

they will still fall at the same rate. Finally you are invited to imagine that the connecting thread is rigid like an iron bar and to agree that they will continue to fall at the same rate. And then it is pointed out that the two bodies connected in that rigid way are equivalent to a single body of double the weight, so that you have just agreed that such a body will have the same rate of fall as either of the bodies on its own. Thus your own beliefs about the elements in the scenario envisaged—the claims to which you are invited to agree—are shown to imply, perhaps contrary to your existing view on the matter, that bodies of different weights can fall at the same rate to earth.

This thought experiment turns on the fact that our views on different matters, once articulated, can prove to have surprising implications. And that lesson holds as much of the practical presumptions articulated in philosophy, as it does of the particular, empirical intuitions that Galileo was working with. Unsurprisingly, then, one very common style of argument in philosophy attempts to derive such potentially surprising implications and to paint in the picture of the world that they convey.

It is in this vein that I read many of the most influential—though not necessarily compelling—contributions of philosophy in the last hundred years or so. Here, roughly stated, are some prominent examples.

- Lewis Carroll's demonstration that under our presumptions about reasoning, as revealed in interpersonal exchange, no argument will be supported by its premisses alone; there will always have to be a rule of inference that is presupposed in the background.²⁵
- Wittgenstein's argument that properly and coherently articulated, our practical presumptions about what following a rule involves, in particular a rule of thought or judgement, entail that a private language is impossible: no one could use an informative, private language to name and keep track of sensations that others could not in principle access.²⁶
- Quine's argument that the presumptions we hold in respect of interpreting and translating words, at least when they are spelled out as they ought to be, entail that two equally good manuals of translation could offer inconsistent construals of a sentence in the target language.²⁷
- Sellars's argument that everything we are committed to in ascribing mental states to ourselves and others is consistent with our having learned to use mental concepts in the way in which we apparently learn to use terms that are theoretically introduced.²⁸
- Strawson's argument that the presumptions involved in sustaining reactive emotions like resentment and gratification entail an ascription of freedom to the subject on whom they are targeted and that disbelieving in someone's freedom is as difficult as the suspension of those reactions.²⁹

²⁵ L. Carroll (1895), 'What the Tortoise said to Achilles', *Mind* 4: 278–80.

²⁶ L. Wittgenstein (1958), *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell).

²⁷ W. V. O. Quine (1970), *Word & Object* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press).

²⁸ W. Sellars (1967), *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press).

²⁹ P. Strawson (1982), 'Freedom and Resentment', in G. Watson, *Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

- John Perry's argument that under our practical presumptions as to what is necessary to make it rational to perform an action, the agent must have beliefs with an indexical content involving concepts like 'I' or 'now' or 'here'.³⁰

Just as Galileo's deduction was driven by a thought experiment, so these arguments have often been associated with experiments—better perhaps, intuition-pumps³¹—that are designed to make vivid the possibility or impossibility alleged. We are invited to imagine the frustration of the individual—Achilles in Carroll's famous story—who tries to move by argument an interlocutor who will endorse only what the premisses say, and nothing that is merely presupposed; the plight of the person who tries to keep a diary on sensations occurring within them that no one else could in principle access; the problems of the radical translator as he or she finds it possible to translate a sentence in inconsistent ways and can find nothing to make one translation right, the other wrong; the position of human beings at a stage where they can give a behaviouristic account of one another's responses but not a properly mental one; the challenge for the person who wants to suspend reactive emotions in dealing with someone and yet continue to see them as a personal and free subject; and the predicament of someone who is lost in an unfamiliar complex and enjoys access to a map but has no way of telling where on the map is *here*.

Philosophy claims to teach us something potentially surprising by means of contemplating such scenarios, as Galileo claimed to do so by his. And what it teaches us bears in a distinctive way on practice. In particular, it bears on the practice of science and it is for that reason that I speak of methodological lessons. Thus the lessons of the tales rehearsed are, roughly: that we must expect some rules of inference to be hard-wired into any cognitive system; that there is no point in looking for a so-called Cartesian theatre of the mind; that neither is there any point in looking for a museum of meaning in the head; that if we can explain the evolution of a behaviouristic language for describing one another's responses, then it is going to be a short step to having an explanation of how the language of mind might have emerged; that if we can give an account of conditions that would make it appropriate, by our lights, to feel resentment and gratification at a subject, then we will have given conditions under which it is in order to ascribe freedom to that person; and that any story of cognitive architecture must make room for beliefs that are context-involving in the manner of beliefs with indexical content.

The methodological lessons illustrated—they may not be the only lessons supported by the arguments in question—all bear on the challenges and prospects for cognitive science and neuroscience. But not every lesson that philosophy may prove able to teach will be confined to this area. There is room for the same sort of philosophical work in relation to the social sciences. Thus Donald Davidson offers an argument that people who were as alien to us as certain anthropological theories assume would not be recognizable—by our received practices and views—as other

³⁰ J. Perry (1979), 'The Essential Indexical', *Nous* 13: 3–21.

³¹ D. Dennett (1984), *Elbow Room: The Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press).