

Belief as 'Seeing As'

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Abstract: Wittgenstein's exposition on aspect seeing (widely known as "seeing as") can be regarded as perhaps one of the least discussed topics among his thoughts. In this light, this paper wishes to contribute to the development of Wittgenstein's notion of "seeing as." The thesis of this paper is that although "seeing as" can be normally understood in two ways—as a visual experience and as an attitude—there is another way in which "seeing as" can be understood, that is, as a belief. In this sense, "seeing as" is not a distinct action from believing, that is, believing is "seeing as."

Keywords: Wittgenstein, Moore's paradox, aspect seeing, seeing as belief

Understanding the Concept of 'Seeing As'

In Part II of the *Philosophical Investigations*,¹ Wittgenstein begins his exposition on "seeing as"² by making a distinction between the two uses of the word "see:"

The one: "What do you see there?"—"I see *this*" (and then a description, a drawing, a copy). The other: "I see a likeness between these two faces"—let the man I tell this to be seeing the faces as clearly as I do myself.³

From this distinction, his succeeding discussion implies two notions of "seeing as," namely, "seeing as" as a visual experience and "seeing as" as an attitude.

¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. by G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953). Hereafter referred to as *PI*.

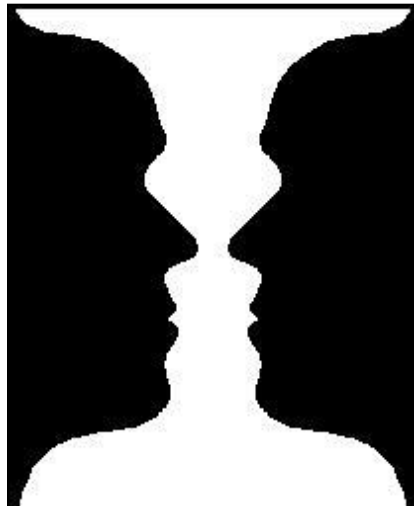
² See Avner Baz, "What's the Point of Seeing Aspects?" in *Philosophical Investigations*, 23:2 (2000), 97-121. See also John Churchill, "Rat and Mole's Epiphany of Pan: Wittgenstein on Seeing Aspects and Religious Experience," in *Philosophical Investigations*, 21:2 (1998), 152-172.

³ Wittgenstein, *PI*, 193.

However, before proceeding any further in the discussion of the implications of this distinction, there is a need at this point to elucidate first some very important items that will facilitate the flow of the discussion in this paper. Hence, a clarification of terms is in order.

'Seeing As'

"I contemplate a face, and then suddenly notice its likeness to another. I *see* that it has not changed; and yet I see it differently. I call this experience 'noticing an aspect'."⁴ *Noticing an aspect* is the experience generally being referred to by the term *aspect seeing* or *seeing an aspect*. It can be considered as a commonly occurring phenomenon although barely recognizable. However, seeing an aspect is best manifested and readily recognized when one encounters ambiguous figures like picture puzzles or optical illusions such as in the image ("Facevase")⁵ below:

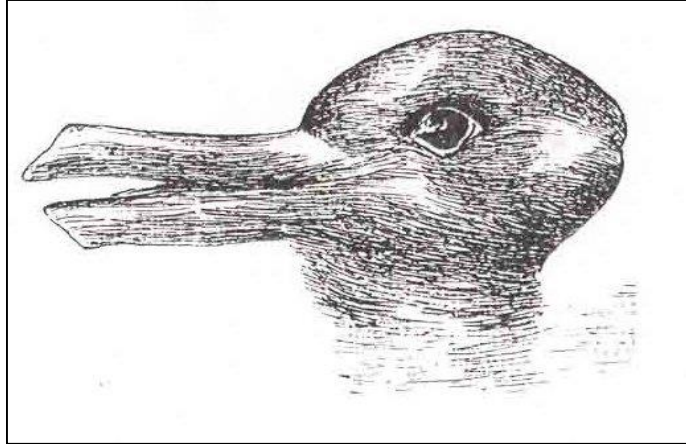


In the image presented, at first glance, one can initially see a white cup (chalice or vase), however, after a while, it may happen that one cannot see the cup anymore, but instead, one sees two faces facing each other. Here, it can be said that one initially saw the aspect that is the cup (Aspect A) and later on saw the aspect that is the two faces (Aspect B).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ "Facevase" (Public Domain), in Wikimedia Commons (21 October 2006), <<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AFacevase.JPG>>, 23 January 2016.

