no wonder to remark that there are unproblematic cases in which we do speak *of* dispositions of persons, as previously envisaged. That some persons and not others act in some ways rather than other ways is unsurprising. To ordinary parlance belongs the expression that persons are *likely* to act in some ways in some contexts and circumstances. But what does involve speaking *about* dispositions? I previously stressed the difficulty by suggesting that dispositions are quasi-independently-existing units. Dispositions indeed present *some* independence with respect to persons, objects, context and circumstances. For example different persons can speak about dispositions of other persons or objects which are not theirs, in different contexts and circumstances. But such sort of independence hardly could have involved their (material) existence independently from persons, objects, contexts, circumstances, and – as I hope to render clearer – from actions.

1.1. Sartre's treatment of "the problem of the being of possibles"

Furthermore the intimate disposition of the liar is positive; it could be the object of an affirmative judgment. The liar intends to deceive and does not seek to hide this intention from oneself nor to disguise the translucency of consciousness; on the contrary, the liar has recourse to it when there is a question of deciding secondary behavior. It explicitly exercises a regulatory control over all attitudes. As for one's flaunted intention of telling the truth ("I'd never want to deceive you! This is true! I swear it!") — all this, of course, is the object of an intimate negation, but also it is not recognized by the liar as one's intention. It is played, imitated, it is the intention of the character which the liar plays in the eyes of one's questioner, but this character, precisely because it is not, is a transcendent. (Sartre, 2003, p. 71, Translation modified).¹

Sartre addresses the difficulty with expressions of dispositions at the occasion of the consideration of a hard case, one at least as ancient as western philosophy, but, more realistically, much more ancient: the one of lie. Remarkably enough, he does not thereby target Cretans. But neither does he use the distinction between the positive and the negative in a moralizing way. He rather proposes a reflexion about the disposition of the liar (or, of a liar), that is, the disposition to lie, the affirmation of a falsity in order to achieve some end/s or objective/s in explainable ways. His account shows forth that: (i) Different lies must present sufficient coherence, if lies are somehow assumed to render possible to a person to achieve one's end/s or objective/s. (ii) Such that the disposition to lie comes to exert a "regulatory control" over the attitudes of the liar and which results in a sort of gradual loss of freedom over one's own relation(s) to truths. The more ends and objectives are achieved by means of lies, the less ends and objectives are

¹ "En outre, la disposition intime du menteur est positive : elle pourrait faire l'objet d'un jugement affirmatif : le menteur a l'intention de tromper et il ne cherche pas à se dissimuler cette intention ni à masquer la translucidité de la conscience ; au contraire, c'est à elle qu'il se réfère lorsqu'il s'agit de décider des conduites secondaires, elle exerce explicitement un contrôle régulateur sur toutes ses attitudes. Quant à l'intention affichée de dire la vérité ("Je ne voudrais pas vous tromper, cela est vrai, je le jure", etc.), sans doute est-elle l'objet d'une négation intime, mais aussi n'est-elle pas reconnue par le menteur comme son intention. Elle est jouée, mimée, c'est l'intention du personnage qu'il joue aux yeux de son interlocuteur, mais ce personnage, précisément parce qu'il n'est pas, est un transcendant." (Sartre, 2006, p. 82)

likely to be achievable without. (iii) The relevant opposite to the *intimate* relation of the liar with affirmed falsities is *publicness*. A lie could not happen, so to speak, ‘in the head’, and is rather an event which involves at least two persons. The relation of persons to some truth is indeed not reciprocal in a basic and central range of cases if a lie is somehow *achieved* by a liar: the liar knows that the used falsity is one, while the person/s to whom is lied does not.

To this extent, Sartre envisages, from the start, lying *as a practice*, the one of the production and the adaptation of falsities by liars according to responses obtained from the persons to whom they lie to realize some of their own objectives. The unreciprocity involved by the analysis of the event of a lie is not merely an unreciprocity between persons with respect to an ideal of truth, to an idea of truth, or ideal truth. Its occurrence rather involves an unreciprocity between persons, dispositions and truths: a liar tells *publicly*¹ to the person/s to whom is lied, a falsity which is *intimately* known by the liar to consist in a falsity which is likely to render achievable an end or objective. Unsurprisingly, if that is not the case, there is no lie: if you did not know that ‘what’ you told to someone was false, that you were intimately convinced to tell the truth, then in a basic and central range of cases, you did not lie. Suppose for example that you thought that Belgrade’s botanical garden is where Belgrade students’ garden is, and that someone asks you the way to go to the botanical garden. You indicate to the person the way to the place you assume to be the botanical garden, which, in fact, is the students’ garden. But this is precisely not the case in which someone sends someone else elsewhere than desired, so to speak, ‘on purpose’. For in the previously considered case, although ‘what’ was said was false, you really did not know that ‘what’ you said was false. So, that a falsity was told by a person can be, in an *unproblematical* sense, be ignored by or be unknown to that person oneself. But can a person ignore to have been lying? Answering this question can be achieved by recalling an aspect of lying-as-practice, which is not explicitly considered by Sartre in the quoted passage. Considered almost independently from the practice of lying, most lies are such that these do not need to be repeated² to indefinitely remain an eventually efficient lie.³ However conceived, one could not have imagined that truths are eternal if lies could not be such. Importantly, Sartre underlines that such consideration does not apply when we think the quasi-relation of the liar to oneself:

And at the very moment at which I was disposing to make myself of bad faith, I had to be of bad faith with respect to these dispositions (theseselves) (Sartre, 2003, p. 91, Translation modified).⁴

Remarkably enough, Sartre did not ‘personalize’ dispositions, that is, confuse dispositions and persons, or argue in favor of personalism - a conception he criticized (2006, pp. 564-568; 2003, pp. 540-544). He wrote: “ces dispositions mêmes” (an expression distinct from another french expression, “ces mêmes dispositions”): dispositions could not be persons within persons.⁵ Sartre rather stresses an aspect of the

1 That is, even an intimate context can be in that sense public.

2 As, for example, when the end for which the liar lied has been thereby achieved.

3 Although a lie will remain a lie even when not efficient anymore, even following the destruction of evidence, or the forgetting of its remembrances. Consideration of another hard case, the one of genocide, provides us with intelligibility-dimensions: attempts and partial results of destruction of genocide evidences are also historical. On this see notably Aushwitz-Birkenau State Museum (2025), Des Forges and Human Rights Watch (1999, p. 27; pp. 186-187; p. 413; pp. 552-553; 581-582) and Panh (2004).

4 I propose the word “theseselves” by contrast with the one of “themselves” to disambiguate cases in which the reflexive pronoun does not refer to persons in a legal sense, from cases in which the reflexive pronoun does refer to persons in a legal sense, a disambiguation that is required notably to account for Sartre’s criticism of personalism.

5 On this, see Uçan, forthcoming.

'intimate' relation of someone to one's dispositions. A person can effortlessly think that a person has or will have one's *own* dispositions. Persons do distinguish between similar dispositions which *can* be 'had' in some sense, by several different individual persons, and those dispositions which *are* somehow 'had' by some persons and not others. The upshot of the distinction is that we need to be able to account for the fact that we can think, each of us, that a disposition is one's *own*, in a way which could not have implied any deprivation of any disposition from anyone else. For example, to truly say a truth which never was said by anyone else, could not have deprived anyone else from the capacity to truly say a truth which never was said by anyone else before – a trivial and ordinary aspect of our relations to truths. But the relations of the liar and the person(s) to whom is lied to dispositions are not necessarily reciprocal. And further, someone could *not* have lied to oneself as someone could to someone else. That is a constitutive dimension of Sartre's concept of "bad faith" which is a moral yet unmoralistic, unmoralizing concept.¹ If a person could tell to some other a falsity known to be a falsity by oneself and unknown to be such by some other, and could tell to oneself as to some other a falsity, yet someone could not ignore that the falsity is a falsity the way in which some other can. In that sense, someone 'cannot' lie to oneself, but can pretend to lie to oneself. That is a stark and important contrast, lying-to-oneself, in this derivative sense of 'lie', needs to be repeated, to present some sort of delusive efficiency, although never, strictly speaking, a lie to oneself will be achieved (A thought Cavell also considered (1979, pp. 375-377)). We can be achievers, inasmuch as we could be failers, for, important is that the application of the concept of 'success' is debatable). Not each ordinary affirmation, and not even each extraordinary slogan extends intelligibility. Even expressions of true and legitimate rebuking can be confuse. And not every voice raising could have rendered intelligible.

States—in contrast with qualities which exist "potentially"—give themselves as actually existing. Hate, love, jealousy are states. An illness, in so far as it is apprehended by the patient as a psycho-physiological reality, is a state. In the same way a number of characteristics which are externally attached to my person can, in so far as I live them, become *states*. Absence (in relation to a definite person), exile, dishonor, triumph are states. We can see what distinguishes the quality from the state: After my anger yesterday, my "irascibility" survives as a simple latent disposition to become angry. On the contrary, after Pierre's action and the resentment which I felt because of it, my hate survives as an *actual* reality although my thought may be currently occupied with another object. A quality furthermore is an innate or acquired disposition which contributes to *qualify* my personality. The state, on the contrary, is much more accidental and contingent; it is *something which happens to me*. There exist however intermediates between states and qualities: for example, the hatred of Pozzo di Borgo for Napoleon although existing in fact and representing an affective, contingent relation between Pozzo and Napoleon the First, was constitutive of the *person* Pozzo.

