

A Critique of John Haugeland's Beholdenness Theory of
Truth or: Haugeland's Attempt to Steal Home

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- EPM Sellars, Wilfrid. 1956. "Empiricism and Philosophy of Mind." Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1997.
- HT Haugeland, John. 2013. *Dasein Disclosed*, ed. Rouse, Joseph. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- DD Haugeland, John. 1998. *Having Thought*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this essay is to examine the relationship between mind and truth in John Haugeland's essays, "Mind Embodied and Embedded" (1995), "Objective Perception" (1996), "Truth & Rule-Following" (1998), and "Authentic Intentionality" (2002). I will do so by mapping Haugeland's divergence from his previous alignment with the so-called "neo-pragmatists," who in this essay act as a foil against which Haugeland's later view can be situated. The neo-pragmatist camp largely consists of Wilfrid Sellars and Robert Brandom. Haugeland diverges from this camp in the attempt to illustrate that there is a difference between according with social practices and getting the world right, or, in other words, to illustrate that there is something true about the world independent of us.

The four essays in question spell out a conception of understanding in which dynamic perceptual engagement with the world is embedded in an idealized, static structure of truth undergirded by existential commitment. I will argue that these two major aspects of Haugeland's view are incompatible. Ultimately, this essay seeks to show how Haugeland's goal of exorcising the demon of "capital-R Relativism" is unsuccessful by illustrating that there is a flaw in his claim that existential commitment is self-generated.

CHAPTER 1

The main goal of this chapter is to provide context in which to situate Haugeland's divergence from what he deems a "third-base" view occupied by neo-pragmatists such as Wilfrid Sellars and Robert Brandom. Haugeland's divergence – which comes in the form of the attempt to exorcise the demon of "capital-R Relativism" – is the subject of the rest of this essay. The crux of Haugeland's argument against the neo-pragmatist view rests on his demonstration that not all constitution is institution – that is to say, his demonstration that a community of conforming selves can all agree on something yet still be objectively wrong about it. Haugeland previously attributed the third-base view to himself but in his later work, despite retaining some key aspects of his Sellarsian roots, saw his view as fundamentally different from that of the neo-pragmatists.

The classification of the neo-pragmatists is not an official one but one that Haugeland offers in his 1990 essay, "The Intentionality All-Stars," in which he provides an overview of different stances of philosophers of mind. This overview is imaginatively laid out through a depiction of groups of philosophers occupying different defensive bases in a baseball game of phenomenology.

In this essay, Haugeland investigates where each camp locates original intentionality – intentionality here referring to the property of mental states as being "about" something. What original intentionality is depends on the view of each camp, but for our purposes, it is most easily understood when contrasted with derivative intentionality. Derivative intentionality inherits intentionality from something else

that has the same propositional content already. For example, imagine two people who decide to communicate using cut out colored shapes only. If they decide that a purple square communicates, “I am hungry,” then the propositional content of that communication, “I am hungry,” would stem from something else – it would be unoriginal or derivative. Unless we concede to infinite regress or circularity, the problem is that all derivative intentionality must at some point derive from something that is not derivative – namely, it must derive from intentionality that is original.

To give an account of original intentionality, each camp has tried to spell out how “vapid holism” – or the view that “the intentionality of any individual state or occurrence always depends on some larger pattern into which it fits” (Haugeland HT, 130) – renders intentionality compatible with “vapid materialism,” the view that “without any matter, there wouldn’t be anything else contingent either” (HT, 128). In Haugeland’s view, the necessity of this strategy arises from the problem posed by an attempt to understand how intentionality could possibly be both a causal and a normative relation between whatever has the intentionality and whatever it is about.

What makes the three camps *defensive* basemen compared to the phenomenal offensive players at bat is that they all confront intentionality from the outside, taking a third-person or holistic view of it in the attempt to reconcile it with vapid materialism.

In this chapter, I will not go into the details of Haugeland’s depictions of the first basemen and the second basemen. Instead, I will focus on exploring Haugeland’s view of the neo-pragmatist position, as it is this position from which he diverges and that he is critiquing in his later work.

§1.1 REJECTING THE MYTH OF THE GIVEN

The rejection of the notion that knowledge is grounded in some sort of foundation, or what is called the Given, is a central aspect of the views of Sellars, Brandom, and Haugeland. In his 1956 essay, “Empiricism and Philosophy of Mind,” Sellars makes his attack on foundationalism and coherentism by demonstrating why the Given is insufficient for grounding knowledge, where the Given takes many forms but in each form is a bedrock for both of these extreme epistemologies. The Myth of the Given is a Sellarsian influence that Haugeland maintains in his later work and is essential to understanding Haugeland’s discussion surrounding the neo-pragmatist conception of original intentionality. Indeed, that the Given is a myth propels the necessity of each base’s strategy of giving a conception of intentionality that renders it compatible with vapid materialism.¹

The Given has two criteria, as formulated by Willem DeVries and Timm Triplett (2000, xx-xxi). The first criterion is that the Given is epistemically independent. Whatever positive epistemic status the cognitive encounter has with the object does not depend on the epistemic status of any other object, or in other words, the Given must be noninferential. The second criterion is that the Given is epistemically efficacious, which means that it can transmit positive epistemic status to other cognitive states. One could say that the Given must be a basis for inferential knowledge. In this way, the Given can be understood as a conception of original intentionality.

¹ With perhaps the exception of the first-base Neo-Cartesians.

The Given can range from the Cartesian notion of *Cogito ergo sum*² to the notion of raw sensory data that grounds classical sense data theories. One way to distinguish between various forms of the Given is between “conceptual” Givens and “non-conceptual” Givens. In short, a conceptual Given fails to satisfy the criterion of epistemic independence and a non-conceptual Given fails to satisfy the criterion of epistemic efficaciousness (Maher 2012, 14). This requires some spelling out.

A nonconceptual Given might be the visual sensation of a red tomato. In such a case, one is merely affected by the presence of something red. The visual sensation itself does not involve concepts because it is just something that happens to someone. This might warrant its satisfaction of the criterion of epistemic independence because having the sensation of red does not require knowing anything else. However, that having a red sensation is something that merely happens to someone poses problems for the possibility of it being epistemic efficacious. The visual sensation on its own does not give one the ability to make the judgment that the tomato is red unless she already had the concept of redness to which she could appeal. Without possessing the relevant concepts that would warrant her awareness of something being red, a visual sensation of a red tomato on its own is not grounds for further inferential knowledge because it lacks propositional form (17). Propositional form is necessary because in order to make a claim about something, one must be able to say whether it is true or false – otherwise it cannot have or transmit positive epistemic status. On its own, the sensation of a red tomato is not something with propositional form that is inherently truth-evaluable; it is just something that happens.

² Although this, of course, requires the proof of God.

On the other hand, a conceptual Given can take the form of an observation report, which inherently has propositional form and is truth-evaluable. An observation report might be made when one is confronted with a red tomato and thinks that it is red. One might say that the proposition form itself is the basis for further knowledge. This guise of the Given seems to satisfy the criterion of epistemic efficaciousness, as many other positive epistemic states can be derived from the observation report, such as, “This tomato is ripe.” One might also argue that an observation report such as, “This tomato is red,” can satisfy the criterion of epistemic independence because it can stand on its own without deriving from any other piece of knowledge. After all, on the face of it, it would seem that because we recognize properties of objects, observational reports can suitably act as the most basic units of knowledge. But this would seem to presuppose that the world is already carved up into objects that we have special access to through our faculty of reason.

In Sellars’s view, we are not endowed with some innate capacity to recognize the properties of objects. On his view, recognition of properties of objects requires more than some capacity that is fundamental to us. Recognition of properties of objects in the form of an observation report requires inference from many other concepts. A conceptual claim cannot be epistemically independent because to have one concept requires “having a whole battery of concepts” (Sellars EPM, §19). It is not enough to just have the concept of “redness.” One must also be able to have the concept of “not red,” which might entail the necessity of concepts such as “orangeness” or “blueness.” One might also need to understand the concept of “normal conditions,” under which the tomato will appear red, as opposed to an

instance when the tomato is viewed under fluorescent lighting, where it might appear orange instead.

Being able to make an observation report means that one is reliably able to make knowledge claims. What's more, being able to make an observation report requires that one *knows* one is a reliable reporter, which provides the grounds for justification of the knowledge claims. The requirement that one must know that one is a reliable reporter means that an observation report can never be epistemically independent; the justification and thus knowledge of the observation report will require support from one's knowledge of one's reliability.

The requirement for knowledge of one's reliability as a reporter means that it is insufficient to merely exhibit regularity in a red-response when faced with a red object. For instance, consider a parrot that has been trained to squawk, "Red," when faced with a red tomato. The parrot would not be considered to be capable of making judgments because of its inability to make inferences from that judgment and to be held accountable for its judgment. When faced with a response like, "Is it not orange?" or, "How do you know?" the parrot would not be moved to respond. It cannot account for its judgment and its reliability, so in that sense, it's not making a judgment.³

We can say that to have a concept is to be able to make a judgment about it, where concepts themselves are the constituents of judgments. To make a judgment is to assume the normative status of a knower. And to be a knower is to have the ability

³ For many philosophers, this requirement for knowledge has raised concerns as it excludes nonhuman animals and young humans from being capable of knowing. That problem will not really be of concern in this essay as I am merely evaluating Haugeland's argument in its own terms.

to make the right judgments, in accordance with both the circumstances at hand and the relevant norms of reasoning. This means that one must have knowledge of those norms (Maher 2012, 16).

It is probably helpful at this point to clarify what is meant by “normative.” Sellars makes much use of the notion of normative functionalism, in which one defines a kind in terms of the function that an instance of such a kind *ought* to perform or properly performs. The function that ought to be performed is treated as an ideal according to which instances of a kind are evaluated and individuated. This means that instances do not always carry out the role as dictated by the ideal kind; there is room for error. Importantly, normative functional kinds are holistic in the sense that their normative roles arise according to the standards governing the larger domain to which they belong. Take, for instance, the role of a chess pawn. Apart from the game of chess, the chess pawn would have no ontological status at all. It would just be a block of plastic. In this sense, the game of chess is epistemically prior to the chess pawn. Because a chess pawn is defined by its role within the larger game of chess, a chess pawn can be a chess pawn regardless of its shape or material, as long as it is still subject to the rules of chess governing pawns.

To formulate his alternative account, Sellars rejects the need for a Given to ground knowledge. What Givenists have done by committing to the Myth is to confuse the space of reasons and the space of causes. With his attack on the Myth, Sellars shows that conceptual facts cannot be analyzed in terms of empirically descriptive facts, or, in other words, the normative is irreducible to the causal. There can be no such thing as purely descriptive, non-normative individuation of a mental state as a foundation of knowledge (Lance 2008, 420). To make any sort of

knowledge claim is to already take up a normative stance in which one understands oneself as a reliable reporter. In one of his most widely cited remarks, Sellars states,

In characterizing an episode or a state as that of *knowing*, we are not giving an empirical description of that state or episode; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, the space of justifying and being able to justify what one says.

(Sellars EPM, §36)

This requirement for assuming authority for one's judgment means that assertions fundamentally have a normative dimension. Knowledge claims cannot be made purely on the basis of empirical description; to describe an occurrence is already to place it in the space of reasons. Placing in the space of reasons is to individuate an entity according to the normative standard to which an instance of its kind should adhere. However, the space of reasons should not be understood as some reified and rigidly coherent structure. Justification of a knowledge claim does not always require linear belief-to-belief steps; that would commit us to the problem of a regress. Instead, Sellars commits to a vision of knowledge as a multidimensional and holistic *self-correcting* enterprise. Consequently, the dynamicity and holism of socially instituted normativity are essential for a neo-pragmatist view of knowledge.

§1.2 HAUGELAND'S VIEW OF THE MECHANISM OF SOCIALLY INSTITUTED NORMATIVITY

Now that we've gotten a glimpse of why knowledge must be understood as fundamentally normative for Sellarsian philosophers,⁴ we can take a look at how Haugeland understands the mechanism of the emergence of these norms in the view of the neo-pragmatist camp. Keep in mind that his characterization is not of Sellars's

⁴ More specifically, left-wing Sellarsian philosophers. See Rouse 2014 for an account of the distinction between left-wing Sellarsians and right-wing Sellarsians.

view specifically, but of a broader class of views. Therefore, it does not capture any one view closely but instead merely acts as a foil against which he will formulate his alternative view.

In Haugeland's view of neo-pragmatism, original intentionality essentially arises in social practice. The pattern of vapid holism takes form as ways of life established and maintained by the mechanism of communal conformism. Contentful tokens – such as rituals, tools, and performances – gain their meaning through their situatedness within a way of life, which is defined by the larger holistic pattern of norms that governs it.

The primary mechanism for establishing this larger pattern of norms is one that Haugeland calls *conformism*. Community members sort themselves into arbitrarily demarcated groups within which they adopt similar behavioral dispositions through the processes of copying the behavior of others and reinforcing the “right” behavior in others.⁵ The majority-rule behavioral dispositions coalesce into norms, which set the standards for evaluating the propriety of individual behavior. Both the groups and the norms are effectively emergent entities that are maintained by being passed down through the generations (HT, 149).

Through the mechanism of conformism, social behavior is norm-governed. However, there is a distinction to be made here: that between acting according to a rule and acting from a rule. One need not be able to recite a rule of social behavior explicitly or explain *why* a norm of social behavior is what it is; one only needs to be

⁵ “Right” appears in scare-quotes here to denote that the correctness of an act is primarily evaluated in terms of its accordance with the communally established norms – socially instituted propriety that Haugeland will argue does not provide grounds for objectivity.

able to modify their dispositions to adhere to the behavior deemed appropriate to the relevant circumstances. From this we can say that acting from a rule is distinct from acting according to a rule in that it is explicit and deliberate behavior. (Haugeland HT, 150). On the other hand, acting according to a rule is not an auspice of regularism. Norm-governed behavior is still dependent on the extant class of relevant norms, which is distinct from something that repeatedly happens without being caused by anything at all. It is through the community members' monitoring of individuals that norm-governed behavior can be "wrong" in the sense that it deviates from what is deemed acceptable to the larger community (HT, 151).