The phenomenon of seeing an aspect, such as when one saw Aspect A, is referred to by Wittgenstein as the *dawning* of an aspect. For instance, is the image⁶ below that of a duck or of a rabbit?



Wittgenstein used the image of the duck-rabbit in his discussion of aspect-seeing in the *PI*. Years later, the philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn, who was introduced to the works of Wittgenstein by one of his colleagues in UC Berkeley, used the duck-rabbit to explain his notion of “paradigm shift” in the history of science, which he dubbed as “scientific revolution.”

The subject of a gestalt demonstration knows that his perception has shifted because he can make it shift back and forth repeatedly while he holds the same book or piece of paper in his hands. Aware that nothing in his environment has changed, he directs his attention increasingly not to the figure (duck or rabbit) but to the lines on the paper he is looking at. Ultimately he may even learn to see those lines without seeing either of the figures, and he may then say (what he could not legitimately have said earlier) that it is these lines that he really sees but that he sees them alternately as a duck and as a rabbit ... as in all similar psychological experiments, the effectiveness of the demonstration depends upon its being analyzable in this way. Unless there were an external standard with respect to which a

⁶ “Duck-Rabbit Illusion,” in Joseph Jastrow, “The Mind’s Eye,” in *Popular Science Monthly*, 54 (1899), 299-312 as cited in “Duck-Rabbit Illusion,” in *Wikimedia Commons* (29 March 2006), <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Duck-Rabbit_illusion.jpg>, 23 January 2016.

switch of vision could be demonstrated, no conclusion about alternate perceptual possibilities could be drawn.⁷

However, in science, a paradigm shift leads to problems, problems lead to crisis, and crisis results in revolution—a scientific revolution. For Kuhn, a paradigm is an achievement that “was sufficiently unprecedented to attract an enduring group of adherents away from competing modes of scientific activity. Simultaneously, it was sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of problems for the redefined group of practitioners to resolve. Achievements that share these two characteristics I shall henceforth refer to as ‘paradigms,’ ...”⁸ Thus, a paradigm shift—or a scientific revolution—is a revision of an existing scientific paradigm that is tantamount to the seeing of another paradigm that was not seen before (e.g., the Copernican revolution).

However, unlike aspect-seeing, which begins with the dawning of an aspect, Kuhn points out that paradigm shift does not involve seeing *as* but is characterized by seeing *it*. Furthermore, he emphasized that it is also different from Gestalt although the latter can be seen as a prototype.

The transition from a paradigm in crisis to a new one from which a new tradition of normal science can emerge is far from a cumulative process, one achieved by an articulation or extension of the old paradigm. Rather it is a reconstruction of the field from new fundamentals, a reconstruction that changes some of the field’s most elementary theoretical generalizations as well as many of its paradigm methods and applications. During the transition period there will be a large but never complete overlap between the problems that can be solved by the old and by the new paradigm. But there will also be a decisive difference in the modes of solution. When the transition is complete, the profession will have changed its view of the field, its methods, and its goals ... Others who have noted this aspect of scientific advance have emphasized its similarity to a change in visual gestalt: the marks on paper that were first seen as a bird are now seen as an antelope, or vice versa. That parallel can be misleading. Scientists do not see something as something else; instead, they simply

⁷ Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, vol. 2, no. 2 of *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 114.

⁸ Wittgenstein, *PI*, 10.

see it ... In addition, the scientist does not preserve the gestalt subject's freedom to switch back and forth between ways of seeing. Nevertheless, the switch of gestalt, particularly because it is today so familiar, is a useful elementary prototype for what occurs in full-scale paradigm shift.⁹

Nonetheless, although essentially different from Gestalt, the paradigm shift is similar to Gestalt in terms of the immediacy of the switch. "Just because it is a transition between incommensurables, the transition between competing paradigms cannot be made a step at a time, forced by logic and neutral experience. Like the gestalt switch, it must occur all at once (though not necessarily in an instant) or not at all."¹⁰ Meanwhile, the parallelism of Kuhn's paradigm shift with the views of Wittgenstein on aspect-seeing can only reach as far as the fact that from "the start they [both] presuppose a paradigm"¹¹— the duck or the rabbit or the old scientific paradigm.