By *acts* we must understand the whole synthetic activity of the person; that is, every disposition of means as related to ends, not as the for-itself is its own possibilities but as the act represents a transcendent psychic synthesis which the for-itself must live. For example, the boxer's training is an act because it transcends and supports the For-itself, which moreover realizes itself in and through this training. The same goes for the research of the scientist, for the work of the artist, for the election campaign of the politician. In all these

¹ On this see also Cavell's distinction between moralists and moralizers (1979, p. 326).

cases the act as a psychic being represents a transcendent existence and the objective aspect of the relation of the For-itself with the world. (Sartre, 2003, Translation modified, p. 185)¹

Sartre undichotomically distinguishes between *states* and *qualities* of persons. That is to say, the distinction between *states* and *qualities* could not involve that no state is a quality and no quality a state. According to him there are also intermediaries between states and qualities. And, on his approach, the distinction between states and qualities is gradual. He addresses the traditional conception of epistemology by using the Aristotelian distinction between “potentiality” and “actuality”. Thereby he also addresses classical debates of philosophy, as notably the one between Locke and Leibniz about human mind. Sartre’s approach is very clear: modally, states differ from qualities and inversely, as states exist actually while qualities exist potentially. States are simple or mere enactments of dispositions which can latently persist after their enactment. When an event is lived by a person, that event happens *to* and *with* that person, and some dispositions can be said to be enacted, in a sense that is very similar to that which Wittgenstein called “natural reactions”. But, the fact that a determinate disposition of a determinate person is enacted by a determinate event does not necessarily involve that the enacted disposition *tells*, or, is characteristic of that person. By contrast, qualities are potential enactments of “innate” or “acquired” dispositions of the mind (“dispositions d’esprit”).² In fact, Sartre defines acts as “any synthetic activity of the person” or “any disposition of means towards ends”. It is quite clear that according to Sartre accounting for dispositions involves accounting for activity. But there is no equation of acts and actions involved. Such equation, as I shall attempt to render clearer, is both superfluous and misleading. We so far considered Sartre’s elucidation that the past actuality of a lie could not have implied the actuality of the truthfulness of the confusion of some truth and some falsity. Let us now consider Wittgenstein’s approach to a structurally similar problem.

1 “Les *états* se donnent, en opposition avec les qualités qui existent ‘en puissance’, comme existant en acte. La haine, l’amour, la jalousie sont des états. Une maladie, en tant qu’elle est saisie par le malade comme réalité psychophysiologique, est un état. De la même façon, nombre de caractéristiques qui s’attachent de l’extérieur à ma personne peuvent, en tant que je le vis, devenir des *états* : l’absence (par rapport à une telle personne définie), l’exil, le déshonneur, le triomphe sont des états. On voit ce qui distingue la qualité de l’état : après ma colère d’hier, mon ‘irascibilité’ survit comme simple disposition latente à me mettre en colère. Au contraire, après l’action de Pierre et le ressentiment que j’en ai éprouvé, ma haine survit comme une réalité *actuelle*, bien que ma pensée soit présentement occupée d’un autre objet. La qualité, en outre, est une disposition d’esprit innée ou acquise qui contribue à *qualifier* ma personne. L’état, au contraire, est beaucoup plus accidentel et contingent : c’est *quelque chose qui m’arrive*. Il existe cependant des intermédiaires entre états et qualités : par exemple, la haine de Pozzo di Borgo pour Napoléon, bien qu’existant en fait et représentant un rapport affectif contingent entre Pozzo et Napoléon Ier, était constitutive de la *personne* Pozzo.

Par *actes*, il faut entendre toute activité synthétique de la personne, c’est-à-dire toute disposition de moyens en vue de fins, non en tant que le pour-soi est ses propres possibilités, mais en tant que l’acte représente une synthèse psychique transcendante qu’il doit vivre. Par exemple, l’entraînement du boxeur est un acte parce qu’il déborde soutient le pour-soi qui, par ailleurs, se réalise dans et par cet entraînement. Il en est de même pour la quête du savant, pour le travail de l’artiste, pour la campagne électorale du politicien. Dans tous les cas l’acte comme être psychique représente une existence transcendante et la face objective du rapport du pour-soi avec le monde.” (Sartre, 2006, pp. 197-198)

2 Although reluctances might be felt and objections made to the use of both expressions, an unproblematic concept of “innate” dispositions can be construed by remarking that babies do not necessarily react in similar ways in similar conditions.

1.2. Wittgenstein's treatment of a "paradox which lies in our saying that something which is indeed not the case is nonetheless possible"

Accounting for Wittgenstein's approach to dispositions involves accounting for one's criticism of the conception of possibility as a preliminary shadow of the actual:

I want to indicate a paradox which lies in our saying that something which is indeed not the case is nonetheless possible. There is nobody sitting on this chair, but somebody could sit here. It seems as if in this case something were not the case, and yet more the case than if it couldn't have been the case. (Wittgenstein, 2003, p. 39)¹

To present the paradox, Wittgenstein uses a sentence in the grammatical sense whose ordinary awkwardness is immediately remarkable: "There is nobody sitting on this chair". Indeed to express to someone that a chair is empty, the grammatical sentence "Nobody is sitting on this chair" would be at worst, much less ambiguous, and most probably much more appropriate. Yet the use of the phrase used by Wittgenstein is not that extraordinary. After all, you might recall that you asked, or envisage that you could ask to someone whether anyone sits on an empty chair you want to sit on. Would that involve some sort of complete insanity from your part (whatever could be thereby meant, or thereby failed to be meant)? Nobody sits on a chair, and yet is asked by someone who knows that, whether someone else does. Most probably, this is very unlikely. In many such cases, thusly asking expresses a polite way to make sure that the person next to whom you are willing to sit is not going to get disturbed, as for example, that person might be waiting for someone else. Remark that in such contexts, that is not, strictly speaking, permission which is asked to someone, and that such absence is neither problematic nor unpolite.

This is better remarked if contrasted with cases of 'what' can be called "(un)civilized politeness". For example, consider a trader, in a tube, at Bank Tube Station, in London, probably going to work. While in the tube, he first violently strikes you with his shoulder (probably 'because' you somehow are in one's way), and then, aggressively quasi-shouts the word "sorry" at you (probably 'because' the person which turns contingently out to be yourself in that case, needs to be somehow removed from one's way). Or, let us consider another example, of a person who invites you to dinner, to whom you proposed to pay your share, and who yet quasi-shouts at you the next that you should have paid your dinner. By contrast with such cases of "(un)civilized politeness", asking whether someone sits in an empty chair, less than madness, expresses real care, attention. Yet the dimension of politeness is not secondary in this case. To be used to uses could not necessarily remand to "second nature".² Of which an aspect is to remark that there is no unmisleading *equivalence* between "using words of politeness" and "acting in polite ways" and inversely, even if usually, such uses are mostly mutually integrative. To this extent, Wittgenstein, with this relatively awkward, unusual formulation, poses a philosophical problem. The grammatical sentence "there is nobody sitting on this chair" can be used to mean "nobody is sitting on this chair". So we do not necessarily confuse "there is nobody" with "nobody" and inversely. And in a sense that surely is sufficient to dissolve the paradox. Nevertheless, one can nevertheless wonder whether the paradox has been addressed and can be unfolded at all.

1 "Ich will auf ein Paradox hinweisen, welches darin liegt, dass wir sagen, es sei zwar etwas nicht der Fall, sei aber möglich. Es sitzt auf diesem Sessel niemand, es könnte hier aber jemand sitzen. Es ist als wäre hier etwas nicht der Fall, aber doch mehr der Fall, als wenn es nicht der Fall sein könnte." (Wittgenstein, 2003, p. 38)

2 As unclear there was any "first". On this see also Marrou (2021) and Negarestani (2018, p. 268), and also Sahlins (2008).

To achieve such objective, let us distinguish distinct imaginary, or eventually lived, cases. One in which you arrived earlier than someone else with whom you are going to meet in a crowded place in which you are looking for a table for both yourself and the person with whom you are going to meet. One or several persons sit at a large table where many places are empty. You ask whether someone sits on these chairs. If this or these persons are waiting for one or several persons, they might reply that someone or some ones are sitting on these chairs, although nobody (actually) sits on this or these chair/s.

And consider another case in which, as earlier, you are just looking for a nice place, with a comfortable chair to sit in. You see empty chairs, at the terrasse of a café. You sit or ask a waiter(ess) whether you can sit in a chair. You just need to sit. You are tired. You have worked the whole day. It's hopefully going to be a moment of enjoyment. And the waiter(ess) tells you that you cannot. You precise that you will not stay long. The waiter(ess) tells you that these places are reserved, and shows you empty chairs in which you had not wished to sit, for example at the very back of the café, next to the entrance of the toilets, or, at the very entrance of the covered terrasse of a café, next to the door, from which freezing cold air blows.