Accordingly, the adherence with certain standards and minimization of deviation through imitation and censoriousness gives the standards their *de facto* normative force, which is to say that the normative force of propriety devolves upon social practice. With the emphasis on social practice, it might seem to one that there is no room for the individual in the neo-pragmatist conception of original intentionality. This is true; for the neo-pragmatists, the self is fundamentally a member of a conforming community, a unit of public accountability who upholds the standards of conformism through behavioral censoriousness and imitation. The public domain is epistemically prior to any individual domain, and because of this one can say that the neo-pragmatists locate original intentionality in the institution of communal norms established through the social mechanism of conformism.

§1.3 HAUGELAND'S INTERPRETATION OF THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN NEO-
PRAGMATIST THOUGHT

For the neo-pragmatists, tools are defined in terms of their normativity – that is, they are defined in terms of what they ought to be used for. For example, a hammer is not a hammer apart from its role in driving nails into a surface.⁶ The role of a tool is instituted through its relationship to other public paraphernalia. On Haugeland's view, for the neo-pragmatists, linguistic tools are a special case of tools in the sense that they are *double-use* tools.

Linguistic tools are double-use in the sense that utterances are both produced and responded to. "Utterance" is ambiguous in that it denotes both the production of a linguistic token and the produced linguistic token.⁷ It is the produced linguistic tokens that are evaluated according to their linguistic kind and thus have normative statuses. Effectively, the produced linguistic tokens act as the primary bearers of semantic content (HT, 153).

The function of linguistic tools is primarily to connect the two uses – the utterance (in the produced linguistic token sense) and the response – because the utterance should be responded to and the response is itself in the form of an utterance. Both of these acts are norm-governed, which means that the relationship between the propriety, or the accordance with the relevant norms, of each of these acts is where

⁶ This does not mean that hammers cannot be used in other ways, but if a hammer were to be used to decorate one's kitchen, for example, this might be an instance of a *misuse* of a hammer.

⁷ A type is a descriptive category, while a token is a particular instance of an object which may fall under a descriptive category. For example, if someone were to say, "I have the same dress as her," one would probably rightfully assume that the speaker has the same *type* of dress as her (with the same designer, the same pattern), and not the same *tokened* dress, which would mean that they literally share the same dress.

the connection resides. To illustrate this, Haugeland uses an example of a policeman directing traffic. In such a scenario, it is proper for him to tell you to go when it is safe and clear, and in response it is proper for you to drive only when he tells you to. If you were to drive when he didn't tell you to drive, your response would not be proper because you would not be acting in accordance with the norm (not going) implied in the tokened utterance (the policeman telling you not to go) (HT, 153).

Linguistic tokens have a propriety-determining status that is not manifest, which is to say that their status is contingent on many other factors that proceed or surround it. Thus, the status of a tokened utterance is not always the same but is dependent on the normative circumstances within which it is situated. For example, the tokened utterance, "bomb," has a significantly different status on an airplane than it does in a conversation about the take-out one ordered last night. That 'bomb' takes on a different meaning resulting in different norms governing the propriety of the response when uttered on an airplane is the result of preceding factors (e.g., 9/11) and surrounding factors (e.g., being in a metal box in the sky).

Linguistic acts affect the normative circumstances themselves, including those of both the utterer and the audience. Tokened utterances affect statuses, which means that there are *new* proprieties implicit in the affected statuses. The propriety of the response is evaluated by how one behaviorally responds to the proprieties implicit in the affected statuses. This is what is meant by saying that linguistic tools are double-use. Use of linguistic tools involves a dimension of accountability for one's utterances. For example, imagine you make a promise to your sister to feed the cat when you get home. By making that promise, you are committing yourself to feeding the cat, and your sister is justified in counting on you to actually feed the cat when

you get home. Because of this, your sister's decision to go see a movie after school instead of going home to feed the cat is a proper response, but only on your account. If instead you fail to feed the cat when you get home, one might say that your sister's decision to go see a movie was improper, as that decision resulted in the cat not being fed like it ought to have been. But the change in the propriety status arose only because you did not keep the promise you made in the first place. As a result, your sister can blame the impropriety of her response on your failure to maintain the commitment you made in your promise.

What's more, by failing to keep your promise, you lose the entitlement you had to the content of your claim. Effectively, you are knocked down a mark in your authority to impose normative constraints on the behavior of others because of your failure to be held accountable to the obligation you accepted. Alternatively, if you had fed the cat, you would have maintained such authority. Through a mechanism of affecting statuses, linguistic tools can causally engender the extant classes of norms in that they allow one to be both subject to and the author of new norms.⁸ Because of this, linguistic practice provides a dimension of dynamicity necessary for the location of original intentionality in social institution.

For linguistic acts to gain causal force, not all language moves can be intralinguistic. In fact, it is necessary that some language moves are not intralinguistic. If they were, the whole mechanism of socially instituted normativity would be comparable to a self-contained game in which all intentionality derives from a fundamentally bounded normative practice within which tokened utterances

⁸ It should be noted here that the norms themselves are contestable.

are endlessly manipulated. Haugeland identifies observation statements and promises as examples of moves that are not intralinguistic, because the propriety of these utterances depends on nonlinguistic factors. The propriety of a tokened utterance involving publicly instituted paraphernalia thus depends on both its internal coherence within the space of giving and asking for reasons *and* its external coherence with the relevant circumstances of the extralinguistic world. For example, the propriety of the utterance, “Look, there’s a firetruck over there!” relies on there actually being a visible firetruck over there, and not an ambulance or nothing at all (HT, 154). Maintaining this coherence requires community members to keep track of normative statuses of public symbols through keeping track of ever-changing conversational statuses. Retaining not only one’s own conversational statuses but also the conversational statuses of others makes possible the grounding of individual cognitive states because these statuses allow one to justify a belief – or, effectively, to be a *knower* (HT, 156).

It is for this reason that language (at least, in the views of Sellars and Brandom) is necessary for awareness of particulars and thus for knowledge, which is a generalization of Sellars’s thesis of psychological nominalism. All inner thought is derivative from the public sphere of giving and asking for reasons, which is governed by a larger communally instituted set of norms. Language is necessary for the possibility of giving and asking for reasons. Original intentionality is made possible through the sense in which linguistic tools are *double-use*, where the propriety of a response is determined by the new proprieties that are implicit in the statuses affected by the utterance. It is through this process of affecting statuses that norms can be engendered, and it is through the process of conformism that norms can be

maintained. Thus, original intentionality is an essentially norm-governed social institution constituted by the relationships among public paraphernalia that renders all private intentionality derivative.

That neo-pragmatists essentially view original intentionality as social institution is what Haugeland will argue cannot provide a basis for objectivity – or in other words, getting the world right. Getting the world right is not merely making statements about the world that are in accordance with the arbitrarily established communal standards – that is to say, it's not just a matter of “how we do things.”

How Haugeland formulates his account against the neo-pragmatist view of original intentionality will be the focus of the rest of this essay. I will maintain this focus by illustrating which key aspects of neo-pragmatist thought Haugeland retains and which he discards, in order to ultimately argue that his claim that not all constitution is institution is unsuccessful.

CHAPTER 2

In this chapter, I will examine Haugeland's view of perceptual engagement with the world and how he thinks we perceive objects as such in order to illustrate the beginnings of Haugeland's divergence from a neo-pragmatist view of original intentionality. By considering Haugeland's "super-monkey" thought experiment in terms of Sellars's psychological nominalism, I will raise some preliminary concerns that his holistic view of object constitution requires the dynamic practice of language – or at least a richer conception of social practice – to do the work of letting objects be in order to accomplish the goal of reconciling social practice with a world that exists independently of us. However, what Haugeland will use to show that understanding is independent of language – existential commitment – will be the focus of the next chapter.

§2.1 PERCEPTUAL ENGAGEMENT

For naturalist⁹ philosophers of mind, the separation of ontologically independent mental and physical domains has long been an issue since Rene Descartes first formulated mind-body dualism. This notion pervades approaches to

⁹ "Naturalist" philosophers are those that don't appeal to the supernatural in order to explain human features, such as the mind.

artificial intelligence that attempt to model intelligence on internalized symbol manipulation.¹⁰

In the 1995 essay, “Mind Embodied and Embedded,” Haugeland argues against drawing a boundary between the skull-bound mind and the external physical world, or, in other words, between the rational normative domain and the physical causal domain. In fact, he argues that there is no defining characteristic of the mind at all – a defining feature that, for other philosophers, took shape in aspects such as intentionality or normativity. As explicated in the previous chapter, the three bases held that the defining feature of the mental or cognitive was impossible except in some supra-individual network of relations: vapid holism.

For Haugeland, the various strategies that attempt to reconcile original intentionality with vapid holism remain intellectual or theoretical in a way that actually perpetuates Cartesian separation of the mental realm and the corporal realm. An example of this separation might be Sellars’s notions of the space of reasons and the space of causes, as explicated in the previous chapter.

Alternatively, in order to move past the “clumsier ‘left-wing’ (that is, socialist) phenomenology” (HT, 147) of the neo-pragmatists, Haugeland proposes to invoke the “intimacy” or the intermingling of mind, body, and world in order to call certain distinctions into question. Rather than accepting the premise that the mental has some defining feature from the outset, Haugeland instead suggests that intelligence is just as corporal and worldly as it is mental. The external world is not

¹⁰ Much of Haugeland’s work attempting to understand human intelligence does so by exploring what makes it different from artificial intelligence.

represented by interconnected tokenized symbols in the mind but instead is perceptually engaged with in an *ad hoc*, dynamic manner.

To illustrate what he means by this, Haugeland uses Herbert Simon's parable of an ant crawling on a beach (HT, 209). The ant does not have a model of the beach or a step-by-step list of instructions contained in its head but instead is tightly coupled with the beach to form one integrated system. The crucial point here is that the complexity of the ant's path is not a result of the complexity of the ant itself or the complexity of its internalized model of the beach but instead is a result of the complexity of the environment, or in other words, the ant's perceptual and skillful engagement with its environment.

The holist thesis that the mind would be impossible in the absence of the body and/or world is commonly accepted, but what Haugeland is exploring in this essay is how important this necessity is to understand the nature of intelligence (HT, 211). What is at issue is whether the holist thesis can both be granted and if the mind can still be understood as a distinct and well-defined subsystem within the necessary larger whole.

Understanding systems through their decomposition into simpler components is a quite intuitive approach. What this understanding gets wrong is that it leads to the impression that there are transducing interfaces between distinct components. What really matters is not the components and the interfaces between them, but the structure of interactions that define hierarchies. Hierarchies can be understood in terms of intensity of interaction between components, or how tightly things are coupled. Coupling refers to the degree to which they affect each other. For example, in the case of the ant on the beach, the ant and the beach are tightly coupled as an

integrated unit because the ant's path depends on what the details of sand look like (however the ant might perceive those details). The ant is constantly and perceptually engaged with the beach. If the ant's path were determined by the ant's internal model of the beach, then the ant and the beach could be understood as independent components of a system with an interface between the ant's feet and the beach. Instead, the ant's behavior can only be understood in terms of its environment. Thus, the beach is integral to understanding the phenomenon of the ant traveling along a path on the beach.

It is important to note that what we are trying to understand in the case of the ant on the beach is the ant's path, rather than the ant's immune system or respiration, both of which would render the beach largely irrelevant. Thus, which close interactions matter depends on what we're interested in or what we're trying to understand. Decomposing systems in terms of intensity of interactions between subsystems and within subsystems is a way of rendering the phenomena in question intelligible (HT, 216).

The rejection of a strictly representationalist theory of mind – a theory of mind that Haugeland believes misinforms much of the artificial intelligence effort – comes in the form of a slogan: “perception is cheap, representation expensive” (HT, 219). A representationalist theory of mind holds that the mind can be thought of as the totality of a static structure consisting of tokenized symbols, the content of which is determined by the symbols' interconnectedness. The problem facing the theory is that this structure needs to be kept up to date with a dynamic environment, which is difficult in the context of attempting to create artificial intelligence that can interact with the environment in real time. A perception-based theory of mind, on the other

hand, is more useful for artificial intelligence because it can remain *ad hoc* and thus more suitable to a constantly changing environment.

Perception theories of mind make much use of the concept of affordances as proposed by J.J. Gibson, who defined affordances as what the environment has to offer an organism (HT, 222). On this view, we can only understand animals as perceivers if we think of them as inseparably related to their environment, which is understood in terms of what is appropriate to the animal. Affordances allow for an understanding of animals as perceivers because understanding perceptual engagement in those terms requires reference to both the animal and environment. What is controversial is that affordances can be perceived and not inferred by the animal – that relevant features of aspects of the world are inherent properties of those features. Affordances allow the locus of the meaningful to reside in the world itself, and not in a model of the world. This is the basis for another slogan, proposed by Rodney Brooks: “the world is its own best model.” Specifically, skillful engagement with the changing world happens in real time, rather than being responded to through the accommodation of changing facts about the world into some pre-existing symbolic representation or model of it in our heads.

Of course, human intelligence is not the same as ant intelligence. But the notion that, for humans, mind and body cannot be divided into independent components connected by a transducer still stands. In fact, Haugeland suggests that the human intermingling of mind and world may be more intimate than any other. To illustrate this, Haugeland uses the example of typing at a keyboard. To perform this skill, a feedback loop that can continuously be recalibrated to all sorts of changing factors must be in effect. The changing factors are, of course, concrete details of the

worldly situation in which the typist is embedded. What's more, there is no determinate interface between the keyboard and the typist's fingers, as the notion of a determinate interface depends upon the assumption of distinct components that Haugeland is rejecting. The entire performance depends on a number of contingencies rather than concrete instructions given to the typist's body by her nervous system. The activity cannot be analyzed in terms of the typist and the world but instead must be understood in terms of the typist and the keyboard as a tightly-knit unity, in which the behavior of each affects and constrains the other.

Haugeland's aim is not to dissolve all the distinctions into a homogenous soup but instead to call certain distinctions into question. Although there is no determinate interface between mind and body or mind and world, that does not mean that these things are the same or that the distinctions between them are washed out. What does matter depends on what we're interested in – that is to say, intelligence abides in the meaningful (HT, 230). The problem then, is to find a way to understand the effectiveness of intelligence without the need for a separate inner or mental realm.