Going back, the dawning of an aspect is the immediate recognition of an aspect, as the experience when one immediately recognized Aspect A. When, for instance, one is presented with the image above and asked, "What do you see here?", one will always instantaneously see something and, without thinking, respond, "A cup," for instance, upon immediately seeing Aspect A or more precisely, upon the dawning of Aspect A on the person. This kind of response is what is referred to as the *report* of perception. However, there are instances wherein one, upon saying that one sees a white cup, might suddenly exclaim, "No wait, two faces facing each other!" At this instance, it is clear that one has shifted from seeing Aspect A to Aspect B, but this time, the utterance of the person is not anymore merely a report of perception but it is already an *exclamation* or *avowal*. Although both report and exclamation are expressions of perception, they are different in the sense that an exclamation can be called as an *expression of thought*.

But since [exclamation] is the description of a perception, it can also be called the expression of thought.—If you are looking at the object, you need not think of it; but if you are having the visual experience expressed by the exclamation, you are also *thinking* of what you see.¹²

⁹ Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 84-85.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹² Wittgenstein, *PI*, 197.

In the second instance, one is not only having a visual experience of Aspect B, but is also thinking about what is seen – one is “occupied” with what he sees. This assertion by Wittgenstein will shed light on critical points in the subsequent discussion of the notions of “seeing as.”

Meanwhile, in cases where one continues to see only Aspect A of the image, Wittgenstein calls this experience as the *continuous seeing* of an aspect or *continuous aspect perception*. If questioned further, one might explain the features of Aspect A which are similar to the features of a real cup; or one might draw another image of a cup to show how Aspect A resembles a cup; or one might even get an actual cup and match it up to the image presented. On the other hand, the experience of shifting from seeing Aspect A to seeing Aspect B is called the phenomenon of *changing of aspect* or *conversion*. In this instance, one will not refer to a cup anymore but might refer to pictures of faces or even point to one’s own face.

One may point out that what has just been described is similar to the propositions of Gestalt psychology. Conversely, it could never be more different. It is precisely Gestalt psychology as represented by the work of Wolfgang Köhler that Wittgenstein criticizes.¹³ In Gestalt psychology, one sees things in *segregated wholes*, wherein certain aspects “belong together,” as Gestalt advocates put it:

Consider the Rubin vase. You can see it either as a vase, or as two profiles, but never as both at the same time. That this is so is the consequence of the way in which lines in the visual region ‘be-long’ to the area that is perceived as figure. In current psychology this phenomenon is often referred to as ‘border ownership’ or the ‘one sidedness of edges.’¹⁴

Köhler points out that in both experiences (in seeing the vase and in seeing the profiles), one sees a *new visual object* each time. But Wittgenstein questions this and argues that in seeing the aspects (of the vase at one time and the profiles at another), there is no new visual object because the object of perception *has not changed*. This is the paradox of aspect perception. Further, Köhler argues:

¹³ It is important to note that Wittgenstein’s criticisms against Gestalt psychology focused on the work of Köhler, aptly titled *Gestalt Psychology* (1929).

¹⁴ Naomi Eilan, “On the Paradox of Gestalt Switches: Wittgenstein’s Response to Kohler,” in *Journal for the History of Analytical Philosophy*, 2:3 (2013), 4.

Whenever we say to ourselves or others: ‘What may that something be, at the foot of that hill, just to the right of that tree, between those two houses, and so on?’ we ask about the empirical meaning or use of a seen object and demonstrate by our very question that as a matter of principle, segregation of visual things is independent of knowledge and meaning ... it follows that my knowledge about the practical significance of things cannot be responsible for their existence as detached visual units.¹⁵

In this sense, one initially sees objects as meaningless entities—like blotches on paper—and attaches them with meaning. For instance, when one looks at a “pen,” one perceives the “pen” not as a pen, but as an organized whole. Only when one attaches a meaning to the “pen” can a pen be perceived as a pen, that is, a tool used for writing. One, then, perceives the pen in connection to its use and not just a meaningless object perceived. But seeing and meaning are independent of each other. As Köhler puts it, “segregation of visual things is independent of knowledge and meaning.” On the other hand, Wittgenstein points out that seeing does not come without meaning; that is, a purely visual experience sans meaning is not possible. Rather, “we see things with their meaning.”¹⁶ In the same way, when one looks at blotches on a piece of paper, one does not see the blotches only in a purely visual experience, but sees the blotches as meanings, for instance, “It looks like a butterfly” or “I think I see a face.” Thus, it is “contrary to Köhler—precisely a meaning that I see.”¹⁷

In another note, there are also cases wherein one is able see Aspect A of the image but is unable to eventually see Aspect B and vice-versa. This is what Wittgenstein refers to as *aspect-blindedness*. However, it is not a possibility for a person to be completely aspect-blind because one always recognizes an aspect. Even a person who is deprived of sight can recognize an aspect through touch or hearing.