The consideration of such cases can serve to elucidate that the emptiness or fulness of chairs, the quantities of sitters on chairs (as several persons also can sit on one chair) could not, so to speak, be properties of chairs 'as such'. 'Emptiness' or 'fulness' of chairs are relative to the ends or objectives of persons in an unsubjectivist sense: whether someone or nobody sits on a chair can be objectivated by means of ordinary linguistic means, if required.¹ But in none of the ordinary cases envisaged, sitting on someone sitting on a chair and only then asking oneself whether someone is there sitting or not happens. To this extent, the contextual unproblematicity of the affirmation that somebody is sitting on one or several chairs onto which nobody (else) actually sits is in contrast with the contextual problematicity of the affirmation by, for example, the wait-e-r-ess, that somebody will sit on this chair.

Let us distinguish between *conceivable* and *pertinent* doubts to pose and address a central aspect of the problem posed by Wittgenstein. In almost every case, it's *conceivable* that at least one person can sit in a given chair. But it is not *pertinent* to say in each of those cases that nobody is sitting in the considered chair. Thus, let us consider the grammatical sentence, or suppose that the string of signs put forward by Wittgenstein is a grammatical sentence: "There is nobody sitting on this chair, but somebody could sit here". Wittgenstein's concern with this string of words is understandable against the background of *a combinatorial conception of grammar*: According to this conception, grammar, as such, could not and should not be answerable to reality in any sense if arbitrariness is in a desirable sense possible, and yet could and would provide rules which could enable us to form combinations of words and distinguish sensical and non-sensical ones.

For many of us, nowadays, much more difficult is to imagine that grammar could not be 'part' of reality in any sense. Achieving what has been called 'the linguistic turn' involved dispensing with any sense of compulsoriness of such idea. But by contrast, that arbitrariness can somehow be involved by grammaticalization in ways which can be precised is unproblematic. So, according to the approach criticized by Wittgenstein there would be "arbitrariness of grammar" and "non-arbitrariness of reality",

¹ In that, Wittgenstein's account is proximate to the one of Sartre who endorses the task of *accounting* for nothingness and does not presuppose the reducibility of its reality, or its dissolvability into being, as, for example, Bergson does against the background of a sort of religious monism. Accounting for the intelligibility of negative facts could not be secondary. On this see Sartre's criticism of Bergson's conception of negation (2003, 35) and Bergson's compositionalist account of nonsense and correlated criticism of nothingness (2003, 283).

which would be, so to speak, “opposites”. But then, the very formation of the mentioned proposition, sentence in the grammatical sense, would be so to speak, in some sense, a ‘miracle’. Such grammatical sentence *should* not even have had to be conceivable. Or, at least, without calling into question the conception of “a natural necessity” involved by such conception of grammar, and of its allegedly inconceivable answerability to reality.¹ So the ‘paradox’ would be: either nobody is sitting in this chair, or, someone is sitting in this chair. But it *cannot* be the case that both someone and nobody are sitting in this chair. In the central range of case, the previous remark is truly *unproblematic*. As, if both someone and nobody are sitting in this chair, then either someone is nobody, or nobody is someone. That is to say, there would not be any conceivable and pertinent distinction between someone and nobody. But that could not be the case. The *quantity* of persons involved could not be different from ‘itself’. The confusion involved by the approach criticized by Wittgenstein is rendered clearer by putting close to each other the two strings of signs formed to pose the problem:

“Chair has and” [*Sessel hat und*”]

“There is nobody sitting on this chair, but somebody could sit here” [*Es sitzt auf diesem sessel niemand, es könnte hier aber jemand sitzen*”]

A striking difficulty is indeed that some sort of articulatedness can be supposed to be displayed by the second string of signs, although a similar articulatedness can be supposed not to be displayed by the first string of signs. According to the conception of grammar criticized by Wittgenstein, then, grammatical structure could be lacking from a string of signs that could not even be a sentence in the grammatical sense, while, and but, grammatical structure could be somehow problematically displayed by a not well formed sentence in the grammatical sense (at best a ‘degenerate’ sentence could be thusly formed).²

Remark that: it is unclear that grammatical structure is displayed by *any* of the two strings of signs. Or, the two strings of signs, in some contexts, can both be used and ‘function’ *as* sentences in the grammatical sense. And that is, I argue, exactly the consideration made by Wittgenstein: it is at best unclear that grammar, as such, could have been unanswerable to reality.³ Grammar could not have been meant to render conceivable its (agrammatical) failures that it should then render inconceivable. Similarly, *possibility*, as such, *could not have separated us from reality*: the possibility of a possibility is not meant to be first

1 Due to a sort of externality to reality as such, and according to which grammaticalizing and legislating could be, as such, equivalent.

2 This question notably concerns the debates between philosophers who proposed resolute readings by contrast with ineffabilist readings of Wittgenstein’s works (On this see notably Diamond, 1981; Hacker 1986; Conant, 2002), but also philosophers who criticized ineffabilist readings without arguing in favor of (explicitly) resolute readings (as Sullivan, 1996). Regrettably enough, (and not *as such* but in relation to the works of Wittgenstein) resurgence of (unformal and) moralizing distinctions between “well-formed sentences” and “not-well-formed sentences” in recent years can be constated. By contrast, the approach I defend is still resolute, still presents therapeutical aspects, and claims liberation as a desirable objective.

3 On this see also Lewis’s criticism: “Sometimes we are asked to tremble before the specter of the ‘alogical’ in order that we may thereafter rejoice that we are saved from this by the dependence of reality upon mind. But the ‘alogical’ is pure bogey, a word without a meaning. What kind of experience could defy the principle that everything must either be or not be, that nothing can both be and not be, or that if X is Y and Y is Z, then X is Z? If anything imaginable or unimaginable could violate such laws, then the ever-present fact of change would do it every day. The laws of logic are purely formal; they forbid nothing but what concerns the use of terms and the corresponding modes of classification and analysis.” (Lewis, 1929, p. 246) Although the formulation of Lewis involves a difficulty, the thought is unproblematic: logic could not have been meant to render conceivable the (its) (alogical) failures that it should then render inconceivable.

established by a presupposed coercive conception of necessity to be then acknowledged.¹ That is one central point of Wittgenstein's criticism of the traditional conception of possibility:² "The words 'logically possible' and 'logically impossible' are, in fact extremely misleading." Whatever is possible or not could not, as such, have been illogical, alogical, unlogical, anyway.³

Then, the difficulty was not with the supposition that "the mind" – in some sense, we – *could not* think "what is not the case at all", but with the supposition that "the mind" – in some sense, we – *cannot* think "what is not the case at all". This really is *possible*: we (often) do think what is not the case at all, although less often is thought by us, that such fact we (sometimes) think is "what is not the case at all" (and without mistake, in a unmoralizing sense). The empty chair also could have been the one of the teacher who has not shown up. Once dispelled the necessarily misleading preconception of possibility as a shadow, Wittgenstein does elucidate 'about' dispositions:

"If we call understanding a disposition, then we must be absolutely clear that a disposition is essentially something hypothetical." (Wittgenstein, 2003, p. 359)⁴

The relevant opposite to "hypothetical" is "assertorical" to read the passage; for it is a case of counter-appropriation, a sane meeting of a tradition with itself achieved by Wittgenstein.⁵ That someone *can* act in such and such a way in such and such circumstances, *can* happen. That is to say, correlative facts are *likely* to happen, will *probably* occur. And such account is in stark contrast with the misled conception according to which, the fact that someone *must* act in such and such a way in such and such circumstances, *must* happen (for example and notably: "because that person *has* a disposition").⁶

The resolution proposed by Wittgenstein notably involves comparing humans and machines and

1 The criticism of the coercive conception of necessity was a, if not *the* central aspect of Wittgenstein's rejection of would-be illogical necessity: "There is no compulsion for one thing to happen because something else has happened. There is only *logical* necessity" (Wittgenstein, 2023, 6.37). In this respect, the attribution to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* of the idea that the rejection of the would-be eventuality of illogical necessity amounts to the affirmation of the existence of one and only one specie of necessity, as argued by Descombes after Anscombe (2007, p. 436), is necessarily misleading. Wittgenstein's rejection of the relevance of the application of the genus-species distinction to logic indeed is neither reducible to an expression of dogmatism, nor to a rejection of the conceivability of a philosophy of action. Quite the contrary, and arguably as remarked by Lewis (Cf. Previous footnote) such rejection expresses the importance of modalities for our accounts of both logic and action. Indeed, accounting for the intelligibility of action involves to account for the asymmetry between laws with which actions might be conform, and, the eventually principled but unprescribed regularities of actions that we can depict to ourselves. Although the realizations of some actions can be conform to some laws, it is not the case that the achievement of any action is meant to conform or not to some law.