To tackle this issue, Haugeland turns to a notion proposed by Hubert Dreyfus:

When we are at home in the world, the meaningful objects embedded in their context of references among which we live are not a model of the world stored in our mind or brain; they are the world itself.

(Dreyfus 1979, 265-266)

There are three points being made here in the effort to reject a representationalist view of the mind. The first is that the meaningful is essentially worldly and importantly, the meaningful is not located in symbolic representations or models of the world. This is to say that original meaning is contained in the world itself – we do not derive meaning *from* the world, but instead propositional content is accounted for

by our engagement *with* the world. Secondly, the meaningful is objects embedded in their context of references. Specifically, what Dreyfus has in mind are tools and other paraphernalia. Tools have their meanings beyond themselves in terms of their function for us – their places in a web of significance. These meanings are not located in representations of them but rather in our skillful engagement with them.

Finally, the third point is that we do not store the meaningful inside ourselves, but rather live in it and are at home in it (Haugeland HT, 233). In a somewhat infamous example, Haugeland suggests that when one drives to San Jose, it is not that one is following an internalized model of the road, but instead that the road itself knows the way. The road encodes the information to get to the destination on which the driver's ability to arrive at the destination depends. In other words, the driver collaborates with the road in a mode of perceptual skillful engagement and this engagement can only be analyzed in terms of the road and the driver as an interknit unity.

Tight coupling of the driver and the road that knows the way is just the tip of the iceberg of our skillful involvement with the world. That tools have meaning in the sense that they're important to us and are interdependent with other things in their proper use expands the sense of the meaningful, as opposed to a conception of the meaningful in which it is located in content-bearing representations.

Now, an issue for the view that holds that the meaningful abides in the world might be that tools are unable to allow one to deal with circumstances that extend beyond one's current situation.¹¹ Haugeland acknowledges this and concedes that the

¹¹ One might argue that something that situated cognition cannot accommodate is offline thinking or thinking that is done in the absence of perceptual engagement with the immediate

very definition of a tool is something that allows us to better cope the present and manifest (HT, 233). However, he does not concede that the thesis that we live in the meaningful contradicts our ability to deal with the absent and covert. In fact, in the scenario in which the road and the driver collaborate to get to San Jose, it is the collaboration itself that allows the driver to get to the destination – a city out of view and thus something that is absent and covert.

In another sense, the intelligence that has accumulated over years of human innovation is inherited through tools. Haugeland points to agriculture as an example. Much like the information is “encoded” in the road, knowledge of growing food is encoded in the plows, combines, and tractors that make agriculture possible. One might say that this information is encoded in the skills of the farmers, but without their engagement and use of these tools and thus an analysis of their skillful exercise as inseparable from the tools, their skills would be meaningless. Likewise, the tools themselves are meaningless apart from the skillful engagement of the farmers with them.

Scientific practice is as worldly as agriculture. Externalized instrumentation embodies much of the intelligence required for investigation, distinction, and manipulation of natural phenomena (HT, 236). Trying to understand either instrumentation without skillful engagement with it or scientific skills without instrumentation would be nonsensical; each is integral to the other. Without

surroundings. Haugeland may be rejecting a strictly representationalist theory of mind, but it is important to note that this view is simply broadening the traditional view that cognition converts external objects into tokenized symbols in the head that can be manipulated. Haugeland claims that he is emphasizing perceptual engagement with our surroundings while still accommodating symbolic manipulation, although I’m not convinced he effectively illustrates this. I will not explore this here, though.

specialized instrumentation, skillful engagement with that instrumentation, and a higher unity that makes these interactions meaningful, scientific practice would be impossible.

Higher unity of intelligence of individuals is required to make sense of individual intelligence. As pointed out earlier, institutions don't make sense in terms of their individual components but instead in terms of the interactions within and between constituted domains that make up the institutions. Engagement between individuals and interaction between individuals and their paraphernalia constitute the structure of an institution but this engagement only makes sense in terms of a global order. In this way, social organization is as much of an embedded phenomenon dependent on meaning externalized in heritable paraphernalia as is agriculture and scientific practice.

Maps, drawings, photos, and other symbols of the world they attempt to represent do not contradict Haugeland's rejection of a representationalist theory of mind but serve as examples of externalized human intelligence (HT, 236). On the one hand, a traditionalist might say that these externalized representations of the world restore content to the inner mind that it might lack without them. However, it is the engagement with these externalized representations that matter. By thinking of them as conduits for the transmission of content to inner models of the world, one fails to account for what is actually doing the work in their facilitation of the meaningful: our skillful uptake and dynamic engagement with them in a constantly changing environment that finds its significance in the contextual.

The point is that cultural intelligence resides in the heritable practices and paraphernalia in which the meaningful is located. Haugeland's conception of the

meaningful might sound like the neo-pragmatist view in that it relies on public paraphernalia that gains meaning through social institution. However, it moves beyond the neo-pragmatist view of communally instituted public paraphernalia in order to make room for a larger role of the external objects themselves. Because mind and world are intertwined, objects cannot be analyzed purely in terms of the arbitrary norms that are imposed upon them and define them through their normative functional roles. The behaviors of mind and world affect and constrain each other in a way that makes each necessary for understanding the other. It is through a conception of the mind as embedded in an environment with which it is perceptually engaged that Haugeland believes we can make room for a necessarily larger role of the world itself.

§2.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF HIGHER ORDER KINDS

Because mind, body, and world can only be understood in terms of each other, there is no need for a defense of the notion that there is a world “out there.” If nothing else, situated cognition is at least effective in exorcising the demon of good old dualism, and by extension, solipsism. The problem that does remain is *how* perception can be about objects.

Delineating the structure of perception of objects as such is a necessary step in Haugeland’s refutation of the neo-pragmatist position. The problem with the neo-pragmatist view is that it doesn’t allow for a way of understanding how one might be in perfect accord with a particular social practice but how that social practice can be entirely wrong about the world itself. This is the basis for yet another one of

Haugeland's slogans: "not all constitution is institution." Recall from the previous chapter that for the neo-pragmatists, making observation claims requires coherence with the normative domain and coherence with the external causal domain. On the neo-pragmatist view, observation claims are evaluated in terms of their propriety with the relevant communally established norms governing understanding of each domain. In Haugeland's view, this leaves something essential out – namely, the causal role of the world itself. In short, the philosophical problem at hand is to show how objectivity requires both an account of how social practice provides the normative force in guiding our beliefs about the world *and also* how it relies on an objective world independent of the way we take it to be.

In "Objective Perception," Haugeland explores the question of how and why we recognize objects as objects – the problem of objectivity. It is in this essay that he begins to spell out his conception of truth as beholdenness and to spell out the dependence of objectivity on both normativity and modality, diverging from a neo-pragmatist view of original intentionality. For Haugeland, instead of just being normative, perception must be normative and *modal* all the way down.

On Haugeland's view, one must not conceive of an object as a "temporally and spatially cohesive corporeal lump" (HT, 246). The objecthood of objects are not merely given to us by the world. Instead, "object" is meant in a formal sense, to denote a role or function regarding perception. It does not carry any implications about the nature of the perceived object – in fact, perceived objects extend over a range of phenomena including concepts, facts, emotions, in addition to traditional corporeal things. But it is also important to note that the objecthood of objects is not merely a socially instituted phenomenon. The point is to delineate the structure

between perceiver and perceived. The “objecthood” of perceptual objects and the “of-ness” of perceptual objects are entangled and can only be analyzed in terms of each other (HT, 246).

To begin to lay out a holistic view of constituted objectivity, Haugeland looks at an information-based view of recognition of distal objects as laid out by Fred Dretske (HT, 242). The issue at stake here is to understand why perception can be of distal objects when it is via proximal stimuli. Dretske proposes that the object of perception is whatever that perception carries information about in a primary way. A perceptual state carries information in a primary way if it does not carry information via any other fact.

The example that Dretske uses to spell this out is the perception of the doorbell being pushed (the distal object) via the sound of the doorbell (the proximal stimulus). Although what we hear is sound of the doorbell and not the doorbell being pushed, the information that is being carried through that perception is that the doorbell button was pushed. Under normal conditions, the doorbell being pushed is both a necessary and sufficient cause for the sound of the doorbell. Thus, under normal conditions, the doorbell transmits information about the button in a secondary way.

On the other hand, the transmitted information changes under abnormal conditions. Imagine that the bell wires short from time to time, causing the bell to ring. The same perceptual state no longer carries the same information. Now when the doorbell rings, the implication is, “Oh, the doorbell is going off again,” but

without the implication that the doorbell button was pushed.¹² The perceptual stimulus is free of the information that it carried under normal conditions. Thus, the object of perception is the sound of the doorbell ringing and not the button being pushed, because the sound carries information about the bell in a primary way. What is being heard is not the button being pushed but the doorbell itself. In both normal and abnormal conditions, because the object of perception is the information that is transmitted in a primary way, the perceived object – what we hear – is the sound of the doorbell and not the pushed button.

One might argue that the ringing of the bell carries information about the air or our eardrum vibrating in a certain way, and that the information that the bell is ringing is carried only via the information about the air or our eardrum ringing in that particular way. Thus, the information about the air or our eardrum is the primary information. Using the same logic of how information is carried either in a primary or secondary way, through this argument, what we really hear is the vibration of the air or our eardrum, rather than the bell (HT, 243). When confronted with the physicalist concern about why the perceptual experience even carries information about the bell at all, Dretske replies that in fact intervening causal factors are not the proximal information because that causal proximal information is not at all carried by the perceptual experience.

To illustrate why, Dretske's reply has two parts. The first part of Dretske's reply is that information can carry information about one thing being the case without carrying any information about the factors that caused it to be the case. The example

¹² This is, of course, assuming that one is aware of the problem.

Dretske uses here is that, if there are only lemon drops in the mantle bowl when Grampa gives money to one of the grandchildren to buy lemon drops, the fact that the bowl is full of lemon drops may provide information about the fact that Grampa gave money to one of the grandchildren to buy lemon drops, but it doesn't provide information about which grandchild Grampa gave money to or which grandchild bought the lemon drops. Information about the fact that Grampa paid cannot be carried via the intervening causal factors (HT, 244).

The second part of Dretske's retort is to point out that the information about which grandchild paid is analogous to the physical causal processes like the vibration of air or our eardrum that act as intervening causal factors in our perception of the sound of the ringing doorbell. In fact, the different ways that the air or the eardrum might vibrate are like the different grandchildren that might have bought the lemon drops – so analogously, the perceptual experience of the doorbell ringing cannot carry information about how the air or the eardrum is vibrating because that perceptual experience does not carry any information about the intervening physical causal factors at all (HT, 244).

The problem, in Haugeland's view, is the characterization of the proximal stimulus. This issue arises because the argument relies on the claim that perceptual experience of the same object can be transmitted via a number of different stimuli. If only one stimulus mediated the perceptual experience, then the perceptual experience would carry information about the stimulus and thus information about the object would not be carried in a primary way (HT, 245). For Haugeland, it's the qualitative difference – the difference in kind – that matters.

This difference in kind undermines Dretske's argument. He must consider all kinds because if one kind of stimulus mediated the same kind of perception of the same kind of object, then the perception would carry information about the kind of stimulus. The perception of the kind of stimulus would only carry information about the perception of the object only via the perception of the kind of stimulus, and the perception of the object would not be in a primary way. Thus, to accord with his account of the type of perceived object, there must be no aspect among different perceived objects that is shared (HT, 245).

The crux of Haugeland's negative evaluation of Dretske's view lies on its lack of accountability of global or higher order kinds. Haugeland argues that Dretske does not consider that the perceptual stimulus carries the information that the proximal stimulus is of a higher order kind and carries information about the perceived distal object via the information of the kind of stimulus.

What Dretske's view does not accommodate is why a certain aspect of an object – say, its squareness – can be reliably recognized from varying perspectives and under conditions that vary from the normal conditions. Consider the discussion of higher order kinds in the previous chapter. On Sellars's view, it is only through the knowledge of the relevant norms – including those of “normal conditions” – governing objects that properties of objects could be recognized at all. Haugeland maintains this – on his view, higher order kinds are essential for the possibility of sensory perception of objects as such. What perceptual responses track is the kinds primarily, and the distal object only via the kinds. Consequently, the kinds are epistemically prior to the perceptual tracking of particulars (HT, 246).

§2.3 AN EARLY ACCOUNT OF OBJECT CONSTITUTION

This refutation of Dretske provides the grounds for Haugeland to formulate his positive account of how global kinds facilitate our perception of objects. The issue of how perception of proximal stimuli is able to be of distal objects now turns into a deeper question that requires that the intertwined “ofness” of perception and the “objecthood” of perceptual objects be analyzed in terms of each other (HT, 246). For Haugeland, the question takes a Kantian turn: how is the structure of objectivity imposed on the physics and physiology of sensation? In this way, an account of objectivity can be formulated that accommodates the necessity of kinds for object perception.

To begin to answer this, Haugeland turns to the example of chess.¹³ Chess is a game played on a visible medium so that the objects of chess, such as positions, threats, and moves, can be seen. That an object such as a knight fork can immediately be seen as a square or a piece suggests that these objects can only be perceived as *gestalts* (HT, 247).

In spelling out the requirements for being able to “see” a knight fork, Haugeland suggests that the first indication of what is involved in the seeing might be that nonhuman animals cannot see a knight fork. On his view, this is because nonhuman animals do not have the concept. To see the knight fork and to apply the concept of “knight fork” to the perception, one must have the concept (HT, 247). What’s more, the very possibility of the game of chess is alien to nonhuman animals.

¹³ Although, as we will see later, the game example of traditional chess can only go so far to explain how objects can be of a world that is independent of the way we perceive it.

Consequently, it seems that some grasp of the game of chess and the understanding of games as a concept is necessary in being able to see a knight fork as such and to discriminate it from another chess object – say, a pinned knight.

Drawing on Sellars's normative functionalism, the recognition of chess objects as such also requires that one be able to recognize a knight fork regardless of the medium on which the game is played, whether that medium is pixels on a screen or giant combines in a cornfield. On the flip side of that, a chess player must be able to recognize that one is actually playing a game of chess using a chess board. Other games can be played using a chess set, and when these other games are played, each piece takes on an entirely different role. Thus, to recognize that a knight fork is a knight fork, one must be able to appreciate that it has taken place during a chess game. Appreciation of the domain in which the object has occurred is a prerequisite for object recognition (HT, 248).