“Seeing As” as a Visual Experience

Earlier, it was mentioned that two notions of “seeing as” are implied

¹⁵ Wolfgang Köhler, *Gestalt Psychology* (New York: Liveright, 1929), 82.

¹⁶ Fiorenza Toccafondi, “Seeing the Meanings: Wittgenstein and Köhler,” in *Gestalt Theory*, 34:3/4 (2012), 290.

¹⁷ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. I (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), par. 869, p. 153 as cited in Toccafondi, “Seeing the Meanings: Wittgenstein and Köhler,” 289.

from Wittgenstein's distinction of the two uses of the word "see." One of them, which shall be discussed in this section, is the notion of "seeing as" as a visual experience. In the *PI*, Wittgenstein gave the following observation about visual experience:

What is the criterion of the visual experience?—The
criterion?
What do you suppose?
The representation of "what is seen."¹⁸

He further added that the "concept of representation of what is seen, like that of a copy, is very elastic, and so *together with it* is the concept of what is seen."¹⁹ This can be taken to be a precise description of seeing an aspect. In the case of the image presented above, when two people try to look at it and one sees Aspect A while the other sees aspect B, it can be said that there is a "sense in which they are seeing the same thing and another sense in which they are not."²⁰ Indeed, this can be proven when one asks them to describe what they see; surely they will come up with two totally different descriptions although they are both looking at the same image. In other words, the representation of what is seen follows what is "actually" seen.

The concept of "seeing as" as a visual experience is best captured in the statement, "I see *this*"²¹ where *this* can stand for a *cat*, as in "I see a cat"; or a *tree* as in "I see a tree"; or a *man* as in "I see a man"; and so on. In other words, "seeing as" in the sense of a visual experience can be regarded as merely "plain seeing." Hence, one plainly sees a cup while another plainly sees two faces facing each other. This also explains why in the instance of a conversion, the person undergoes a new visual experience, despite the image not changing. "If you search in a figure (1) for another figure (2), and then find it, you see it (1) in a new way. Not only can you give a new kind of description of it, but noticing the second figure was a new visual experience."²² Thus, one sees Aspect A during a particular visual experience and Aspect B in another particular visual experience, but never at the same instance since "the *impression* is not simultaneously of a picture-duck and a picture-rabbit" (as in Wittgenstein's example where the image used is that of a duck-rabbit).²³

¹⁸ Wittgenstein, *PI*, 198.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Robert Fogelin, *Wittgenstein*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 1987), 202.

²¹ Wittgenstein, *PI*, 193.

²² *Ibid.*, 199.

²³ *Ibid.*

“Seeing As” as an Attitude

The concept of “seeing as” as an attitude is the second of the two notions of “seeing as” implied by Wittgenstein’s distinction of the two uses of the word “see.” Wittgenstein illustrates the distinction between “seeing as” as a visual experience and “seeing as” as an attitude through the following remarks:

A wall covered with spots, and I occupy myself by seeing faces on it; but not so that I can study the nature of an aspect, but because those shapes interest me, and so does the spell under which I can go from one to the next.

The double cross and the duck-rabbit might be among the spots and they could be seen like the figures and together with them now one way, now another.²⁴

In this case, when Wittgenstein speaks of “a wall covered with spots,” he is, in fact, reporting a visual experience of seeing a wall covered with spots. But when he speaks of seeing “the double cross and the duck-rabbit ... among the spots,” he, at this point, is seeing in terms of a particular *attitude*, which in that particular instance, *influences* what he sees. “The apparent paradox of aspect seeing was at least in part generated by the fact that what was seen in the usual sense had not altered but what was seen in the sense of being allied to thinking had. Aspect change was not an alteration of perception but of attitude.”²⁵

John Hick attempts to describe the difference between these two notions in simplified terms:

If I am looking at a picture, say the picture of a face, in sense number one I see what is physically present on the paper—mounds of ink, we might say, of a certain shape, size, thickness and position. But in sense number two I see the picture of a face. We could say that in this second sense to see is to interpret or to find meaning or

²⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, ed. by G.H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman, trans. by C.G. Luckhardt and Maximilian A.E. Aue (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 12. Hereafter referred to as LWPP.