2 On the importance of modalities in the early works of Wittgenstein, see Shieh (2024).

3 That is an important aspect of the criticism of solipsism in the *Tractatus*. Visual 'field', like logical space, has no limit (Wittgenstein 2023, 5.6331). The reading here proposed is not compatible with the one proposed of Wittgenstein's account for logic and structure in the *Tractatus* by Travis (2006).

4 "Wenn wir das Verständnis eine Disposition nennen, dann müssen wir uns ganz klar machen, dass die Disposition wesentlich etwas Hypothetisches ist." (Wittgenstein, 2003, p. 358)

5 Importantly enough, there is no equivalence between the occurrence of a word and the application of a concept: that Wittgenstein uses the word "essential" could not necessarily presuppose that Wittgenstein argues in favour of the essentialist disjunction according to which: either there is no disposition, or dispositions are essential possibilities. Rather Wittgenstein explicates that the reality of dispositions could not strictly imply implicit reference to some necessary existence, even conceived as attenuated, or lesser necessary existence.

6 On this, see Descombes's remark that an action can be considered as a quality or attribute of a person we want to identify in given circumstances, and therefore can thusly be considered to actantially analyse a proposition (2014, p. 111). Remark that the use of a definite description can render achievable the same. Although actantial analyses of propositions solve problems which are different from the ones addressed by Wittgenstein, such analysis elucidates both the mediative role that dispositions can display in our exchanges, and the inversion involved by the traditional conception of dispositions with respect to the relations of existence and dispositions.

inversely, and such comparison also can raise difficulties. Unproblematically, we can speak about a calculating machine, tell *of* a calculating machine “that it has within it the disposition to carry out certain calculations, say multiplications” (Wittgenstein, 2003, p. 359).¹ Such derivative use of our concept of disposition could not have been ‘logically surprising’, inasmuch as such machines have been conceived, construed, and are used to achieve the realization of such operations. This could not mean that such operations have been achieved by the conception, the construal, and the achievement of the considered machine. This rather means, unsurprisingly, that some means to render an easier achievement of the operations we could achieve *ourselves* otherwise and without such means have been materialized. Such remark applies notably to early stages of the development of machines. For there are senses in which neither a human could rivalize with a contemporary digital computer nor the opposite.² But clearly, consideration of calculating machines can learn us about the human mind. Not every conceivable arrangement of elements is likely to provide ways for easily achieving mathematical operations. And that should have been in some sense inconceivable according to the criticized conception.

Consider, for example, the case of abacuses. An abacus is a calculating machine, in the sense of a machine built to achieve complex calculations in easier ways. Its internal states can be disposed to achieve the calculations for which such machines have been conceived. As far as we know such machines were first conceived more than four thousands years ago. Undeniably, a contemporary scientific calculating machine can achieve operations that cannot to achieved with an abacus. But for some operations, an abacus is quite handy. If its technique is known well enough, using an exemplar of an abacus is even superfluous to achieve *quicker* with the abacus-using-technique, an operation that can be achieved with a contemporary calculating machine.³ So Wittgenstein clarifies, elucidates that:

The application is not at all anticipated in the disposition in some shadowy manner.

The conception against which we are here struggling goes back to a very deep-rooted mistake, which we must now articulate in order to render it harmless. It is the conception of possibility as a less robust, as it were shadowy, reality. (Wittgenstein, 2003, p. 359; p. 361)⁴

1 “[...] sie habe die Disposition in sich, gewisse Rechnungen zu lösen, etwa die Multiplikationen.” (Wittgenstein, 2003, p. 358).

2 That is really a central point. A troublesome undecidability cannot but arise once supposed, as granted by Kant – although critically, that everything to understand is already pre-contained in the understanding. On this see the criticism of categorial amenability by Lewis (1929, pp. 36-66) and the exceptional reading of Longuenesse (2005, p. 8; pp. 28-29; pp. 81-116), who hopefully enough, did not stop at proposing a reading of the categories, but also accounted for the generative development of the table of categories. However, and that is not against her reading, Kant’s conception renders difficultly intelligible the unpregivenness of results of applications, which is the sort of myth criticized by Wittgenstein.

3 Many videos of such performances can be found online. On the history and the technique of the use of abacuses see Perceval Maxwell (1981). In fact, in the conversations recorded by Waismann, Wittgenstein explicitly mentions that an abacus should be conceived as a calculator or calculating machine: “Tautology is an application of the calculus, not its expression. A calculus is an abacus, a calculator, a calculating machine; it works by means of strokes, numerals, etc. Subsequently a calculus may be used to construct a tautology; but this does not at all connect a calculus with propositions or with tautology.” (Waismann & Wittgenstein, 1979, 106). Waismann there mentions the esteem of Wittgenstein with respect to the use of the abacus.

4 “Die Anwendung ist in der Disposition noch nicht in einer schattenhaften Weise vorweggenommen. Die Auffassung, die wir hier bekämpfen, geht auf einen sehr tiefwurzelnden Irrtum zurück, den wir einmal aussprechen müssen, um ihn unschädlich zu machen. Es ist die Auffassung der Möglichkeit als einer schwächeren, gleichsam schattenhaften Wirklichkeit.” (Wittgenstein, 2003, p. 358; p. 360).

1.3. Distinguishing naive dispositionalism and philosophical pragmatism

We studied that Sartre and Wittgenstein criticize and reject an actualist conception of possibility, according to which whatever is actual *must* first be possible, that the possible somehow both must and must not exist like the actual to be possible at all, and, a correlative conception of dispositions. Their approaches are proximate in that both integrate the importance of the intelligibility of negative facts and for the necessary misleadingness of any alleged compulsoriness of the confusion of falsities and truths if we are to philosophically account for dispositions at all.

Let us further distinguish *naive dispositionalism* from *philosophical pragmatism*, to further contextualize their accounts in their proximities. We can indeed distinguish between *pragmatism* and *philosophical pragmatism*, that is, between unreflexive pragmatism, sometimes also characterized as *opportunism*,¹ and philosophical pragmatism, that is to say, *explicitly reflexive pragmatism*.² Indeed, pragmatisms are distinct from other philosophical traditions notably by the further integration of the relevance of practices, actions, effects, consequences to think *thought*. Let us recall ‘what’ has sometimes been called the pragmatist maxim, principle, or formula, initially expressed as a *rule* by Peirce,³ and later defended by James.⁴

Remarkably enough, the rule defined by Peirce could not imply that an object could be definitive of our conceptions of the relations of thought and action. For one ‘object’ is that of the relationality of thought and action (the consideration that actions and thoughts are *somehow* related), another is that the intelligibility of thought should be accountable for in relation to action (the consideration that accounting for thought involves that at least some of our thoughts should be explainable in relation to actions), and yet another is that some occurrences of thoughts could not unproblematically derive from the realization of actions (the consideration that appropriate thoughts of actions can unproblematically *succeed* to the realizations of these actions).

But none of these ‘objects’ could be equivalent in any sense with the necessarily misleading affirmation of *the superfluity of thought as such*, which has – regrettably enough, too often been assumed to constitute the ultimate metaphorical ‘horizon’ of philosophical and non-philosophical pragmatism. Contrary to misleading criticisms which have been addressed to pragmatist philosophers, made on the bases of unreflexive appropriations and uses of their ideas by harmful ideological approaches, pragmatist philosophers themselves have criticized the rejection of thought and reflexivity, and argued in favour of their valuations.⁵

These considerations matter to provide an external contextualization of the proximities of the thoughts of Sartre and Wittgenstein. The central upshot of distinguishing between naive dispositionalism and philosophical pragmatism is to distinguish the pragmatic consideration of the relevance of effects,

1 Opportunism is not philosophically necessarily problematic, but can sometimes turn out to be such.

2 Philosophical pragmatism is not necessarily philosophically unproblematic, but is obviously much less likely to turn out philosophically problematic.

3 “Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object” (Peirce, 1998, p. 146)

4 “Pragmatism, on the other hand, asks its usual question. ‘Grant an idea or belief to be true,’ it says, ‘what concrete difference will its being true make in any one’s actual life? How will the truth be realized? What experiences will be different from those which would obtain if the belief were false? What, in short, is the truth’s cash-value in experiential terms?’” (James, 2013, Lecture VI, p. 68)

5 On this, see notably Dewey’s historical account of the development of philosophical pragmatism in the United States of America (1998, pp. 12-13).

consequences, practices, actions to think thought (and action), from the claim that we do what we do *because* we have the dispositions we have. Both Sartre and Wittgenstein accounted for the inherent relatedness of thought and action in ways which are compatible with central aspects of pragmatist philosophies,¹ among which notably the criticism of the *a priori* method made by Peirce.²

The problem posed by naive dispositionalism (which, in a sense, is the problem posed by causalism – broadly considered as inclusive of meaning causalism, and of some inferentialisms) is the causal reductionism involved. This criticism requires to be handled with care as the very idea of causal relations could not be adequately rejected. But in determinate senses, the primacy of causal relations over intelligible relations needs to be criticized, even and in fact especially if we do value non-scientific conceptions of scientific methods: intelligible relations are not, and could not have been, reducible to causal relations.