It is because of these two considerations – that chess can be played in a variety of mediums and that different games can be played in the same medium – that Haugeland concludes that chess games are a kind of pattern with a specific structure, and chess phenomena can only occur within this pattern as subpatterns of it (HT, 248). These subpatterns would be unrecognizable if they occurred outside of the pattern of chess. The grasp of chess as a particular domain is constitutive for chess phenomena and some grasp of that domain is required for the ability to perceive chess objects as such.

Now, what “some grasp or understanding” of a domain actually entails is vague at this point. Like the neo-pragmatists, Haugeland proposes that some grasp of a domain does not mean that one internalizes the rulebook of chess or is able to recite

the rules of chess on command. Instead, that one can skillfully play the game by letting the standards govern the play is adequate for a conceptual articulation of one's understanding of the phenomena that occur within that domain. This requires some explication.

Unlike the neo-pragmatists, Haugeland claims that objectivity is independent of language from the outset. It is understanding, not language, that separates us from nonhuman animals. (HT, 249). This potentially poses some problems for his later exposition of the force of existential commitment in undergirding the excluded zone, which is critical for his view of objectivity. I will illustrate why, but first let's look at why Haugeland believes this to be the case.

The thought experiment that supposedly illustrates the independence of objectivity and language involves "super-monkeys." Super-monkeys are mystical creatures that have no linguistic capacity at all, but for whatever reason, they are able to learn and play games, including the one in question, chess. Super-monkeys' lack of language means that they can't recite or formulate rules, but this doesn't mean that they are incapable of communication – they can cry out when they are in pain, make warning signals when they sense danger, and give mating displays (HT, 249). Additionally, the ability of the super-monkeys to communicate means that we can ascribe emotional states to them, distinguishing them from computers that play chess.

Requirements for understanding the super-monkeys as playing chess include being able to go reliably through the motions of playing chess. They also include the previously mentioned requirements of being able to play the game in variety of media and also of being able to play other games in the same media. This shows that the "motions they go through" are specifically chess moves, or subpatterns of the higher

order chess pattern. According to Haugeland, this does not require linguistic capacity (HT, 250).

The ability to communicate emotional states allows super-monkeys to fulfill one requirement of being able to skillfully operate within the domain of chess and thus illustrate a grasp of the domain: winning matters to them. We would expect the super-monkeys to be pleased and self-satisfied when they win and dejected and frustrated when they lose (HT, 250). This illustrates that not only are they reliably going through the motions, but they are reliably going through the motions of the chess game in a way that matters to them. This mattering and thus the commitment to the domain of the game itself is essential for the insistence upon the legality of moves. Once one is no longer committed to the game of chess as a situation in which winning matters, anything goes in terms of legality. But once that happens, one is no longer playing chess.

A genuine chess player must take on a stance in which they must always be on the lookout for illegal moves but at the same time must count on legality (HT, 251). This means that in order to recognize chess objects of perception one must not only be able to determine the objects of perception but also be able to enforce the norms that constitute the stance required to recognize chess objects as such. To occupy such a stance requires certain skills. Haugeland lists two: the ability to tell what move is made whenever a move is made and the ability to tell when one's opponent has made an illegal move. This divides a set of recognizable moves into two subsets: possible legal moves and impossible illegal moves. Moves are identified as illegal moves when they are ruled out by the rules that are constitutive of chess phenomena and

their identification. The two abilities are distinct in that they have within them the possibility of discord (HT, 252).

The insistence on legality is a commitment to not tolerating illegality and involves insisting on legality to the extent that one would give up the game if it is not maintained. In other words, when an illegal move is performed, the game itself – the continued play – is at stake. Commitment to legality is also constituted by double-checking one's moves, which allows for accurate perception. This commitment to the constitutive standards that govern a domain is what transmits the normative force that makes possible the ability to identify moves and hence the ability for objectivity. Thus, on Haugeland's view, the capacity for such a commitment is prerequisite for any self or subject to be capable of objective perception (HT, 252). Fine-tuned and double-checked skillful operation within a domain governed by its constitutive standards is not a mere act of going through the motions; it is a nontrivial achievement.

Of course, this chess example is limited in that it emphasizes the social role of our institution of the rules that constitute the chess domain as such. It doesn't quite accommodate an explanation of the independence of the world from our understanding of it because the rules of chess are arbitrary and entirely of our own creation. The only thing that gives them the consistency to make them the constitutive standards that govern the domain of chess is their institution over generations. In the next chapter, we will see that Haugeland attempts to move beyond neo-pragmatist accounts of normativity that rely heavily on game examples. In his exposition of automatic, esoteric, and empirical chess, Haugeland draws a sketch of object

constitution that is analogous to empirical science and allows the world to “talk back.”

But for now, the chess-playing super-monkeys example can adequately illustrate what it means for the constituted objects themselves to act as the criteria for evaluating objects of perception. For example, consider the scenario in which an ambient optic array makes it so that the sensory perception corresponds to one kind of chess position but not the kind that the current chess position actually is. The question is whether the super-monkey playing chess is misperceiving the chess position or is accurately perceiving the ambient array. On Dretske’s view, the object of perception would be the ambient array itself. However, this is useless to us here because of the necessity that the super-monkey be able to accurately and reliably perceive chess positions in order to abide by the constitutive standards governing the domain. The whole point of looking in the first place is to tell what the position is (HT, 254). Hence, the super-monkey must be misperceiving the chess position. In order to play the game well and abide by the commitment to winning the game, the super-monkey will correct the discrepancy between the misperception and the norm constituting the accurate chess position to the best of her ability and bring her response into line with the actual position and not the ambient optic array. This is the basis of the Kantian paraphrase: “the conditions of the *possibility of objective perception* as such are likewise the conditions of the *possibility of the objects of that perception*” (HT, 254). It is for this reason that the norms governing the perceptions as such are inseparable from the standards governing and constituting the chess phenomena. From this we can say that, on Haugeland’s view, correct objective perception must be normative and modal all the way down.

§2.4 ON HAUGELAND'S NOTION THAT UNDERSTANDING IS INDEPENDENT OF
LANGUAGE

The super-monkey thought experiment is puzzling for a few reasons. The first is that it seems that with his claim that understanding is independent of language, Haugeland diverges from the neo-pragmatist view by rejecting a fundamental aspect of his Sellarsian roots – namely, psychological nominalism. At the same time, Haugeland maintains that higher order patterns are epistemically prior to recognition of subpatterns of the higher order patterns, like the chess moves that occur within a game of chess. However, for the neo-pragmatists, there is no awareness of those higher order patterns independent of acquisition of a language.

To understand why Haugeland's view that objects are perceived as *gestalts* is both deeply indebted to and divergent from Sellars's account of sapience, we should first examine Sellars's account of sapience more closely. Recall from the previous chapter the Sellarsian idea that, in order to make knowledge claims, one must not only be a reliable reporter, but one must also *know* that one is a reliable reporter. Being able to account for one's reliability allows one to justify one's claim. The ability to justify one's claim is necessary for the claim to be truth-evaluable, and thus to have positive epistemic status and transmit positive epistemic status to other cognitive states. But how does one become a knower in the first place? Because the Given is a myth, Sellars cannot propose an account where basic words and concepts get their meanings from direct experience independently of other words and concepts.

Alternatively, on the view of psychological nominalism, there is no pathway to knowledge that is independent of language – that is to say, acquisition of a

language is necessary for knowledge of oneself as a knower in the first place. Psychological nominalism is the thesis that “all awareness of sorts, resemblances, facts, etc., in short, all awareness of abstract entities – indeed, all awareness even of particulars – is a linguistic affair” (Sellars EPM, §29).

To illustrate what he does not mean by this, Sellars asks us to imagine a child learning her first language. We tend to imagine the child as already having an awareness of a logical space in which she associates given linguistic sounds with certain objects. This logical space can be thought of as determined by a categorical structure that we use to sort the objects of the world into conceptually (DeVries and Triplett 2000, 60). In Sellars’s view, this is another instance of the Myth of the Given misinforming our understanding of the nature of meaning. When we imagine the child as a person “in a world of physical objects, colored, producing sounds, existing in Space and Time” (Sellars EPM, §30), we are merely imposing the logical structure in which we are already at home on the child. We make the mistake of assuming that awareness of a conceptual space used to sort particulars is epistemically prior to the association of verbal symbols with worldly objects.

In Sellars’s view, we encounter this logical space through language first. One should not make the mistake that language tokens are identical to thought tokens. Of course, not everything that we think or believe is uttered out loud. As explicated in the previous chapter, it is just to say that the possibility of private inner thought devolves upon the larger social linguistic practice through the modeling of the propositional form of individual cognitive states on speech acts. Propositional form is necessary for cognitive states to be truth-evaluable, and thus to have and transmit positive epistemic status. This is effectively to say that the structure of language is

such that it allows for the possibility of inferential knowledge claims to be made within a holistic, fundamentally normative space of reasons. The space of reasons is fundamentally normative in that the categorization of particulars requires knowledge of the relevant norms that govern them. Recall the discussion surrounding normative functionalism from the previous chapter. An instance of a kind is evaluated according to how an instance of its kind *ought* to be; thus, understanding the relevant norms are prerequisite to the recognition of the particulars. The holism of this logical space means that the ability to successfully use a large chunk of language – or the ability to operate within a holistic and supra-individual practice – is prerequisite for inferential knowledge. And as we saw, because of the requirement that one must know one is a knower to justify one's statement, the capacity to make inferences is prerequisite for making any tokened knowledge claim at all.

Given this background, we can now ask the following: how is it possible for Haugeland to maintain both that understanding higher order patterns is prerequisite for recognition of subpatterns (objects) *and* the notion that understanding is independent of language? In his explication of objective perception, Haugeland spells out a conception in which the determinacy and normativity of objects of perception rely on the recognition of the constitutive standards that govern a domain as such.

Haugeland's account of object constitution relies on a stable commitment to a domain and it is this commitment that is supposed to provide both the normative and modal force that grounds objective perception. But what this commitment actually arises from seems mysterious. If we take the important points from the super-monkey example and grant that what the super-monkeys illustrate by being able to successfully play chess is that they understand the constitutive standards governing

the domain, the problem of what commitment to the constitutive standards of the domain actually stems from remains.

As explained earlier, the ability of the super-monkeys to express satisfaction when they win a game of chess and disappointment when they lose and, consequently, our ability to attribute emotional states to them supposedly illustrates that winning matters to them and suffices for that commitment. That winning matters to them such that they are able to recognize legality and illegality in a way that ensures accurate objective perception makes them committed to the domain of chess and accordingly allows them to fulfill a requirement for objective perception without having the capacity for language.¹⁴

From the super-monkey example, it seems that, rather than devolving upon the public practice of giving and asking for reasons, the ability to be committed to a domain devolves upon individual emotional states and the ability to communicate them. But this would seem to presuppose occupy a logical space in which one could make inferential claims about what particular emotional states mean and what the proper responses to those emotional states are, or, alternatively, at least a richer social dimension in which non-verbal tokened communications can take the place of linguistic utterances. For an account of object constitution in which recognition of the

¹⁴ Haugeland acknowledges that there might be some evolutionary argument made here that essentially points out that the cognitive capacities required for playing chess would never have evolved without language (HT, 255). And concretely speaking, this is likely true and does not hinder the point he tries to make with this example because it's clear that super-monkeys don't exist outside of a philosophical thought experiment. Likewise, Haugeland acknowledges that it is nearly impossible to conceive of teaching a super-monkey to play chess without being able to express the rules of the game linguistically. One might suggest that one could express that the super-monkey was doing something wrong by making a dissatisfied face or expressing anger, but those expressions could have a number of causes apart from the constitution of legal or illegal chess positions. This is largely irrelevant for the thought experiment because of the fact that it is a thought experiment with no bearing on how things actually are, so my suggestion that he fails to illustrate that understanding is independent of language is not rooted in any of these points.

kinds is epistemically prior to the recognition of the particulars, a richer conception of the social practices is necessary for providing the normative force that makes a commitment to any particular domain possible in the first place. However, Haugeland provides no such account in “Objective Perception.”

Tentatively, from this essay, we can say that it seems that the notion of emotional states is primarily an internalist one in that the individual emotional states are epistemically prior to recognition of the larger pattern itself. Even so, this would seem to be inconsistent with Haugeland’s commitment to normative functionalism – recall his refutation of Dretske where he argues that the kinds are epistemically prior to recognition of instances – and his view of the embodied and embedded mind.

In “Mind Embodied and Embedded,” meaning is located in the world itself through our engagement with higher order social institutions that are defined in terms of the interactions within and between constituted domains that make up the institutions. But in “Objective Perception,” it seems that some notion of individual commitment is epistemically prior to understanding of higher order standards that govern such domains. At the same time, that objectivity requires the ability to double-check and recalibrate one’s engagement and perception of fluctuating worldly conditions seems to involve the same sort of dynamic coupling delineated in “Mind Embodied and Embedded.” That this ability is grounded in a resolute commitment to the standards of the domain in way that is independent of language is inconsistent with the account of the locution of meaning in dynamic perceptual engagement with the world that is given in “Mind Embodied and Embedded.” In this chapter, I think it becomes evident that that there is a tension between our perceptual engagement with

the world that finds its significance in the contextual and a conception of objectivity grounded in stable individual commitment.

It should be noted that, for Haugeland, language is a particular domain constituted by skillful use and uptake, which would be consistent with his view of situated cognition because language is an example of skillful perceptual engagement with the world of the kind elucidated in “Mind, Embodied, and Embedded.” That Haugeland believes that language is not *necessary* but perhaps *important* for understanding means that there is likely something about a model of understanding based on the necessity of language acquisition that does not allow us to distinguish between social propriety and getting things right, which is the central goal of Haugeland’s later work.