²⁵ Mark Addis, *Wittgenstein: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), 124.

significance on what is before us—we interpret and perceive the mounds of ink as having the particular kind of meaning that we describe as the picture of the face, a meaning that mounds of ink, simply as such, do not have.²⁶

Thus for Hick, “seeing as” is partly a matter of plain seeing and partly a matter of interpretation. I agree with Hick’s understanding of the first sense of “seeing as”; however, I believe that he was somehow a bit off in his understanding of its second sense. I have my doubts that it will be entirely correct to say that Hick misunderstood the second notion of “seeing as” because he associated it with interpretation. I think that he used the term interpretation in a very loose sense. It cannot be blamed since Wittgenstein himself employed the use of the term: “what about the double cross? Again, it is seeing according to an interpretation. Seeing *as*.”²⁷ Malcolm Budd shares this view:

The notion of interpretation that Wittgenstein expounds is too strong to do the work he intends it for. A better conception would not restrict interpreting to the making of a conjecture, but would allow in cases in which we are only entertaining a supposition, merely imagining or making-believe that a figure is intended a certain way ...²⁸

Nevertheless, to set things straight and more clearly, unlike interpretation which implies process, seeing in terms of an attitude is instantaneous. One sees Aspect A (or Aspect B) in that same instance when one looks at the image and not after a series of seeing and thereafter interpreting the meaning of what is seen. Wittgenstein firmly established this point: “Do I really see something different each time, or do I only interpret what I see in a different way? I am inclined to say the former. But why?—To interpret is to think, to do something; seeing is a state.”²⁹ To distinguish between seeing and interpreting, Wittgenstein points out that “seeing has genuine duration: one can ask for how long one saw the drawing as a duck

²⁶ John Hick, “Seeing-as and Religious Experience,” in *Philosophy of Religion: Proceedings of the 8th International Wittgenstein Symposium*, ed. by Wolfgang Gombocz (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1984), 47.

²⁷ Wittgenstein, *LWPP*, 15.

²⁸ Malcolm Budd, “Wittgenstein on Seeing Aspects,” in *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Philosophy*, 96:381 (1987), 11.

²⁹ Wittgenstein, *PI*, 212.

before it changed to a rabbit, whereas it sounds incongruous to ask for the duration of an interpretation"³⁰ But is it possible to see without thinking? Does a baby think as it looks at its mother's face? Does a person think as one stares *blankly* outside the window? The science of sight is that the brain *processes* the visual sense data to make them an organized whole so that one may perceive the world as one ordinarily does. But this processing does not require the person to do something, that is, to think. Thinking is an act that one does voluntarily. It is doing something with what one sees. One can analyze what is seen, remember it, memorize, or express it. This is thinking. Seeing is different.

It was mentioned earlier that "if you are having the visual experience expressed by the exclamation, you are also *thinking* of what you see."³¹ This is in direct connection with what Wittgenstein calls a *well-known impression*.³² In simple terms, it is more likely that one will not recognize an impression that one does not know of. One might be looking at a cup, as in above, without seeing it. "Does someone who doesn't recognize a smile as a smile see it differently than someone who does? He reacts to it differently."³³ Here, it becomes quite clear that in "seeing as" as an attitude, seeing seems to be "half visual experience, half thought."³⁴

Moore's Paradox

In one of his letters to G. E. Moore,³⁵ Wittgenstein commented on the "absurdity" of Moore's assertion, "There is fire in this room and I don't believe there is," which he later called "Moore's Paradox." He pointed out that it "isn't the *only* logically inadmissible form and it is, under certain circumstances, admissible"³⁶ and commended Moore for having made such a discovery.

In the *PI*, Wittgenstein begins his discussion on the expression "I believe" with an analysis of Moore's Paradox. According to a commentator on Wittgenstein, Garth Hallett, Wittgenstein has purposely "left [the

³⁰ Severin Schroeder, "A Tale of Two Problems: Wittgenstein's Discussion of Aspect Perception," in *Mind, Method, and Morality: Essays in Honour of Anthony Kenny*, ed. by J. Cottingham and P.M.S. Hacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 358.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 197.