Centrally for the purpose of this text, statements or sentences in the grammatical sense which are conditionals are not or could not all be reducible to the establishment of causal relations between events (of the form: if an event happens, then another event happens). The reality of our linguistic uses is much more complex. Accordingly, the distinction of naive dispositionalism and philosophical pragmatism enables to delineate out a central aspect of the result of the criticisms of the actualist entanglement by Sartre and Wittgenstein: whenever dispositions are assumed to be thinkable without relations to ends, finalities, purposes, then we eventually might be delineating some *inclination* or *propensity*, but the isolation of dispositions from contexts and circumstances leaves us with a thin concept of disposition that could not have been sufficient to account for situated possibilities of action, that is to say, for what we have done, what we do, what we will do, what could have been done, etc.

1 On this see notably Boncompagni (2016).

2 “So with the *a priori* method. The very essence of it is to think as one is inclined to think. All metaphysicians will be sure to do that, however they may be inclined to judge each other to be perversely wrong.” (Peirce, 1998, p. 134)

2. Disposition as Action

We studied that Sartre and Wittgenstein propose mutually independent accounts of the importance of dispositions correlatively to actions. But I neither explicited the ways in which Sartre and Wittgenstein accounted for such correlations, nor proposed an independent account of these correlations. The problem posed by naive dispositionalism which altogether tends to neglect both the importance of causal explanations and the irreducibility of explanations to causal ones has been brought out. I thus will now propose a comparative study of the mutually independent alternative accounts proposed by Sartre and Wittgenstein in place of the actualist conception of possibility and disposition. Indeed, the actualist account indeed cannot but fail to address the ways in which naive dispositionalism fails the mutual eventual contributions of possibilities, dispositions, and actions. I will elucidate that accounting for disposition as action, for disposition as a practice, is required both according to Sartre and Wittgenstein to account for dispositions.

2.1. Sartre's explicitation of the practice of disposition for an adequate conception of action

It is in the *Notebooks for an Ethics* that Sartre explicitly distinguishes between the two concepts of form which are put at use in *Being and Nothingness*, and constitute a central aspect of the new approach to the intelligibility of action there proposed. These two concepts of forms are internally related to two different conceptions of dispositions. According to the antique, and relatively Aristotelian, conception of *form*, which provided the means to pose and address the problem of “the being of the possibles”, the relation of matter and form is relatively external, but in an internally Platonistic sense. According to the criticized approach, materially disposing differently elements can *only* change *form* and not matter, although, Sartre stresses that the rearrangement of elements does involve a change not only of form, but also of *matter*:

The mere rearrangement of elements into a new form as means toward an end alters these elements down to their matter. One says that one has only changed the form. But here one is drawing on the old concept of form. In fact, the modern form (Gestalt) is a unification of the whole in its particular nature, therefore in its substance. Let us add that this change is brought about in a world that is already human. The question of any modification of the in-itself remains to be discussed. Action is a creative humanization of inhuman elements, hence the appropriation of a sector of the world by the human. (Sartre, 1992, Translation modified, p. 122)¹

By contrast, the new concept of form and correlative conception of dispositions that is put forward renders both intelligible and conceivable that a rearrangement can be equivalent not only with a formal

¹ “La simple disposition nouvelle d'éléments comme moyens en vue d'une fin altère ces éléments jusque dans leur matière. On dit qu'on n'a changé que la forme. Mais c'est qu'on a recours au concept ancien de la forme. En fait la forme moderne (Gestalt) est unification du tout dans sa nature particulière et donc jusque dans sa substance. Ajoutons que ce changement est opéré dans un monde déjà humain. La question de la modification de l'en-soi reste à débattre. L'action est humanisation créatrice d'éléments inhumains donc appropriation par l'homme d'un secteur du monde.” (Sartre, 1983, p. 129).

change, but also a material change, in interrelated ways. In other words: *appropriative activity can be both formally and materially transformative*. A pot of paint which does contain painting material that can be used to paint pots of paint, can also consist in the material that can enable us to step up and reach other pots of paint, which otherwise would not be reachable by us. And these pots of paints also can contain painting material whose containers can also be painted. Such that a painting or the reach of paint could not result from the mere formal and somehow *lesserly* material rearrangement of the elements of a pot. Observing or realizing material *and* formal changes could not reduce to observe or realize concomitant changes which otherwise would obtain mutually independently. Quite the contrary, material and formal changes mutually involve each other and obtain along our endorsement of relatively active, organized, and maintained practical stances with respect to our surroundings, whose diversities are irreducible to instances of coping-with activity. Against this background, the bodiliness of Sartre's account of dispositions can be rendered even clearer:

This is why if we reject the analogical reconstruction of my body according to the body of the Other, there remain two ways of apprehending the body: First, it is *known* and objectively defined in terms of the world but *emptily*; for this view it is enough that rationalizing thought reconstitute the instrument which I am from the standpoint of the indications which are given by the instruments which I utilize. In this case, however, the fundamental tool becomes a relative center of reference which itself supposes other tools to utilize it. By the same stroke the instrumentality of the world disappears, for in order to be revealed it needs a reference to an absolute center of instrumentality; the world of action becomes the world *acted upon* of classical science; consciousness surveys a universe of exteriority and can no longer in any way *enter into the world*. Secondly the body is given concretely and fully as the very arrangement of things in so far as the For-itself surpasses it towards a new arrangement. In this case the body is present in every action although invisible, for the act reveals the hammer and the nails, the brake and the change of speed, not the foot which brakes or the hand which hammers. The body is *lived* and not *known*. (Sartre, 2003, 348)

Sartre introduces a disjunction between two ways for someone of (quasi-)relating to one's own body.¹ In this context, secondary cases in which, for example, we learn which are and where are our organs on the basis of some schematic presentation of human anatomy are not considered by Sartre. The problem addressed by Sartre is different: we can learn human anatomy, but this does not involve that we could have been, so to speak, bodiless until we learned human anatomy. The disjunction is the following: either one 'emptily' knows one's body as a body that is one's own, or one 'fully' lives one's body.

If one 'emptily' knows one's body as a body that is one's own, *we then think the structured organic whole*. One's body is arranged, that is, its parts are disposed in contingent ways. We can imagine the dispositions, in the sense of the *arrangements* of organic structures differently than these are. As Sartre does, when imagining that we could have had a third eye, such that this third eye could have seen one's eventual other eyes *while one sees* (Sartre, 2003, p. 340).

If one 'fully' lives one's body *we then do not and in some sense could not think the structured organic whole*. *While living one's body*, one does not focus on one's own body. Or rather, focusing on one's own body as a body of one's own, in most cases, is not compatible with the achievement of our objectives,

¹ A disjunction which is very different from the one introduced by Schopenhauer (1958: 103).

activities, tasks, routines and so on (as for example: winning a fight during a martial art competition, or, carrying a very loaded tray). Surely, thinking to one's own body as a body of one's own while achieving is not impossible. But, such exercise of capacities of our own could not be constitutive of the primary range of cases in which we achieve. For, to make sure, there really are other cases that we can consider and in which one might relevantly express one's uncertainty with respect to the organical relatedness of a part of one's body to some of its other parts (as after a fall), notably as feelings get anaesthetized *by the body itself*: "Did my arm pop out from my shoulder?", "Is my leg still attached to my hip?", "Is my arm broken?" are questions one can ask oneself relevantly in some circumstances.¹

In the technical terms of (Sartre's critical) phenomenology: prereflexive consciousness of one's own body could not be positional. Quite the contrary : perceptual consciousness of the dispositions of objects, of tools, of results of the uses of tools, of instruments, are correlated, that is to say, both mutually and internally related to our actions.² Ways in which tools, and their applications reveal themselves, get shown to us according to that we do, and are unproblematically related to the actions we realize. And these ways which involve that we do *not*, and could *not* have had to be conscious of one's own body as a body of one's own along their realizations.³ Dispositions ("theselves") of things are correlated to the actions we realize.⁴ Importantly enough, such account of one's appropriative (quasi-)relation to one's own body could not require ownership.⁵ And, states of the world, dispositions of things, tools, results, which are lived by us, are correlated to 'what' reflexively turns out to be enactments of dispositions,⁶ in ways which can be unproblematically internal, and could not have required the negation of the reality of the external.

It is strange that philosophers have endlessly argued about determinism and free-will, citing examples in favor of one or the other thesis, without beforehand attempting to explicit the structures contained in the very idea of *action*. The concept of an act contains, in fact, numerous subordinate notions which we shall have to organize and to hierarchize: to act is to modify the *figure* of the world; it is to arrange means in view of an end; it is to produce an organized instrumental complex such that by a series of sequences and linkages, the modification made to one of the links brings about modifications in the whole series and finally produces a foreseen result. But this is not yet what matters to us. We should first remark that an action is by principle *intentional*. The awkward smoker who inadvertently

1 At some occasions, pain is not informative anymore. And while too intense shocks sometimes are not correlated to pain, sometimes too intense pain results into a shut off.