So it seems that Haugeland will have to provide something else to ground his holistic view of object perception. As we will see, he does this by expanding on his notion that one must be committed to a domain in order to skillfully operate within it *and* ultimately be beholden to the external objects themselves. Haugeland’s conception of existential commitment will be the focus of the next two chapters. The task at hand will be to see whether existential commitment provides an adequate grounding of Haugeland’s account of objectivity in order to vindicate the claim that understanding is independent of language and to illustrate that there truly is a difference between proper social performance and getting things right.

CHAPTER 3

In “Objective Perception,” Haugeland spells out a conception of objectivity in which the importance of global kinds is highlighted for how we understand objects as such. Although he begins to diverge from the neo-pragmatist view in that he maintains that understanding is independent of language, this account does not fully accommodate the distinction that separates Haugeland’s later view from what made his earlier view more in line with the neo-pragmatists: a distinction between proper social performance and getting things right. Getting things right refers to the extent to which we can tell the truth about worldly objects. Haugeland’s account is not axiomatic in that there is no rule that is more basic than all the others; instead, he builds a holistic account of various kinds of rules and rule-following in which each kind is integral to the others. In this chapter, I will spell out Haugeland’s theory of truth as beholdenness by looking at two of his later works, “Truth and Rule-Following” (1998) and “Authentic Intentionality” (2002).

From the outset, Haugeland offers a conception of truth that differs from majority-based consensus. Empirical constitution of external objects is not a creation with standards that have been arbitrarily agreed upon and institutionalized. What gives external objects their normative force is their modality – what is necessary, possible, and impossible for their being objects as such. An exposition of Haugeland’s account of objectivity that gives power to the phenomena follows.

§3.1 TWO ACCOUNTS OF BASIC GOVERNING RULES

To begin “Truth and Rule-Following,” Haugeland distinguishes between two types of rules: governing rules and exhibited rules. The difference between these types of rules lies in their “direction of fit.” Governing rules are “rule-to-world” and include those that we understand as determining what happens – that is to say, they are normative in that they dictate how things ought to be. By contrast, exhibited rules are “world-to-rule” and include those that we understand as illustrating what happens. Exhibited rules might be thought of as factual. The difference between governing and exhibited rules corresponds to the difference between verbally expressed rules that are either prescriptive or descriptive. However, Haugeland does not build verbal expression into his conception of rules and rule-following (HT, 305-306).

Haugeland further distinguishes between types of explicit governing rules. For example, articulated rules are ones whose expression requires multiple steps to be followed in a specific way, such as recipes. By contrast, expressed rules are ones whose expression requires a response to an instruction that is not explicitly complex. The example Haugeland gives is that of an instructor saying, “Put your pencils down!” while administering a test. Expressed rules tell one what to do, but not how to do it (HT, 307).

Now, the problem with a conception of normativity rooted in rule-following is that in some sense, compliance with a governing rule requires compliance with a lot of other rules. In this way, there is a need for some sort of basic rule that can be followed without compliance with other rules of the same sort in order to ground all the others. However, for Haugeland, that regress is not of concern. Instead, his focus

is on the identification of the sorts of basic rules that ground the possibility of truth-telling (HT, 308).

Haugeland begins his quest of identifying these sorts of basic rules by looking at two accounts of basic governing rules that, while they are adequate in their own domains, are in his view inadequate for grounding the possibility of truth-telling (HT, 308). These sorts of basic governing rules include biologically evolved normativity and socially instituted normativity.

Haugeland's story about biologically evolved normativity goes something like this. When we understand an organ in a natural organism as operating normally, we understand it as functioning as it ought to, or in accordance with governing rules. For example, the normal operation of the heart is to pump blood, but pumping blood is not merely an exhibited regularity. If a heart does not pump blood, it fails to function in the way that it should. The normative force of biological operations derives from a systematic view of individual organisms in which the correct biological operation is integral to and part of how that kind of organism is supposed to operate as a whole (HT, 308). This understanding is holistic and systematic in that the measure of biological success might be measured in evolutionary or reproductive terms. We do not understand this success on the basis of a single individual but instead how a particular function has been statistically favorable within a population and, as a result, has been distributed across a population over generations, through natural selection. Biological systems or states can both carry instructions and information. When a biological operation fails to adhere to the governing rule, it can misinform. Thus, biological functional norms make the distinction between information and misinformation intelligible (HT, 309).

However, a distinction that biological functional norms fail to make intelligible involves that between functioning properly as an information carrier and getting things right. In Haugeland's view, there is no biological basis for a system functioning properly yet at the same time carrying misinformation. The example that Haugeland uses to illustrate the failure of biological functional norms as being functionally correct but factually wrong is that of a bird whose normal operation is to avoid eating yellow butterflies because most of the yellow butterflies in its environment are poisonous. For the most part, this "yellow-detection" mechanism carries the correct information, but on the rare occasion when the bird avoids a non-toxic yellow butterfly, the biological operation is functionally correct but carries misinformation. However, from the standpoint of the biological functional norm, according to which behavior was performed as it was supposed to, there is no basis to suggest that the bird mistook the non-toxic yellow butterfly for a toxic yellow butterfly. Biologically evolved normativity fails in that it does not provide a constraint on the correctness of information apart from what normally functioning information carriers usually carry (HT, 310).

The counterpart of biologically evolved normativity is socially instituted normativity. In the following paragraphs, I will provide another overview of Haugeland's preferred gloss on the neo-pragmatist camp's inadequacies to set the stage for what is required for him to show that not all constitution is institution. Just like its counterpart, socially instituted normativity cannot account for a distinction between proper performance and objective incorrectness.

In Haugeland's 1998 sketch of the neo-pragmatist camp, normative force finds its basis in the community, or in "majority rule." The emergence and

maintenance of social norms should be understood in terms of a package of meta-dispositions that Haugeland calls conformism. Conformism provides the mechanistic basis for the social institution of norms. Community members promote the correct behavior in the appropriate circumstances and individuals copy them or modify their own dispositions to adhere to whatever the norm of behavior is (HT, 311). The problem of a regress for rule-following is present here too. Not all rule-following can be socially governed and explicit unless children are born socialized with some innate ability to follow certain grounding rules (like, for example, if humans are born able to use a language). So neo-pragmatist accounts often invoke biological dispositions to accommodate nonsocial learning behavior and the ability to learn rules that are not explicit – biological functional norms, for instance, that might be thought of as conditioning or “habits.” These biological functional norms account for the “meta-dispositions” that are modified by an individual to conform to the behavior of others.

Dynamic uptake of one’s dynamic environment allows individuals to be able to distinguish between normal and deviant behavior and thus to be able to modify both their own behavior and the behavior of others. In this sense, individuals can track their actions and others’ actions to “keep score” of the particulars in an interdependent and intricate structure. If the dynamic parameters and the stable parameters are compatible, this results in the social institution of a community with a shared set of customs and values (HT, 311).

The pre-eminence of the “rule-to-world” direction of fit for governing rules is most obvious in the story of socially instituted normativity. Individuals modify their behavior according to communally agreed upon norms. In this sense, appropriate behavior, relevant circumstances, and the social norms that link them are all socially

instituted. The way in which these norms are brought about differ from the ways in which biological functional norms are brought about; instead of a statistically based mechanism of propagation of a certain feature that happens to work in a particular environment, socially instituted norms are brought about through a mechanism in which individuals keep others in line in order to minimize deviance. While biological functional norms have a “rule-to-world” fit in terms of there being a way in which a biological operation is *supposed* to function, the “rule-to-world” fit is more pronounced in the neo-pragmatist picture of normativity because socially instituted norms causally determine individuals’ originally plastic behavior through a historically based emergence of norms. In this way, both types of norms are constrained by the histories that precede them, but biologically functional norms are more constrained by the biological raw materials of the phylogeny in which the organism exists.

Like biological functional norms, socially instituted norms enable a distinction between information and misinformation by socially instituting roles whose function is to carry information. For example, when a green light is supposed to be red, it doesn’t just fail to carry information, but it misinforms (HT, 313).

The problem with socially instituted normativity is that it cannot enable a distinction between proper performance and getting things right, which is ultimately what Haugeland is after in his conception of constituted objectivity. What both of these accounts of basic governing rules lack is an accommodation of telling, a sort of responsive rule-following in which the correctness of the response depends on something external to the performance itself (HT, 313). Telling involves both directions of fit; on the one hand, there is a rule-to-world fit in that the performance

itself is subject to evaluation of certain standards, and on the other, there is a world-to-rule fit in that the correctness of the performance is a function of the external entity to which it is supposed to respond. In his account, Haugeland desires a distinction between a correctly performed act of telling and the incorrectness of the response about the world itself. Objects must have a determinate and normative status independent of the socially instituted norms of performance for their evaluation, or in his words: “Objects themselves must act as independent criteria of correctness” (HT, 314). To obtain the distinction between the governing norms of proper performance and objective correctness, Haugeland must show how we are beholden to the objects themselves.

To further illustrate the flaw in an account of objectivity that cannot make sense of the notion of everybody consistently being wrong about everything, Haugeland uses the example of a socially instituted performance that he calls “grocking.” Now, under socially instituted normativity, not only are the performance norms themselves a matter of consensus, but the performances and the conditions that elicit them are a matter of consensus too.

In one example, members of a community are all able to tell grock-worthy circumstances apart from non-grock-worthy circumstances, except for one member who begins to deviate in his understanding of the circumstances that elicit grocking. When grocking is a particular dance move in a freeform folk dance, that member’s understanding is wrong because it diverges from the (arbitrarily) agreed upon standards for what everybody understands to be grocking. But in the second example, where grocking is pronouncing the word “yellow” and grock-worthy circumstances are those that call for the yellow-pronouncing response in the face of something

yellow, an account of socially instituted normativity fails to account for whether that member is right and everybody else is wrong, or vice versa. The performance itself – the tokened utterance – is entirely a matter of public consensus, just like the folk dance, but that something is yellow is not entirely a matter of public consensus.

Haugeland illustrates this problem further with an example of a charismatic florist, who is able to convince everyone that the proper response to a certain shade of yellow is not in fact to pronounce the word “yellow” but instead to pronounce the word “scarlet.” Under a socially instituted account of normativity, if everyone was convinced by the florist and agreed that the proper response to that shade of yellow was to pronounce the word “scarlet,” then the florist would be able to determine what is to *be* yellow because there are no criteria for something being yellow apart from whatever everybody agrees to be the case. Thus, socially instituted norms have no criteria independent of themselves, which for Haugeland is a major problem in any account of objectivity.

Because Haugeland argues that his sketch of neo-pragmatism allows no room for there to be objective color reports, he must delineate an alternative metaphysics of normativity – one that is not based on the necessity of language for understanding – in which one charismatic florist is unable to convince others to change their color-identifying performance on purely arbitrary grounds. To do so, he outlines four basic kinds of rules and rule-following that in his view were originally telescoped into one kind of rule (and rule-following): constitutive rules.

§3.2 *BREAKING DOWN CONSTITUTIVE RULES*

The notion of constitutive rules, a distinction made within the larger subset of governing rules, was in Haugeland's view originally proposed (in separate accounts) by John Rawls and John Searle. What constitutive rules denote are those rules that govern phenomena that do not make sense independently of the rules that govern them, which is distinct from rules that govern phenomena that do make sense independent of their respective governing rules (HT, 318). Rawls uses the example of the American baseball rule that stipulates that a batter strikes out when they get three strikes. Only in terms of their accordance with the constitutive rule do the notions of "batter," "strike," and "out" make sense. Games are thus constituted by rules, and these rules define the phenomena of the game (HT, 319).

Rawls makes a distinction between constitutive rules and maxims, which are imperatives governing phenomena that make sense independent of the respective maxim. For example, the phenomenon of brushing one's teeth is intelligible independently of the imperative, "Brush your teeth!" Like Rawls, Searle makes a distinction between constitutive rules and "regulative" rules. Regulative rules are imperatives that have the force of some antecedently legitimate authority. Where Searle goes wrong, in Haugeland's opinion, is claiming that all constitutive rules are a special subset of regulative rules, but not all regulative rules are constitutive rules. For example, the rules of baseball regulate how the game is supposed to be played and specify "what the players as being players are required and/or allowed to do" (HT, 319).

In Haugeland's view, the problem of using games as examples for rules and rule-following is that they place too much emphasis on the derivation of their

normative authority from mutual agreement among the players in order to regulate the actions of the players. Consequently, it becomes too easy to bracket constitutive rules as a subset of regulative rules. To improve upon this flaw, Haugeland calls these sorts of governing rules – rules that regulate the actions of the players within the game through mutual deontic commitment between players that are enforced by threat of ejection from the game – constitutive *regulations*.

Constitutive regulations are different from what Haugeland called constitutive *standards* because they only govern the actions of the players. By contrast, constitutive standards govern all of the phenomena that occur within the game and determine what they are. The contrast between constitutive standards and constitutive regulations in the context of a game is less clear than it is in an empirical setting. For example, in the game of baseball, the constitutive regulation that a player may only advance from base to base only in order, and only when the ball is in play or the pitcher has begun to pitch, governs the actions of the player. But the capacity of these specifications to determine what can and cannot happen in a game and thus to determine what it is to be a base-runner or a pitcher also allow a constitutive regulation to be a constitutive standard. It is only because the players' actions are part of the phenomena that occur within a game that is of our own invention that the same governing rule can function as both a constitutive standard or a constitutive rule (HT, 320).

By contrast, there are certain phenomena that cannot be governed by a rule that have the capacity to act both as a constitutive standard and a constitutive rule. For example, that the ball must follow a ballistic trajectory and rebound off the bat is not a requirement that arises from a governing rule regulating the players' actions, but is

still constitutive of what it is to be a ball and hence of other baseball phenomena (HT, 321). Haugeland introduces this distinction in order to give force to the notion that when a baseball falls outside of the foul line by following a ballistic trajectory rather than curving back into left field, there is something necessary about this phenomenon that is *independent* of us.

To make the distinction between constitutive standards and constitutive regulations even clearer, Haugeland uses the example of semi-automatic chess, in which moves are randomly and automatically inserted in between the moves that players may make. Semi-automatic chess is still a playable game and contains phenomena within it that are constitutive of the game itself. However, the difference between semi-automatic chess and regular chess is that now the constitutive standards govern phenomena that the players have no control over, whereas in traditional chess, all of the game phenomena are in control of the players.¹⁵ That the constitutive standards governed phenomena are manipulated entirely by the players in traditional chess makes the constitutive standards “mere shadows” of constitutive regulations, which exclusively govern the actions of the players by the normative force of mutual deontic commitment (HT, 321).