³² Wittgenstein, *LWPP*, 16.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Wittgenstein, *PI*, 197.

³⁵ See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Cambridge Letters – Correspondence with Russel, Keynes, Moore, Ramsey, and Sraffa*, ed. by Brian McGuinness and G.H. von Wright (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 315ff.

³⁶ Wittgenstein, *Cambridge Letters*, 317.

discussion on] 'I believe' till [after his discussion on expression of emotions], apparently because 'Moore's Paradox' suggested the possibility of a fuller, more complex development, one which could not conveniently be incorporated in the earlier section."³⁷ However, apart from this explanation, I believe Wittgenstein did this with the intention that his discussion on "I believe" may serve as a guide in order to understand his discussion on the following section, on "seeing as." In other words, his thoughts on "seeing as" need to be seen in the light of his thoughts on "I believe." For such reason, the only manner of proceeding is by clarifying what Wittgenstein thinks of the expression "I believe" in relation to his analysis of Moore's Paradox.

Moore's paradox can be put like this: the expression "I believe that this is the case" is used like the assertion "This is the case"; and yet the *hypothesis* that I believe this is the case is not used like the hypothesis that this is the case.

So it *looks* as if the assertion "I believe" were not the assertion of what is supposed in the hypothesis "I believe!"³⁸

Here, Wittgenstein distinguishes between two ways of understanding the word "I believe," which also clarifies how one should treat the idea of "believing." The first distinction shows that the "expression 'I believe that this is the case' is used like the assertion 'This is the case'" is an assertion that corresponds to something that is true in reality, as in "I believe that fire is hot" which is, of course, true, hence, the assertion can simply be taken to be understood as "Fire is hot." The second distinction, however, which points out that "the *hypothesis* that 'I believe this is the case' is not used like the hypothesis that 'this is the case'" signifies that the speaker's use of "I believe ..." is not to assert something that corresponds to something true in reality, but is, in fact, stating one's state of mind. Thus, an assertion that "I believe that fire is cold" cannot simply be taken to be understood as "Fire is cold" but as something that the speaker wishes to "believe" about the fire.

The distinction can be understood more easily when one tries to look at the difference between the language-games of someone who works as a chef, for instance, and someone who works in a circus—say someone who walks over burning charcoals with bare feet—a fire walker. For the chef, the

³⁷ See Garth Hallett, *A Companion to Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 655ff.

³⁸ Wittgenstein, *PI*, p. 190.

belief that fire or burning charcoal is hot is merely brought about by what he usually experiences—the heat of the fire and of the burning charcoal. However, in the situation of someone who works for the circus, in order to perform the feat, he needs to “believe” that the burning charcoals are cold and does so.³⁹ Through believing that the charcoals are cold, he is able to walk over the burning charcoals barefoot without feeling the heat. Here, it can be said that “one can mistrust one’s own senses, but not one’s own belief.”⁴⁰ Wittgenstein points out that “[t]he language-game of reporting can be given such a turn that a report is not meant to inform the hearer about its subject matter but about the person making the report.”⁴¹ Hence, when one says that “I believe that fire is hot,” the assertion does not only convey that fire is hot but also the internal disposition of the speaker who believes about the fire being hot.

In essence, the paradox of Moore’s assertion that, “There is fire in this room and I don’t believe there is” puts to light the characteristic of “I believe ...” to show a person’s state of mind. “‘I believe ...’ throws light on my state. Conclusions about my conduct can be drawn from this expression.”⁴²

From this elucidation of how the expression “I believe ...” should be understood in Moore’s Paradox, Wittgenstein draws out his thoughts on what believing is:

This is how I think of it: Believing is a state of mind. It has duration; and that independently of the duration of its expression in the sentence, for example. So it is a kind of disposition of the believing person. This is shown me in the case of someone else by his behaviour; and by his words. And under this head, by the expression “I believe ...” as well as by the simple assertion.⁴³

From this statement, we can draw out four characteristics of belief: a) it is a state of mind; b) its duration is independent of the duration of the expression in the sentence; c) it is a kind of disposition; and d) it is expressed by words and behavior.

³⁹ Notice that I wrote the word *believe* here in quotation marks, as in “believe.” The reason is that I did not want to use the term “see as” in this paper this early because I am worried that it might still be premature to do so and decided to use it later after the link between belief and “seeing as” has been established. Nevertheless, what I mean in this sentence is that the fire walker needs to *see* the burning charcoals *as* cold in order to perform his feat.