2 By contrast with secondary cases of statistical evaluations which do involve a concept of correlation as well, but a different one.

3 Careful uses of the notion of bodily awareness can in that sense turn out more helpful. See Morris (2008, pp. 95-111; 2009, Notably Chapters 1-3) for accounts of Sartre's conception of the body. The account here proposed nevertheless should indirectly contribute to render clearer the *criticism* addressed by Sartre to the hodological conception of space.

4 This critical achievement of Sartre, is only partly inspired by Heidegger. Sartre explicits in the fourth part of *Being and Nothingness* this criticism (2003, pp. 576-598; see notably pp. 578-579; p. 590) which is central to the very structure of the book. On this basis, Merleau-Ponty's approach appears to be less innovative than it often is assumed to be.

5 I immediately precise, for that is an important aspect, I claim, for anti-sexism. Some feminist positions opposed to anti-feminist positions claim that we are the owner of our bodies. So let's make sure : I am certainly not arguing that we could not be owner of our bodies in the sense that I could have defended anti-feminist positions against feminist positions. But, I argue that to argue in favour of ownership of bodies by souls (or subjects) will not turn out adequate. That was, and still in some places, at some occasions, is the problem. Although there are cases in which problems can turn out to be solutions, in this case, I argue, the problem could not thusly turn out. Slavery still has not disappeared. (International Labour Organization, Walk Free, and International Organization for Migration, 2022).

6 But not *processes* in a strict sense, and rather, states of the mind.

made a powder magazine explode has not *acted*. However, the worker who was in charge of dynamiting a quarry and who obeyed the given orders has acted when s/he provoked the foreseen explosion: s/he indeed knew what s/he was doing, or, if one prefers, s/he was intentionally realizing a conscious project. This does not mean, of course, that one must foresee all the consequences of one's act. The emperor Constantine was not foreseeing that by establishing himself to Byzantium he would create a city of Greek culture and language, whose appearance would ulteriorly provoke a schism in the Christian Church and which would contribute to weakening the Roman Empire. Yet he made an act to the extent that he realized his project of creating a new residence for emperors in the Orient. The adequacy of the result to the intention is here sufficient for us to be able to speak of action. (Sartre 2006, Translation modified, 455)¹

Sartre explicits the co-relatedness of *dispositions of things* and *dispositions of minds* at the occasion of the explicitation of the idea of human action at the beginning of the forth part of *Being and Nothingness*. He there accounts for disposition as a practice that is central to explicit the very idea of action. Indeed whether conceived: (i) as an *activity*, i.e. that of disposing or arranging, (ii) as its objective or result, i.e. as a *disposition of things*, (iii) as an 'enactment' of the successful result of past activity, i.e. a *disposition of mind*, which obviously also can be applied to its results (as one can dispose oneself to dispose or be disposed), dispositions are accountable for both (w)holistically and purposefully.²

First, dispositions are to be accounted for (w)holistically: although eventually and circumstantially relevantly negligible, any change made by anyone in the world is equivalent with a change of the world (and as a whole, in an unproblematic way). The consequences of such change, if any, might be of little importance, or even might be completely unimportant. For example, that you put your coffee at this or that position on a table is unlikely to have any consequence. But in other circumstances, the realization of such action *could* have other consequences. For example, closer to an edge of the table, the cup might

1 "Il est étrange qu'on ait pu raisonner à perte de vue sur le déterminisme et le libre arbitre, citer des exemples en faveur de l'une ou de l'autre thèse, sans tenter, au préalable, d'expliciter les structures contenues dans l'idée même d'action. Le concept d'acte contient en effet de nombreuses notions subordonnées que nous aurons à organiser et à hiérarchiser : agir, c'est modifier la figure du monde, c'est disposer des moyens en vue d'une fin, c'est produire un complexe instrumental et organisé tel que, par une série d'enchaînements et de liaisons, la modification apportée à l'un des chaînons amène des modifications dans toute la série et, pour finir, produise un résultat prévu. Mais ce n'est pas encore là ce qui nous importe. Il convient, en effet, de remarquer d'abord qu'une action est par principe intentionnelle. Le fumeur maladroit qui a fait, par mégarde, exploser une poudrière n'a pas agi. Par contre, l'ouvrier chargé de dynamiter une carrière et qui a obéi aux ordres donnés a agi lorsqu'il a provoqué l'explosion prévue : il savait, en effet, ce qu'il faisait ou, si l'on préfère, il réalisait intentionnellement un projet conscient. Cela ne signifie pas, certes, qu'on doive prévoir toutes les conséquences de son acte: l'empereur Constantin ne prévoyait pas, en s'établissant à Byzance, qu'il créerait une cité de culture et de langue grecques, dont l'apparition provoquerait ultérieurement un schisme dans l'Eglise chrétienne et contribuerait à affaiblir l'Empire romain. Il a pourtant fait un acte dans la mesure où il a réalisé son projet de créer une nouvelle résidence en Orient pour les empereurs. L'adéquation du résultat à l'intention est ici suffisante pour que nous puissions parler d'action." (Sartre, 2003, 477-478)

2 When defining action, Sartre uses the expression of "the figure of the world", which is or was as unusual in English as it is or was in French ("la figure du monde"). For this reason I claim that the translation should be transparent. Philosophically also, this translation-choice is relevant, as a few decades later, Putnam was to write *Realism with a Human Face* (1990) which notably contains "Beyond the Fact/Value Dichotomy" where he criticizes the dichotomic conception of the distinction between fact and value which was also earlier exactly criticized by Sartre (2003, 121-132; 2006, 109-119). In that, the present account is in agreement with Conant's remark of the superficial similarity and profound divergence between the philosophies of Sartre and Heidegger (2012, 37). Nevertheless Conant arguably underestimates the scope of Sartre's rejection of the distinction between the ontical and the ontological as conceived by Heidegger (2003, Part IV, 527; 2006, p.504), which in fact constitutes a deep convergence of the philosophies of Sartre and Wittgenstein.

be more likely to fall and break. Further, dispositions are to be considered purposefully: dispositions of things, objects, persons can be the aim, the objective of an action. And the realization of such action is related to the ends and (future) realization of further actions. As for example, the arrangement of things or objects present in a room tidied up before the arrival and the welcoming of a guest.

However, before any further explicitation of the implicit structures of the idea of action, Sartre precises intentionality as a condition of intelligibility of action. That is to say, in the primary and non-metaphorical range of cases, *no action is not intentional* (by contrast with secondary and eventually metaphorical range of cases of actions of substances, as the corrosive action of alkalis). An event which happens or is meant to happen ‘unavoidably’, which could not have failed to happen, could not be an action.¹ Importantly enough, and eventually paradoxically at first sight, the use of the word “intentional” is dispensable to explain action in the considered sense. That is to say, in many ordinary cases, specifying that an action has been achieved *intentionally* would not contribute to our knowledge of the concerned action (by contrast with the precision that an action has been achieved intentionally, in secondary contexts and circumstances in which the evaluation of the responsibility of the realization of an action is wanted). And as earlier made explicit by Sartre, a practice such as that of lying involves practical knowledge in the sense that, the liar could not ignore to be lying while lying, if by one’s action a lie is truly achieved or failed. Similarly, a doer could not ignore to be doing while doing if by one’s action an action is truly achieved or failed.

To explain this difference, Sartre introduces a contrast between two ranges of cases, by means of a contrast between two examples, two imagined situations. In the first, an ‘awkward’ worker who smokes makes inadvertently a powder magazine explode. In the second, a worker obeys to given orders and makes a quarry explode. In the two cases an explosion results from the action of a worker. That is to say, the two considered imaginary series of events end with an explosion and involve the actions of a worker. Importantly enough, some causal relations (but not necessarily a knowledge sufficient for their explanations) are involved by the intelligibility of the two ranges of cases, as the considered series of events involve explosions (which can result from the combination of different substances and whose intensity, temperature, scale, etc. can be calculated). And, the two ranges of cases involve series of events which are not conceivably only causally related, but rather involve some ordered achievements of a doer. In both ranges of cases, one or several explosions result from, is or are provoked by someone. In the formers, these explosions were not desired, and maybe not even envisaged by the person who provoked these. In the latters, these explosions not only were envisaged and desired but constituted the objective of an action, whose realization involved not only the use of a dispositive of material destruction, but also the existence of a hierarchical and organized structure of command within which such action could *thusly* be effectuated.

Obviously, Sartre’s example of the awkward worker is an awkward example.² But in that, it is a precious example, which invites us to think and account for the relativity of awkwardness. The relevant aspect of the example can be considered by imagining a person who smokes *while* carrying crates of powder to a powder magazine. Sartre indeed focuses us on the inadvertance that can be involved by a

1 See the early disambiguation of the concept of necessity by C. I. Lewis, which is exactly relevant to account for action, although the disambiguation is there achieved independently from the use of the word of intentionality (1929, p.196).