In my discussion of “Mind Embodied and Embedded,” I suggested that Haugeland makes much use of the notion of skillful uptake. In “Truth and Rule-Following,” Haugeland delineates a somewhat different view of what “skillful uptake” actually entails in order to make sense of the idea that objectivity is constituted and accounts for phenomena that are independent of the way we

¹⁵ For the most part. In traditional chess, the pieces must remain inert in order to be manipulated by the players.

understand them in terms of how they should act. I will return to this “somewhat different” in the next chapter. Haugeland defines ‘skill’ as “a reliable, resilient ability to abide by a governing rule correctly and reliably” (HT, 322). Resilience is essential to Haugeland’s conception of constitutive commitment, a notion that I will later explain in this chapter, and refers to “a kind of perseverance born simultaneously of adaptability and self-assurance” (HT, 322).

The third of the four kinds of rules and rule-following that Rawls and Searle originally telescope into the notion of constitutive rules are constitutive *skills*. To exercise a constitutive skill is to be able to resiliently tell when a phenomenon is in accordance with the constitutive standard that governs it. We can thus say that a constitutive skill is the ability to follow a sort of governing rule. Constitutive skills should be understood as both separate from and interdependent on *mundane skills*, which are the abilities to recognize, manipulate, and cope with the phenomena as such, and are effectively, in the context of games, the ability to engage in play. Constitutive skills are dependent on mundane skills because in order to recognize that a phenomenon is not in accordance with the constitutive standard that governs it, one first needs to be able to recognize it. Mundane skills are dependent on constitutive skills because, without the ability to recognize that phenomenon is not in accordance with a governing constitutive standard, there would be no phenomenon at all since constitutive standards determine the phenomena that occur within a game. With no phenomenon, there would nothing that the exercise of the mundane skill would allow one to recognize (HT, 324).

Haugeland goes on to argue that, in an extended sense, mundane skills are the game phenomena themselves. They can be thought of as “co-constituted” with the

game phenomena that they respond to, manipulate, and cope with. The rest of the essay seeks to explain how mundane skills understood in this sense as being interdependent with constitutive skills can be objective, or as having external objects that act as criteria for their correct exercise (HT, 325). For example, how can the mundane skill of identifying yellow be understood as having an external object that has the normative status of acting as criteria for the response itself?

Throughout my exposition of Haugeland's metaphysics of normativity thus far, I have distinguished between constitution and institution, where the latter refers to a theory of normativity that takes its bases to lie in communal practices. However, what exactly is it that Haugeland means when he refers to 'constitution'? In a sense, this is what the whole of his later work attempts to work out, but in "Truth and Rule-Following," he gives us this explanation of constitution: "Constituting is *letting be*" (HT, 325).

This differs from two mistaken readings of constitution. Letting be is not the imposition of some suitable objective form onto given raw material, like sensory data. On the other hand, letting be is not imposing some more desirable normative standards on objects that are already given to us, where the new imposition is done for our own purposes. Both of these readings of letting be – "creating" and "counting-as," respectively – create issues that arise out of approaches that attempt to understand objectivity by starting with games (HT, 326).

Haugeland rejects both the incredible and self-defeating views of constitution and offers the following view of constitution as an alternative:

Constituting objects is letting them be by finding and showing that they make sense in some determinate way, and can consistently be told and otherwise coped with as such.

(HT, 329)

To explain what he means by this, Haugeland uses the example of esoteric chess, a game that differs from traditional chess by changing the medium in which the game is played. To the untrained eye, the chess “pieces” don’t look like anything at all, but to the skilled player, a jumble or a digit is perceived as a chess piece. Players of esoteric chess may have struggled to learn the ability to recognize these chess objects at first, but through the resilient exercise of the relevant skills, they learn to “see” a chess object, like a knight fork. The standards of what constitutes a chess piece are communally agreed upon and evaluation of successful identification can only be done by those who have already successfully mastered the relevant skills. Again, this is structurally similar to Sellars’s account of sapience; the difference is that for Haugeland those relevant skills need not be linguistic.¹⁶

The point being made with the example of esoteric chess in “Truth and Rule-Following” is slightly different than that made in “Objective Perception.” While in “Objective Perception” the ability to play chess in a different medium was used as a criterion to illustrate what it means to demonstrate understanding within a particular domain, esoteric chess is used here to illustrate what it means to let objects be through co-constitution. Players do not just impose the identity of a chess piece onto a

¹⁶ Although it should be noted here that not all understanding is linguistic in Sellars’s view; it’s just that language is *prerequisite* to understanding.

particular jumble or set of digits, but instead, through the exercise of mundane skills, constitute the intelligible objecthood of the chess pieces by playing with them in a way that makes sense with the constitutive standards of chess that already exist. It is through this process of finding and showing that objects make sense in some determinate and consistent way that constituting objects is letting them be (HT, 329). One should note here that making sense of objects in esoteric chess requires making sense of them in terms of the extant constitutive standards governing a domain. In this sense, Haugeland maintains the epistemic priority of higher order kinds that he elucidates in “Objective Perception.”

What makes games a misleading place to start for deriving a model of objectivity is that they are entirely of our own invention. Showing how constitution can form the basis of empirical objectivity, despite its initial explication through game examples, comes to the fore in Haugeland’s example of empirical chess. In empirical chess, the moves are made automatically by the pieces themselves and follow rules that differ from the rules that the players must follow. It is also esoteric, in the same sense as before. The point of empirical chess is not to win the game but instead is to figure out what the rules are altogether. To take it even further, the point of the game might be to figure out whether it’s a game at all and if so, which phenomena accord with the constitutive standards of the game and which do not. It is in the sense that the rules of the game are not at all up to us that the game is *empirical* (HT, 330).

What distinguishes empirical chess from regular chess is that finding a game that is playable is a kind of achievement that involves an element of discovery about the world (HT, 331). This act of discovery is different than a discovery that takes

place in a game that one already knows how to play, like the discovery that one's queen is indefensible in a game of regular chess. Instead, Haugeland refers to this sort of act of discovery in empirical chess as a meta-discovery, or an act of disclosing something about the world. Part of this disclosure is the domain itself in which the phenomena make the sense that they do.

Entry into the domain of "empirical chess" requires mastery of the mundane – or esoteric – skills required for the recognition of phenomena, and that mastery can only be measured by those who have already gained mastery. What distinguishes the mastery of mundane skills in empirical chess from the mastery of mundane skills in esoteric chess is that the constitutive standards and regulations that govern them are always at stake and liable to change – that is to say, the constitutive standards and regulations have a contestable character in empirical chess that they do not have in esoteric or traditional chess. For Haugeland, this allows empirical chess to act as an apt analogy for understanding the normativity of empirical *science* (HT, 331).

The modal aspect of empirical objectivity is highlighted by Haugeland in his outline of an apparent paradox concerning the recognizability of illegal moves and his response to this paradox. The problem with the idea that an illegal move is recognizable within a domain is that there being chess phenomena at all presupposes their accordance with the constitutive standards governing the domain of chess. The constitutive standards delineate everything that is possible within the domain that they constitute and anything that does not accord with those standards is ruled out as being impossible. If illegal moves are impossible within the chess domain, then they should be unrecognizable. However, they must be recognizable if their exclusion from the domain of chess is to be non-vacuous. Because of this paradox, Haugeland

distinguishes between two senses of “possible” for any constituted domain. The first and wider sense is what Haugeland calls the *conceivable*, which includes all the phenomena, were they to occur, that players would be able to recognize and cope with through the exercise of the mundane skills belonging to that domain, and thus encompasses the scope of all the mundane skills required for skillful operation within a domain. The second and narrower sense is what Haugeland calls the *possible*, which includes those phenomena, were they to occur, that accord with the constitutive standards governing the domain. An illegal chess move is conceivable, but not possible, which is how it can be recognized and ruled out (HT, 332).

If the conceivable is divided into the possible zone and the impossible zone, then the zone of the conceivable that is impossible lies “out of bounds” for a domain. This out-of-bounds zone is what Haugeland calls the *excluded zone*. The excluded zone for any domain is empty because conceivable phenomena are ruled out as impossible because of their inability to accord with the standards that constitute the domain. However, if they were to occur, they would still be recognizable through the exercise of mundane skills associated with the domain. Thus, the requirement that they do not occur is subject to empirical test through the exercise of the mundane skills that belong to a domain. These tests are the reason why disclosure is an achievement because they have the potential to fail if the mundane skills are exercised incorrectly (HT, 333).

Specifically, a test requires the exercise of at least two mundane skills and one constitutive skill. Incompatibilities discovered through the exercise of such skills result in the finding of a failure. There are four possible responses to failure: mundane or constitutive revision or repair (HT, 334). To revise a mundane or constitutive skill

is to fix a particular performance of an exercise of either skill.¹⁷ By contrast, to repair a mundane or constitutive skill is to repair the skills themselves because there is some incompatibility with the combination of results elicited by exercise of those skills and the phenomenon they are trying to make intelligible. None of these responses can be done frivolously; otherwise, they would lose their power to exclude phenomena and tests would be pointless. On the other hand, the skills cannot be too resistant to repair. If they were, then too much faith would be placed in the performances themselves at the expense of the ability to account for error. The resilient character of such skills lies at an equilibrium between frivolousness and obstinacy; the skills must be able to stand up to each other and hold their ground to make intelligible the phenomena they are exploring in a *meaningful* way. The skillful equilibrium itself is always vulnerable in the face of a pattern of errors and is therefore a *precarious* equilibrium (HT, 336). Accordingly, this is what distinguishes a skillful equilibrium from mere consensus and gives phenomena the power to “talk back.”

The maintenance of this precarious equilibrium through the excluded zone is what finally gives Haugeland the ability to distinguish between constitution and institution: “Constituted objective phenomena are the loci of potential incompatibilities” (HT, 337) between interrelated mundane exercises. A constitutive standard delineates the kinds of incompatibilities among the mundane skills through the zone that they exclude – the conceivable but impossible combinations. The phenomena can “talk back” in the sense that they can confound the experts who conduct a number of interrelated mundane findings in accordance with the

¹⁷ Remember that evaluating performances through the lens of normative functionalism allows room for error and for self-correction.

constitutive standards that govern some domain. Because the phenomena have the power to refute an empirical practice, objectivity could never be a matter of mere consensus; instead, the mundane skills belonging to a domain must be co-constituted with the phenomena they seek to make intelligible. In this sense, empirical objects have a normative authority independent of us and can act as a sort of external criteria to their own constitution and thus to objective *correctness*. That empirical objects have the normative authority to act as criteria of their own evaluation is what distinguishes Haugeland's view of norms governing objective correctness from norms governing propriety of performance. That being said, both types of normativity are required for proper and correct mundane skillful exercises within a constituted domain (HT, 338).

The normative force of empirical objects derives from a first-person commitment to the constitutive standard governing a domain. At long last, Haugeland makes the great reveal of the last of four sorts of rules and rule-following that were originally telescoped into the notion of constitutive rules: existential constitutive commitment. Recall the discussion in the previous chapter surrounding commitment to legality in the chess-playing super-monkey example. The ability of super-monkeys to recognize chess objects hinged upon their commitment to refuse to tolerate illegality – and thus commitment to the rules and constitutive standards of the entire domain of chess itself. What was at stake in the refusal to tolerate illegality was the continuation and existence of the game itself, in the form of its continued play. The fourth sort of rule or commitment Haugeland uses to ground normative authority of objects has similar stakes.

What makes this move radical is its emphasis on *first-person* involvement, something that Haugeland believes is conspicuous in its absence from neo-pragmatist accounts of objectivity. Refusal to tolerate illegal moves is mediated by the players' own involvement in the game. Haugeland contrasts existential constitutive commitment to deontic commitment, which is a socially grounded obligation whose force comes from how others expect one to behave in virtue of one's relations to others. Existential commitment is not a deontic status but instead is a dedicated way of living, or in other words, a resolute and resilient first-personal stance. It is not a commitment to other people but instead is a commitment to a concrete practice or way of life. Its normative authority comes solely from itself and is brought to bear by its own exercise. In this way, it is *sui generis* – self-generated – and authentic (HT, 341).

The resolution of existential commitment gives empirical objects their modal character. Being existentially committed means insisting on the domain that is constitutive of the existential commitment's own possibility or the conditions of its intelligibility (HT, 341). This translates into a sort of responsibility to refuse to accept violations of the constitutive standards governing the domain, or a responsibility to maintain the particular precarious equilibrium constituting a phenomenon. In this way, objective phenomena can belong to the "content" of one's existential commitment. Thus, the driving force behind the resilience of skills and the resolve to repair any incompatibilities between mundane findings, as determined by the constitutive standards, is existential constitutive commitment (HT, 342).

The difference between empirical science and games is that the practice of empirical science is always in question, by virtue of its vulnerability in the face of

patterns of error. This is what makes games an inadequate basis for any account of objectivity. It is only through an understanding of existential commitment that the force of the inadequacy of games can come forth. Games are not like empirical science because giving up the play of a game is not hard. By contrast, giving up on a science can cost an individual her career, and by extension, her own self-understanding. Giving up is not at all arbitrary or a matter of personal preference, but instead is of the highest responsibility.

§3.3 EXISTENTIAL COMMITMENT AND ORIGINAL INTENTIONALITY

The notion that existential constitutive responsibility grounds the possibility of truth-telling is one that Haugeland develops further in his 2002 essay, “Authentic Intentionality.” It is also in this essay that Haugeland develops his positive account of original intentionality, which requires the capacity for objective knowledge. Thus, because objective knowledge requires the capacity to take on existential commitment, the capacity for existential commitment is a prerequisite for genuine original intentionality. Like “Truth and Rule-Following,” the essay focuses on scientific knowledge, which, as I showed in the preceding section, is for Haugeland an example of objective knowledge.

It should be noted here that in “Mind Embodied and Embedded,” Haugeland held that there was no defining mark of the mental, such as intentionality. That his later view offers a positive account of original intentionality is indicative of the tension between his notion of dynamic perceptual engagement and the static – until it is upended – existential commitment to a domain. This tension that is a result of

Haugeland's conception of existential commitment as an idealistic one and its role in grounding objectivity is something that I will explore further in the next chapter.

For now, our task is to understand how existential commitment grounds objectivity. On Haugeland's view, there are three distinct levels of responsibility for self-criticism involved in objective knowledge. The difference between these levels in responsibility is what distinguishes what Haugeland calls ordinary intentionality from authentic intentionality. Both can be either original or derivative, and all four subtypes fall under what Haugeland calls genuine intentionality. The capacity for authentic intentionality is prerequisite to the capacity for original intentionality but actually having authentic intentionality is not prerequisite for original intentionality. By contrast, both the capacity for and actually having ordinary intentionality are prerequisites for original intentionality.

The first level of self-criticism checks that the individual mundane exercises are properly performed in accordance with the communal norms governing scientific practice. This is necessary to remove sloppily performed procedures and to ensure that no scientific findings are accidental (DD, 265). The second level of self-criticism might result when mundane findings cannot be replicated, and the failure is not due to experimental error, or in other words, the improper exercise of mundane skills. When this happens, scientists must instead turn their attention on the norms that govern procedural propriety. Second-order self-criticism is distinct from first-order self-criticism because it does not seek to revise individual performances, but instead seeks to revise the practice itself (DD, 266). The ability to be self-critical at the first two levels requires the capacity to take on some sort of responsibility. Together, the first two levels form the basis of ordinary intentionality.

The third level of self-criticism raises the stakes in a fundamental way. It is only appealed to when revisions at the first and second levels don't work. The third level is self-critical in that it examines the laws that constitute a scientific domain, which, because "laws are nothing other than true empirical universal claims with *modal* force" (HT, 353), can be thought of as the constitutive standards governing the domain. The revision of the laws is a much more radical undertaking than revision of individual performances or the communal norms governing the practices because of the holistic interdependence of the laws and principles governing a domain. The elaborate holism of the structure I delineated in my exposition of Haugeland's conception of objectivity should make the following point clear: it is rare that one law or principle can be revised at a time. It is more likely the case that the revision of one law or principle will require the revision of the whole "package" (DD, 270). Secondly, because the mundane skills are co-constituted with the phenomena they seek to make intelligible, and mundane skills are performed in accordance with constitutive standards, the revision of the constitutive standards will require a likewise wholesale revision of the mundane skills. Thirdly, because objects as such are made intelligible through what is delineated as possible or impossible for them by the excluded zone, the constitutive standards governing the objects are crucial to the intelligibility of the objects as what they are. If too many of the mundane findings are by the domain's own constitutive standards *impossible*, then the problem is with the constitutive standards themselves (DD, 271).

The interdependence of the rules and skills that ground the possibility of truth-telling means that, when things cannot be made to work, the continuation of the domain as a whole is at stake. When enough changes are made, they are usually so

radical that we say that a scientific discipline has been replaced by a “successor.” For example, the domains of phrenology and alchemy were given up on when it was clear that the interrelated mundane findings could not be made to accord with the constitutive standards governing the domains and were instead replaced with the domains of neuroscience and physics, respectively.

The ability to take on the individual responsibility required to question and, if necessary, give up on one’s own domain is what Haugeland calls authentic responsibility. It is not a responsibility taken lightly and, indeed, not everyone has the capacity to do so.¹⁸ The reason for this is that the willingness to question the continuation of the domain to which one is existentially committed is to threaten one’s very own sense of *being*. It is in this sense that responsibility for the whole is simultaneously very personal (DD, 273). At the same time, this is what gives empirical objects their normative authority. One only gives up on a scientific discipline when the external phenomena cannot be made compatible with the constitutive standards that make them intelligible. In this sense, object constitution is not at all arbitrary.

Authentic intentionality can thus be characterized as an honest commitment to making a domain work, at the cost of giving the whole thing up (DD, 274). This honest commitment is double-edged in the sense that one edge is taking on the ordinary responsibility to make things work and the other edge is taking on the authentic responsibility to have the courage to give it up when it does not work. This sort of honest commitment – full-fledged existential commitment – grounds the

¹⁸ This is why actually having authentic intentionality is not a prerequisite for original intentionality.

possibility of objectivity and is the basis of original intentionality. But the structure of double-edged existential commitment is not just limited to science; Haugeland argues that it extends throughout most human practices and is the basic structure of love and freedom.

In this chapter, I have outlined Haugeland's theory of truth as beholdenness. Objects themselves act as external criteria for their constitution and in this way have normative authority. Because of this independence, skillful mundane exercises are normatively beholden to them for correctness of their results (HT, 348). It is for this reason that a charismatic florist cannot convince others that a yellow flower is actually scarlet. Through the delineation of a commitment to responsibly maintain the standards and skills belonging to a domain in order to make intelligible the external phenomena that individuals necessarily find authoritative by virtue of their commitment to the domain, Haugeland outlines the basis of what makes his structure of objectivity possible.

CHAPTER 4

As Mark Lance notes in “Language Embodied and Embedded,” there are two tenets that, taken together, seem to threaten the notions of objectivity and truth by implying that there is no such thing as a noncontextual meaning of a claim. The first is that skillful performances and understanding are embedded in their local contexts. The second is that language is a tool that is defined by its skillful use and uptake (2017, 168-169).

As we have seen, Haugeland attempts to maintain these two tenets¹⁹ while at the same time attempting to maintain that there is something about the world that is true independent of us – independent of socially instituted normative context. However, in order to show that our beliefs are ultimately not arbitrary, Haugeland forgoes the necessity of language for conceptual understanding and instead attempts to explicate the role of the external world in informing our beliefs. For Haugeland, the notion that truth is an external norm governing assertion is something that is grounded in existential commitment.

In this chapter I will argue that Haugeland’s attempt to exorcise the demon of capital-R Relativism – or what he views to be the problem with (his version of) neo-pragmatism – is unsuccessful. I will do so by examining how Haugeland maintains that it is not language acquisition but existential commitment that is necessary for original intentionality, and consequently, objectivity. I will argue that there is a flaw in this account in that existential commitment is not self-generated because it

¹⁹ Recall that, for Haugeland, language is a particular domain of skillful use and uptake.

ultimately devolves upon larger social practices. Therefore, by Haugeland's own argument concerning the flaws of socially instituted normativity, the notion of the possibility of truth flounders. Finally, I will explore the tension between the view of situated cognition espoused in "Mind Embodied and Embedded" and the notion of getting the world right that comes to the fore in "Truth and Rule-Following." I will argue that these two are ultimately incompatible; the practice of dynamic perceptual uptake is inconsistent with the idealized structure of the beholdenness theory of truth grounded in stable "self-generated" existential commitment.²⁰

§4.1 THE DEMONS OF "CAPITAL-R REALITY" AND "CAPITAL-R RELATIVISM"

In "Authentic Intentionality," existential commitment translates into the responsibility of giving up an entire domain when an interrelated pattern of findings cannot be made to work with the constitutive standards governing the domain, at the cost of losing the very thing that informs one's own sense of being. It is through this responsibility that our constitution of objects – although dependent on socially instituted normativity – is ultimately beholden to the external objects themselves. The necessity of the strategy of grounding objectivity by this high-stakes responsibility is motivated by the attempt to avoid falling prey to two extreme notions: "capital-R Reality" on one end of the spectrum, and "capital-R Relativism" on the other.

"Capital-R Reality" can be thought of as God-given reality. Haugeland holds that we cannot directly know God-given reality because "absolute" reality is not a notion that can be made sense of at all (DD, 272). Recall the discussion from Chapter

²⁰ These conclusions are deeply informed by Mark Lance and Rebecca Kukla's analyses of Haugeland's thought and by conversations with Joe Rouse.

2 surrounding the view that reality is already carved up into discrete objects that we have access to through some innate capacity with which we are endowed. As Sellars argues, this is a form of the Myth of the Given in its lack of acknowledgement of the epistemic priority of the space of reasons. We have seen how Haugeland attempts to evade the trap of capital-R Reality by holding that higher order kinds are epistemically prior to recognition of particulars in “Objective Perception.”

Haugeland gives a slightly different spin on this notion in “Truth and Rule-Following” through his exposition of the co-constitution of phenomena with the mundane skills used to identify them. In this sense, he gives us an intricate and multidimensional conception of our normative responsiveness to the world. Even so, the understanding of the constitutive standards governing a domain is epistemically prior to the possibility of recognizing and identifying external objects. Thus, Haugeland’s account of normativity does not hold that we can recognize external objects without already having some awareness of a conceptual space of reasons. This interpretation of co-constitution might raise some eyebrows, but I will explain why I believe this to be the case in the next section.

By contrast, “capital-R Relativism” is analogous to Haugeland’s view²¹ of the neo-pragmatist response to the problem of “capital-R Reality.” We can say that on Haugeland’s view, the notion of “capital-R Relativism” takes the necessity of language acquisition for understanding to an extreme so that “we relativize reality not to God’s descriptive resources but to our own – the only ones we can ever have or understand” (DD, 272). As explicated in the previous chapter, a neo-pragmatist

²¹ Specifically, the view he gives of socially instituted normativity in “Truth and Rule-Following.”

argument against “capital-R Reality” gives us no way to distinguish between social propriety and objective correctness.

With that being said, we are now faced with the task of evaluating whether Haugeland’s attempt to formulate a compromise between the two ends of the spectrum in order to show that there is a difference between getting the world right and according with arbitrary social practices is successful. I will do so by exploring the claim that existential commitment is self-generated.

§4.2 BREAKING DOWN EXISTENTIAL COMMITMENT

In “Authentic Intentionality,” Haugeland argues that existential commitment manifests in the responsibility to uphold the constitutive standards governing a domain, at the expense of giving the whole thing up when a larger pattern of interrelated exercises and findings cannot be made to accord with those standards. Accordingly, on his view, this is what gives external objects the ability to “lock arms” in the face of the larger holistic pattern of mundane skills, with the constitutive standards themselves providing the ability for the objects to lock together (HT, 338).

For an account that tries to give force to the notion to the power of the phenomena themselves, this seems pretty metaphorical, but let’s try to break it down further. That constituted objects are external in the sense that they are *independent* of us is, in Haugeland’s view, what prevents his scheme of objectivity from being a mere coherence theory. It is the excluded zone and our existential commitment to responsibly uphold the constitutive standards delineating that excluded zone – the zone that is conceivable that is impossible – that gives power to the phenomena themselves. Consequently, existential commitment is what gives external phenomena

their normative authority – that is to say, existential commitment is what ultimately prevents our constitution of phenomena from being arbitrary.

That individual existential commitment derives its normative force from its own exercise contrasts the neo-pragmatist claim that the existing engendered norms derive their force from mutual deontic commitment. Haugeland rejects the neo-pragmatist tenet that initiation into the *linguistic* practice of giving and asking for reasons is prerequisite to and necessary for the awareness of oneself as a knower that allows one to successfully behave according with the extant class of norms and to make knowledge claims. Through the mechanisms of conformism and affecting statuses, the linguistic practice of giving and asking for reasons allows original intentionality – that is, directedness toward objects – to be effectively located in social institution.

Haugeland takes issue with this account in its distinction between the normative/rational and the causal/physical domains. Instead, the skills and the objects are made for each other, or in other words, they are co-constituted. In this sense, it is through our perceptual engagement with and skillful response to the world that the spectre raised by mere coherence – or, analogously, the demon of “capital-R Relativism” – can be exorcised (HT, 346). That the equilibrium of the mundane skills is precarious, and not frivolous or obstinate, in the face of incompatibility with the external objects gives force to both the external objects and to the holistic set of skills used to identify them. The responsibility of being beholden to the external objects themselves is grounded in existential commitment. By grounding his account in the notion of individual self-generated existential commitment and its role in responsibly upholding the excluded zone, Haugeland’s claims that his view of understanding makes room for the role of the world itself in informing our normative practices.

But Haugeland's account of objectivity rests on his claim that existential commitment is self-generated and is brought to bear by no other force than its own exercise. This claim doesn't seem quite right to me and I will explain why.

In Haugeland's view, existential commitment translates into a responsibility to maintain the precarious equilibrium that constitutes a phenomenon. Thus, the possibility of the equilibrium of skills being precarious for a domain depends on the possibility of existential commitment. External phenomena are given their normative authority by the maintenance of this precarious equilibrium. At the same time, maintaining the precarious equilibrium requires the ability to recognize objects.

By extension, existential commitment to a domain requires the ability to recognize objects by understanding the constitutive standards of the domain. To recognize such phenomena (to just be able to "tell" like in esoteric chess), one must be able to perform the correct exercise mundane skills and constitutive skills as learned through practical engagement and skillful uptake within that domain. The correctness of these performances is evaluated by skillful experts who are already in that domain and who themselves can just "tell" when something is or isn't in accordance with the constitutive standards of a domain. Without understanding the constitutive standards of a domain, one does not have an understanding of a domain.

From this it follows that understanding of that domain requires learning the mundane skills, constitutive skills, and constitutive standards from people already in that domain. Once one successfully learns these skills, one is in a domain and has the ability to recognize phenomena. Therefore, to be existentially committed to a domain, one must already be in that domain. But being in that domain requires participation in

and skillful engagement within a larger social practice. Consequently, existential commitment cannot be individually generated; it is parasitic on larger social practices.

That existential commitment devolves upon social practices is a knock for Haugeland's radical move to incorporate first-person involvement in his account of objectivity. But does the notion that existential commitment is not truly self-generated threaten Haugeland's account of objectivity in empirical science?

One might protest that this argument only really seems to apply to Haugeland's elucidation of esoteric chess, which is an analogy for his account of recognition of objects as *gestalts*. Recall that esoteric chess is a game that differs from traditional chess in the medium in which it is played. To the trained player's eye, a jumble or digit is perceived as a chess piece, whereas to the untrained eye, a jumble or digit doesn't look like anything at all. The standards of what constitutes a chess piece are communally agreed upon. The empirical content of a "chess piece" is that it is inert and can be made sense of through being played with as a chess piece. While Haugeland makes room for the empirical role of the chess pieces, this empirical role has less force than the empirical role of objects in "empirical chess" in that the rules of chess that we have arbitrarily agreed upon and communally instituted are epistemically prior to their being played with as chess pieces. So for esoteric chess, the point that initiation into the domain of esoteric chess requires engagement in larger social practices *first* and that those social practices are prior to the commitment to playing the game of esoteric chess stands.