2 Barnes translated “maladroit” by “careless” rather than “awkward” (Sartre, 2003, p. 455). I argue that this translation choice should be contested, as the problem addressed by Sartre concerns less the absence of a way of caring, then a problem in a way of caring.

way of realizing an action. In the considered first case, the worker was not attempting to make the powder magazine explode, and yet such event resulted from one's action. So in some sense, that worker did not know the action that was being done by oneself, ignored one's own action, 'what' s/he was doing. But importantly enough, Sartre leaves open the question of the way in which the worker ignored one's own action. For the worker might have ignored one's own action in several ways. The worker might have known that smoking within a powder magazine was very likely to result into a catastrophe and yet did so. In such case, the worker could have and would have neglected one's own relevant knowledge. But the worker might also have ignored to have been carrying powder crates to a powder magazine. In such case, the worker could not and would not have neglected one's own relevant knowledge. And even further, the worker might also have ignored that firing an important quantity of powder results into an explosion. In such case, the worker could not even have neglected one's own relevant knowledge. Considerations and analyses of the indications provided to the worker would suffice to bring out even further ways for the worker to have ignored (aspects of) one's own action. Such analyses would importantly matter to think of the relations between the individual and the collective dimensions of actions.

In any case, the inadvertence involved by the way of doing of the worker in the first example is precisely not involved by the way of doing of the worker in the second. In that second case, an event which *somehow* can be causally explained is the objective of an action. And that action is realized and achieved, in the context of the example, by someone, in agreement with others, within a structured hierarchy. Importantly enough, the achievement of the destruction of the quarry is realizable by the worker without the knowledge that is relevant for the planning of the destruction of the quarry and its realization. Once the preliminary calculations made, tasks assigned, the dispositive of destruction construed and placed, the security perimeter set, etc., the worker can make the quarry explode – knowing what is being done by oneself – without knowing and being able to causally explain the way in which the result shall be obtained by means of the use of the destruction dispositive. A doer can use something (as a tool) whose production and functioning involves knowledge that is not had by oneself in any sense, to realize one's action.

Importantly enough, that one does not know the ways in which are produced or function the objects that are used could not necessarily have implied *per se* a restriction of the practical knowledge involved by the realization of the considered action. Rather, although the knowledge of the ways in which the doer can ignore one's own action can be unavailable to the doer oneself, not every such unavailable way can be relevantly considered to lack to the doer. In fact, in many ordinary cases, such knowledge does not lack at all. The whole of practical knowledge that is required for the effectuation of, for example, the last step of an action (such as that of the second example, which involves dynamiting a quarry by activating a dispositive of destruction), can differ from the whole of knowledge that is involved by the *conception* and the possibility of an action.

Nevertheless, thusly distinguishing among actions by considering both: the integration of (causal) knowledge in their conceptions and the modularity of the involvement of knowledge by an action generates a radical difficulty to accounts of action. For, as earlier mentioned, the realization of an action might have consequences different from itself. In fact, unusual in most cases would be to characterize the realization of one's own action as a consequence of one's own action. However, such characterization is neither inconceivable nor necessarily misled. But assumed as constitutive of the basic range of cases, then, the individuation of an action might seem illusory, inasmuch as entirely relative to a changing whole

of events – the whole of subsequent events – whose limits could not be sufficiently determined, as events happen after other events. Sartre solves the difficulty by rejecting the requisite of the consideration of the whole of the *conceivable* consequences of an action as superfluous and misleading. According to such misleading picture of action, for any action to be achievable, all of its consequences should be predicted. But, as some actions might have unpredicted consequences, no actions would be, in fact, strictly speaking, possible. This difficulty can be solved by distinguishing the *pertinently expectable consequences* from the *conceivable consequences* of an action. Indeed, accounting for action involves the distinguishability of the events which practically must happen for an action to be realized (unsurprisingly, cakes do not bake themselves), and the events which in fact happen during the realization of an action or as one's consequence(s) in ways which are not necessarily priorly envisaged or even, envisageable.

Sartre elucidates that the consideration of *some* consequences of an action is sufficient to evaluate its realization. The intelligibility of an action involves intention in the sense that the doer can foresee, prior to its realization, some way in which the action can be realized, and constate, after its realization, that the action has been realized.¹ That is to say, if one could not imagine, envisage, some way for one's intention to be realized by the realization of one's action, then unclear would remain both that one knows one's desire – involved by the determinacy of one intention, and ways of satisfying one's desire – involved by the determinacy of one result. These are *unrestrictive* intelligibility conditions. Sartre focuses on bringing out conditions without which similar actions are unlikely to be distinguishable from each other at all.

Importantly enough, these considerations which open Sartre's own account of action are not meant to be decisive of the actions which are meant to be realized or not by anyone. Sartre thusly delineates out the place dispositions must have in an adequate account of action by externalizing their comprehensive formations. Remarking that not every means is compatible with the realization of every end, and, that not every end is compatible with the realization of every means, involves the exercise of one's practical ability not only of distinguishing but also of forming ways of pertinently disposing some means to realize some ends. It is not only that dispositions are unintelligible considered independently from their relations to actions. Dispositions are also unintelligible considered independently from the very activity in which disposing consists.

2.2. Wittgenstein's explicitation that understanding a sign is a disposition to apply the sign

Wittgenstein elucidated that dispositions are to be considered in their relations to actions to be accountable for at all, at the occasion of the analysis of the intelligibility conditions of the production or use of calculating machines. The internal states of calculating machines are analogous to externalized internal states of the human mind in their determinate correlation and correspondences to steps of the achievements of conceivable operations. However, and exactly as considered by Sartre, such move raises a difficulty with respect to dispositions prior to their own analyses. Dispositions could not be as traditionally conceived, but could neither have been devoid of any reality altogether. The difficulty is that

¹ Consideration of Wittgenstein's attention to the maintainment that a realized state-of-things and a state-of-things to realize or 'ideal' could not cease to be distinct in every sense (Wittgenstein, 2023, 6.374) is mutually elucidatory with Sartre's account of action.

dispositions are both less and more significative than earlier conceived for our account of human mind: dispositions could not be would-be private and unchangeable pre-shapes of the human mind, always affectively loaded, always expressive of some sort of implicit determinism. But neither could dispositions be *merely* public, always changing, and necessarily misleading pictures of the human mind. This problem can be solved by accounting for the internality of dispositions to actions, a problem addressed, like Sartre, by Wittgenstein, and which involves accounting for the activity in which disposing consists. This problem has constituted a major node of debates within studies dedicated to the works of Wittgenstein, and peculiarly to studies of those works in their (eventual) relations to those of other philosophers. Historically, Wittgenstein's criticism of private language indeed might have sounded or looked like a condemnation of any idea of interiority or 'subjectivity'.¹ For, this is a difficult aspect of the illusions criticized by Wittgenstein, accounting for the mutual independence and relative autonomy of the internal and the external is also a task. And according to most traditions, the independence, freedom and autonomy of individual and singular mental life had to be based upon its extraction from the unconcealed. Expression, as a central, if not the humanly basic mode of exteriorization, had in some sense to be outside in, if there could be the inside out movement of its own realization. However, such picture of expression cannot but raise many of the difficulties it was meant to address.

First let us recall an aspect of the dissolution of "the machine problem" by Wittgenstein. Contrary to expectations derivative from the tradition, consideration of our uses of calculating machines suffices to elucidate that the presupposition according to which results should be pre-given prior to the successful achievement of an operation is both superfluous and misleading. The tool in which the calculating machine consists renders more easily achievable to the mind a step-by-step correlation of states by means of which an operation can adequately be achieved. However such achievement does not require the actuality, but the *possibility* of the realization of such operation. And further, the affirmation that the achievement of an operation is possible does no more involve the affirmation than the negation of the *existence* of such possibility *as* a possibility. It is not only that the would-be requirement of the pre-giveness of the result under an inchoate form is superfluous, but also that such requirement is necessarily misleading.²

With respect to some of our ordinary expressive means, sentences in the grammatical sense, such conception indeed involves a meaning-causalist requirement according to which understanding the meaning of a sign consists in an event internal to mind. Such event should necessarily and conceivably happen, or have happened, 'within' mind *prior* to any application that can be made of the considered sign. Correlatively, the considered sign should be intelligible without consideration of any of its conceivably pertinent applications. Such conception raises several problems: as such conception involves a confusion of the perception of a sign (which does not necessarily involve neither its understanding nor the deprivation from its understanding) with its understanding. Such conception further involves a picture of the human mind according to which a sort of concealed passivity cannot but have constituted its

¹ See notably Bouveresse (1976) for an early study of Wittgenstein's criticism of misleading aspects of conceptualizations of interiority and 'subjectivity'.