By contrast, in empirical chess, the empirical role of objects is made greater in that the equilibrium of mundane skills used to respond to and identify objects is precarious in the sense that it can be upended by a pattern of findings that are

inconsistent with the standards constituting a domain. And for Haugeland, the fact that we are ultimately beholden to the objects themselves is what prevents the whole scheme of objectivity from being arbitrary social institution.

But I think the point still stands in empirical chess for a simple reason. To recognize that the pattern of mundane findings is inconsistent with the constitutive standards governing a domain, one must first be able to understand the constitutive standards of a domain in order to successfully identify the objects that do accord with those constitutive standards. One cannot recognize that something is inconsistent with the constitutive standards if one does not first have the ability to recognize what is consistent. Therefore, the existential commitment that translates into the responsibility to give up on a domain when the findings cannot be made to work with the standards and, by extension, *our beholdenness to the objects themselves*, devolves upon one's initiation into the social practices constituting a domain. Thus, my argument threatens the account of object constitution given in empirical chess and, by extension, empirical science.

On the other hand, I think a stronger protest might arise from Haugeland's accommodation of social practices in the first two of the three levels of self-criticism in scientific practice. In "Authentic Intentionality," Haugeland elaborates on the role of existential commitment by explaining the three levels of self-criticism in scientific practice, a practice that he believes allows for objective knowledge. The protest is that at the first two levels, Haugeland holds that objective knowledge is possible for systems with ordinary intentionality. Ordinary intentionality does not require full-fledged existential commitment to a domain. All humans have ordinary intentionality;

therefore, all humans are capable of objective knowledge even without the capacity for or exercise of existential commitment.

This poses a problem for my claim that existential commitment is not self-generated. If objective knowledge is possible without full-fledged existential commitment, then any ambiguities concerning the source of existential commitment do not threaten the possibility of objectivity in Haugeland's account of understanding.

However, I believe that the point that existential commitment cannot be self-generated poses a problem for Haugeland's account of objectivity still stands. What Haugeland is seeking to give an account of is understanding objective phenomena. That at least some individuals are capable of authentic intentionality and thus of full-fledged existential commitment gives objects their normative authority by disclosing what is and is not possible for a domain. That is to say, being committed to a domain to the extent that one would give up on the whole thing when the external phenomena cannot be made compatible with the mundane/constitutive skills and constitutive standards that belong to that domain is what ensures that our conceptions of those objects correspond to phenomena that are *independent* of us. Hence, that at least some individuals have authentic intentionality and thus full-fledged existential commitment is necessary for the delineation of the modality – what is necessary, possible, and impossible – of objective phenomena.

The modal character of objective phenomena is necessary for our *understanding* of the objective phenomena that are co-constituted with the skills that seek to measure and manipulate them. This engagement with phenomena in order to understand them as being such is distinct from mere objective knowledge of them, which arises from social practices at the first two levels. But if the bases of existential

commitment do in fact in lie in the social practices themselves, then, by Haugeland's own argument, there is no way to tell the difference between constitution and institution. Therefore, even though the norms of social practice are invoked at the first two levels of self-criticism, my claim that existential commitment does in fact derive from social practice threatens the possibility of what is needed for object constitution – objective understanding – in Haugeland's account.

§4.3 THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF THE STRUCTURES OF PERCEPTUAL ENGAGEMENT AND EXISTENTIAL COMMITMENT

In the previous section, I argued that existential commitment cannot be stable and self-generated because it ultimately devolves upon dynamic, contextualized social practices. Even with this point being made, I think there is another incompatibility between Haugeland's conceptions of mind and truth to be explored. In "Mind Embodied and Embedded," Haugeland espouses a view of perception that is dynamic and *ad hoc* – that is to say, contextual. On the face of it, the account of skillful coping within a domain that Haugeland gives in "Truth and Rule-Following" seems to be an extension of such an account of the embodied and embedded mind. However, that the domain itself is governed by a stable and holistic set of constitutive standards does not seem to be consistent with the dynamicity necessary to an account of perception that is *ad hoc*. There seems to be a tension between the conception of mind Haugeland offers in the 1995 essay with the conception of truth he offers in "Truth and Rule-Following" (1998) and "Authentic Intentionality" (2002).

Recall Lance's claim that, taken together, the two tenets that skillful performances and understanding are embedded in their local contexts and that language is a tool

that is defined by its skillful use and uptake threaten the notions of objectivity and truth. Somewhat analogously, I think it can be shown that the notion of truth as some external stable norm governing assertion is inconsistent with the notion of situated cognition.

Haugeland's notion of situated cognition is formulated in the attempt to locate propositional content in engagement with the world itself through skillful coping. But to maintain the claim that the meaningful is located in the world itself, Haugeland must hold that perception is *ad hoc* and highly subject to the particular circumstances of one's situatedness, as he does in "Mind Embodied and Embedded." Later, in "Truth and Rule-Following," he holds that the constitution of objects is highly contextualized by the interrelated holistic pattern of skills belonging to a domain with which they are co-constituted, but the ability to be beholden to objects that are external in the sense that they are independent of us relies on the notion of self-generated, resilient existential commitment. This character of resilience translates, I believe, into some stable ideal with force that transcends the contingencies of one's particular situation. In addition, revising any of the constitutive standards and constitutive/mundane skills belonging to a domain requires a wholesale revision so that it is not the same domain at all but instead is replaced by a successor; thus, the holistic pattern of constitutive standards and constitutive/mundane skills constituting a domain is static until it is upended. It is through this displacement of a domain that our beholdenness to the external objects comes to full fruition.

Maintaining the notion of truth in the sense that we are beholden to external objects requires the idealistic structure of existential commitment. Yet, at the same time, the very possibility of truth requires the dynamic practice of rule-following and

skillful coping Haugeland elucidates in “Truth and Rule-Following.” That is to say, in terms of Haugeland’s conception of truth as beholdenness to objects, the dynamic practice of skillful engagement with the world is embedded within the larger idealistic static structure of a domain undergirded by stable existential commitment to the domain (until it is given up).

Throughout Haugeland’s attack on the neo-pragmatists, he maintains that the normative and the causal realms are not separate. That the neo-pragmatists hold this conception is what ultimately, in Haugeland’s view, does not allow for their account to make possible the distinction between social propriety and objective correctness.

However, in order to dissolve the distinction between the normative and the causal realms in the metaphysics of mind, one must formulate a view of mind that is embedded in its environment, where mind, body, and world are intertwined so that they cannot be understood as individual components; understanding any of them requires analyzing each one in terms of their relationship to the others. Otherwise, one is subject to the demon of dualism.

In “Truth and Rule-Following,” Haugeland attempts to maintain that the normative and causal realms are not separate because our constitution of objects is ultimately beholden to the objects themselves. But doing so requires operating within the context of a static, holistic domain undergirded by an idealistic, self-generated notion of existential commitment. To operate according to existential commitment, which translates into a transcendent ideal, is inconsistent with the notion that perception must be *ad hoc* and subject to the particular circumstances of one’s environment. But for perception to be completely contextual, the possibility of truth is eviscerated. Thus, the structures of static existential commitment and situated

cognition are incompatible. What's more, because situated cognition cannot be made compatible with the necessarily stable character of holistic domains required for object constitution, Haugeland cannot successfully maintain the dissolution of the distinction between the normative and causal realms.

Because the normative realm and the causal realms cannot be made continuous, what are Haugeland's alternatives? Either they must both be dynamic and contextual, which would require Haugeland to give up on the notion of truth. On this view, the constitutive standards governing a domain must be open-ended and the domain must be normative all the way down. Alternatively, the structures must both be stable or static. In this scenario, Haugeland would have to let go of the view of rule-following as dynamic skillful engagement. This is to say that Haugeland would have to embrace a static representationalist theory of mind. But a representationalist theory of mind does not accommodate the ability to adapt to a constantly fluctuating and highly contingent environment, which is Haugeland's point in formulating his view of situated cognition in the first place.

We saw that Haugeland's notion of existential commitment is flawed in that it actually derives from social practice and thus requires a richer conception of social practice to make sense. From the neo-pragmatist view, we saw that social practices are self-correcting, dynamic, and open-ended in that the norms are always contestable. Thus, if existential commitment is parasitic on dynamic social practice, a constituted domain is actually social practice all the way down. Therefore, the holistic norms of Haugeland's individual domains are actually open-ended, which is to say that individual domains are not in fact governed by *stable* constitutive standards that only change when a revolution occurs and the whole domain is given up on.

. From this it follows that the account of objectivity that he has given us is actually one that is actually normative all the way down, which does not allow for the ability to distinguish between constitution and institution. In addition, because both the structures of mind and directedness toward objects must either be stable or dynamic, Haugeland cannot maintain both norm-governed perception and the notion of “truth.” Therefore, his attempt to exorcise the demons of “capital-R Relativism” and “capital-R Reality” by forming some sort of compromise between the two extremes is unsuccessful.

§4.4 SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE CONCLUSIONS DRAWN HERE

I have set up this essay so that it shows how Haugeland’s argument against *his* version of the neo-pragmatist view of understanding is unsuccessful. But need the claim that existential commitment is socially derived undermine the possibility of there being existential commitment at all, or at least some sense of individual empowerment?

It seems like that by saying that existential commitment comes to bear by no other force than its self-exercise, ideally Haugeland imagines it to be some embodied way of living that is compatible with the view of perceptual engagement given in “Mind Embodied and Embedded.” But this is ultimately unsuccessful, because to say that existential commitment is self-generated commits Haugeland to a notion of existential commitment as some magical force, when instead existential commitment could be made compatible with a richer conception of social practices.

I argued that the necessity of the strategy of grounding objectivity in existential commitment arises from Haugeland’s desire to make possible the distinction between

constitution and institution. In his view of the mechanism of conformism, Haugeland gave us a view of socially instituted normativity that was authoritarian in the sense that there was no room made for the individual self. Recall that on the neo-pragmatist view, all inner thought is ultimately derivative from larger public practice and the individual self is a unit of public accountability.

But I think this authoritarian conception is a mistaken view of the actual neo-pragmatist accounts.²² Rather than giving a view of socially instituted normativity in which the individual is solely constrained by the arbitrary institutions that precede one's existence, some interpretation of the neo-pragmatist view (in its actual form, not Haugeland's view of it) could give us a powerful way of understanding the possibility of the evolution of social norms. In allowing one to be an author of new norms, one can also be forward-looking and affect statuses with the goal of changing those norms to lead to some conception of a "kingdom of ends" that the community can strive toward as a whole. Haugeland's notion of individual, self-generated existential commitment does not give us the ability to affect statuses in this way for a richer conception of social practice to do strong political work.

This is a rather vague thought and I will not attempt to explore it or answer the questions it poses here, as I do not think that the scope of this essay allows for it. I would just prefer to not leave one with the impression that with my attack on Haugeland's account of existential commitment, all individual strength is lost to the arbitrary desires of the authoritarian community at large. For example, in saying that existential commitment ultimately devolves upon social practice, it might be that in

²² A thought that is not actually mine, but instead is Mark Lance's in his 2000.

empirical practice, because the commitment itself is social, individuals come to understand objectivity, care about it, and seek it because we are part of a community that does so.²³ I do not think that the notion that existential commitment cannot be truly self-generated makes the significance of such endeavors any less.

But these are questions for further exploration. Instead, in this essay, I have merely attempted to show that the claim that existential commitment is self-generated undermines Haugeland's account of objectivity *in his own terms*.

²³ This is a point made by Steven Horst in our discussion surrounding this chapter.

CONCLUSION

In Chapter 1, I illustrated why, with his attack on the Myth of the Given, Sellars illustrates that knowledge of higher order kinds (norms) is epistemically prior to recognition of particulars. I also illustrated Haugeland's view of the mechanism of the institution of these norms: conformism. Through discursive linguistic practice, the extant class of norms can be engendered. Taken together, the mechanism of conformism and the ability of dual-use linguistic tools to affect statuses show that the neo-pragmatist conception of original intentionality is one in which all inner thought is derivative on larger social practice.

In Chapter 2, I examined Haugeland's view of situated cognition in which the meaningful is contained in the world itself. Exploring the super-monkey experiment through the lens of psychological nominalism, I suggested that maintaining the notion that knowledge of higher order kinds is epistemically prior to recognition of particulars while simultaneously rejecting the claim that language acquisition is essential for initiation into the space of reasons might pose a problem for Haugeland. If we accept Sellars's thesis of psychological nominalism, language acquisition is prerequisite for knowledge of the relevant norms required for recognition of the particulars. In order to provide an account of object constitution in which object constitution is not arbitrary, I contended that Haugeland must provide a richer account of what is necessary for objective understanding *independent* of the notion that it devolves upon the ability to skillfully engage in the practice of uttering and responding to linguistic tokens governed by a larger holistic normative structure.

In Chapter 3, I outlined Haugeland's attack on the neo-pragmatist view where he contends that the neo-pragmatist view of original intentionality gives us no ability to distinguish between social propriety and getting things right. Haugeland formulates his beholdenness theory of truth, in which perception is normative and modal all the way down, in order to give force to the notion that there is a world independent of us that plays a normative role in governing our assertions. On this view, external objects themselves have a larger role of informing our beliefs through the maintenance of the excluded zone, which itself is grounded in individual self-generated existential commitment. In addition, existential commitment to the standards governing a domain manifests in existential responsibility to give up the whole domain when the pattern of interrelated mundane performances and findings cannot be made consistent with the constitutive standards.

In Chapter 4, I argued that existential commitment is not self-generated and in fact devolves upon larger social practice. By Haugeland's own argument, it stands that existential commitment is insufficient to provide an account of objectivity that allows us to distinguish between social propriety and truth. What's more, because existential commitment ultimately devolves upon dynamic social practice, the notion that the structure of situated dynamic skillful engagement with the world is embedded within the structure of a static constituted domain does not make sense; the two structures are incompatible. With these two points taken together, I have shown that Haugeland does not successfully defeat the neo-pragmatist view and the demon of "capital-R Relativism."

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