² In that, the account here proposed does not presuppose, as Morelli (2018) tends to suggest, that providing a de-naturalist reading of the works of Wittgenstein and criticizing dispositionalism would be incompatible, such that defending dispositionalism would be in some sense required to provide a non-naturalist account of Wittgenstein's conception of dispositions. Accounting for dispositions without naturalism and defending dispositionalism are in fact quite distinct and mutually independent tasks. Although the criticism of naturalism does matter to account for Wittgenstein's conception of dispositions, this could not imply the ascription to Wittgenstein of a defence of dispositionalism.

primordial mode of availability to itself. And such conception also involves a series of embedded and mutual separations (rather than abstractions) among which notably, the one of signs and meanings, and the one of exercises and dispositions.

Chauviré brought out and studied the central aspect of Wittgenstein's achievement: dispositions are better understandable as capacities (2002, pp. 17-19) or abilities (and, for motives yet to be explained, not the opposite). The mentalist conception of dispositions as unavailable, remote and opaque fields of potentialities is insufficient and inadequate to think and account for the fact that dispositions can be (metaphorically) 'acquired' by persons, be developed and evolve correlatively to actions. In philosophically pragmatic terms, the conceptual displacement achieved by Wittgenstein renders achievable an elucidation of the internal relations of the concept and its applications.

Now we have a clear overview of the situation. Understanding a word is a disposition to make use of it, this disposition is a possibility, and possibilities are taken for an image of reality. In this way the idea arises that in the understanding of a word all of its future applications are pre-existent or dormant, and disappointment is then felt because the explanation of a word does not prefigure all these applications. (Wittgenstein, 2003, p. 369)¹

The view I wish to argue against in this context is that understanding is a *state* that occurs inside me, like (e.g.) toothache. That understanding has nothing to do with a state is very clearly seen if one asks, 'Do you understand the word Napoleon?' – 'Yes, I do.' – 'Do you mean the victor of Austerlitz?' – 'Yes, I do.' – 'Have you been meaning this without interruption?' It obviously does not make sense to say that I have been meaning this all the time in the way that I can say 'I have been having toothache without interruption'. I can only say: 'I am aware of the meaning of "Napoleon" ' in the same way that I know that $2 + 2 = 4$, namely not in the form of a state, but in the form of a *disposition* (Wittgenstein, 2003, p. 437; See also p. 439).²

Importantly enough, the elucidation of the proximity and relative equatability of dispositions with capacities (and abilities) renders clear that there is no real need to distinguish the two (or three) concepts on a philosophically pragmatist approach in a basic and central range of cases. Whether we do speak of a disposition, of a capacity, or of an ability, we need to be able to account for the internality of the relations of their instances with our actions. Dispositions are *enacted*, as capacities *exercised*, or abilities *displayed* by achievements of achievers. And such connexions involve their, our, actions. However, such grammatical remark could not involve reductionism. Wittgenstein's equation of the understanding of a

1 "Nun überschauen wir die Situation ganz klar. Das Verstehen eines Wortes ist die Disposition es zu gebrauchen, die Disposition ist eine Möglichkeit, und die Möglichkeit wieder hält man für ein Abbild der Wirklichkeit. So kommt man zu der Meinung, dass in dem Verständnis eines Wortes schon alle künftigen Anwendungen präexistieren oder schlummern und ist nun enttäuscht darüber, dass die Erklärung eines Wortes nicht alle diese Anwendungen antizipiert." (Wittgenstein, 2003, p. 368)

2 "Die Ansicht, gegen die ich mich in diesem Zusammenhang kehren möchte, ist die, das[s] es sich bei dem Verstehen um einen Zustand handelt, der in mir vorhanden ist, wie z.B. die Zahnschmerzen. Dass das Verstehen aber nichts mit einem Zustand zu schaffen hat, das sieht man ganz klar, wenn man fragt: 'Verstehst du das Wort Napoleon?' – Ja – 'Meinst du den Sieger von Austerlitz?' – Ja – 'Hast du das unaufhörlich gemeint?' Es hat offenbar keinen Sinn zu sagen, ich habe das die ganze Zeit gemeint, so wie ich sagen kann: ich habe ununterbrochen Zahnschmerzen gehabt. Ich kann nur sagen: Ich bin mir der Bedeutung des Wortes 'Napoleon' bewusst und zwar in genau derselben Weise, wie ich weiss, dass $2 + 2 = 4$ ist, nämlich nicht in Gestalt eines Zustandes, sondern in Gestalt einer Disposition." (Wittgenstein, 2003, p. 436; See also p. 439)

word with a disposition to make use of a word could not have been reducible to the definitive abolishment of any conceivable distinction between the two. The distinction, in fact, can be reiterated if required, and its abolition does not constitute Wittgenstein's objective. For, the philosophically inspired but nevertheless philosophically misleading would-be use of the concept of disposition that is critically addressed by Wittgenstein is the would-be use of the concept as the *unavoidably un lacking ontological counterpart of the concept of capacity*. In what follows, I precise central features of the more elaborate account to which Wittgenstein arguably invites. For as earlier mentioned, the very ordinary relevance of the use of the concepts of disposition and capacity involves the obviousness of the successes and failures of the activity of *(re)identifying* enactments of dispositions, exercises of capacities, display of abilities.

Indeed, ordinarily, there rarely are unclaritys with respect to the fact that we can speak about dispositions and activities. Although, no occurrence of event does, or even is meant to, safeguard our knowledge that we are disposed in some ways, that we do dispose of our own capacities.¹ There could not be anything such as a fact whose reminiscence is meant to reassure us between two enactments of a disposition or exercises of a capacity, that we shall be able to reenact such disposition or exercise this capacity exactly in the way in which we will need, in the future.

But, would we conceive that we should have needed to have obtained such guarantee, such safeguard of our knowledge, then capacities can seem to require to be grounded, and dispositions can seem to constitute their grounds. And for a very simple motive: if the intelligibility of the fact that someone sings involves that of the facts: (i) that someone could have sung, (ii) that it was possible for that person to sing, (iii) that the person had the capacity to sing, then what does it involve to think that a person had a capacity? Thinking a disposition as a capacity of capacity does at least seem to provide an easy resolution of the difficulty: it is in fact a very ordinary aspect of some of our ordinary uses of the concept of disposition to involve such move, in relation with too widely spread confusions about predispositions (conceived asocially, in some substantive and fixist way). Thusly conceived, and even if unconvulsive, predispositions can indeed in turn be conceived as capacities of capacities of capacities. On such (prereflexive) approach: exercises of capacities are actualizations of dispositions (capacities of capacities) which are actualizations of predispositions (capacities of capacities of capacities). A central aspect of Wittgenstein's motive for the reconception of dispositions as capacities then should be quite obvious. Even 'predispositions' can evolve. We just need to consider an adequate time span.

1 On this see notably Bouveresse's explanation of Wittgenstein's account of dispositions (2022, pp. 190-201).

Conclusion

Both Wittgenstein and Sartre criticize mentalist (and privatist) conceptions of dispositions as reducible to states which could only be internal to mind and would simultaneously ground, from the outset, the possibilities of the exercises of capacities or abilities. Such conception of dispositions indeed not only tends to render unintelligible the ordinary thickness of the concept of disposition (by means of which we sometimes sufficiently understand and explain some of our actions and behaviours), but further and also, tend to render actions unintelligible. Indeed, if some mentions of dispositions are sometimes unproblematically equatable with mentions of reasons, much less clear is that, as traditionally assumed, dispositions could have provided grounds for knowledge as such, as a whole, and also thereby, for knowledge of human action. Although apparently innocuous, the assumption according to which: whatever can be actual *must* first be possible, and correlatively, that the possible somehow both must and must not exist like the actual, so to speak, *as a preliminary shadow of the actual*, is really misleading. Indeed, on this conception, criticized both by Sartre and Wittgenstein, dispositions should have been understandable as *possibilities which would exist internally to mind and would separate mind and world to so to speak render their connexions accountable for*. In the first part of the article, we studied that considerations of the modalities and contextualities involved by enactments or exercises of dispositions are sufficient to dispense with the misleading appearance of unavoidable compulsoriness displayed by the correlated actualist conception of possibility and coercive conception of necessity. In that sense, both Sartre and Wittgenstein have elucidated that accounting for dispositions is conceivable inasmuch as dispositions are thought in their relations to actions. Less than rendering dispositions unthinkable, isolating dispositions of minds from contexts and circumstances leave us with a thin concept of disposition which turns out insufficient to account for situative and situated possibilities of action. Thereby is also rendered clear that accounting for dispositions then ought to involve a reflexive account of the activity in which disposing consists. For, not only that we can dispose things, objects, and even, ourselves, but also, we can dispose ourselves to be disposed in ways we can relatively determine and are relevant to our world-conceptions. In the second part of the article, we studied that such externalist reconception of the place of dispositions in our world-conceptions involve the wholistic integration of their relations to our ends, objectives, and purposes. By contrast, mere propensions or inclinations do not involve such connexions. Thusly conceived, we can account for the relative sufficiency of dispositions to account for *some* of our reasonings and practices. That is to say, not only that actions are relevant for accounting for dispositions, but dispositions are in fact thoroughly correlated with actions, as brought out both by Sartre and Wittgenstein. The consideration of the activity of disposing could not be secondary to an appropriate account of the place of dispositions in world-conceptions.

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