⁴⁰ Wittgenstein, *PI*, 190.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, 191.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 191–192.

Since belief is a state of mind, Wittgenstein is able to assert that Moore's Paradox can be admissible under certain circumstances. The circumstances, which Wittgenstein mentions here, seem to point to those instances when one is asserting one's personal state of mind. In saying that "I believe that this is the case," it may be that "this is not really the case," but the speaker's state of mind is that of "this is the case" and not of "what is *really* the case." This is different from Austin's Speech Act theory since the belief does not necessarily need to be expressed in speech as Moore did in pointing out his paradox, yet it may be expressed in behavior. The assertion of the belief was only necessary in the case of Moore's Paradox to clearly show the paradox of asserting a belief statement different from what is seen. In this sense, a person can believe that there is no fire in the room (since it is a mental state) despite the fact that there is an actual fire burning in the room without having to assert that "I believe that there is no fire in the room." Thus, in this scenario, the speech act is inexistent.

Furthermore, it is also different from Gettier's point of view since his discussions in his essay, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" (1963), raises a question on whether justified true belief is a sufficient condition for knowing, wherein he argues that a person can believe and is justified in believing a false proposition, yet can it be called knowledge? This, however, is different from the point raised by Wittgenstein regarding the admissibility of Moore's Paradox since knowledge is not the objective here (the person may see that there is fire in the room, but does not believe that there is. Does this, in effect, mean that the person does not know that there is a fire in the room?); and Wittgenstein is not talking about the justification of belief, but its nature, that is, it is a state of mind. With this in mind, this understanding of "I believe" shall shed light on this paper's thesis—belief as "seeing as."

Belief as 'Seeing As'

In light of the elaborations made above, there appears to be a third concept of "seeing as" that one cannot help but notice since a "*concept* forces itself on one."⁴⁴ And this concept is what this paper wishes to argue—belief as "seeing as."

There are those who may find the link between belief and "seeing as" in discussions concerning religion, for instance, John Hick, who in his paper "Seeing-as and Religious Experience" enlarged the concept of "seeing as" to "experiencing as" in order to justify the validity of religious experiences and, of course, the belief in God, which can be conveniently called faith. It is not

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 204.

difficult to agree with Hick that interpreting, or more appropriately, finding meaning is not purely visual but involves all our senses. However, this only works when one speaks of “experiencing as” because in an experience, “the finding of meaning does not occur only through sight.”⁴⁵ But speaking of “seeing as” is entirely independent and different because in “seeing as,” meaning is not sought; it is immediately recognized. Moreover, there exists a link between belief and “seeing as” which does not require one to extend the concept of “seeing as” in order to conveniently justify this connection. The connection between belief and “seeing as” lies in Wittgenstein’s definition of the term “belief” itself.

As previously mentioned, Wittgenstein’s thoughts on “seeing as” need to be understood, bearing in mind his thoughts on “I believe.” “‘Seeing as...’ is not part of perception. And for that reason it is like seeing and again not like.”⁴⁶ When one takes this into consideration, it seems to appear that the notion of “seeing as” as a visual experience will fall short of the characteristic of “seeing as” not being a part of perception. Obviously, when one speaks of “seeing as” as a visual experience, one is virtually talking about perception.

One must be careful, however, to think that Wittgenstein, in relation to “seeing as” as a visual experience, is talking about pure perception. Pure perception, as Husserl puts it, is achieved through the “narrowing of an impure percept which throws out symbolic components [and] yields the pure intuition which is immanent in it: a further reductive step then throws out everything imagined, and yields the substance of pure perception.”⁴⁷ In other words, pure intuition (wherein all the properties of an object are fully apparent) minus imaginative content results in pure perception, or that “which completely depicts its object through its freedom from all signitive [properties of an object that are not intuitively presented or are subject to interpretation] additions, holds in its intuitively presentative content a complete likeness of the object. This likeness can approach the object more or less closely, to a limit of complete resemblance.”⁴⁸

In this light, “seeing as” — even as a visual experience — is not strictly a matter of pure perception; hence, as pointed out earlier, it is “precisely a meaning that I see” and just recently, “it is like seeing and again not like.” Conversely, to be “not part of perception” seems to suggest something that is internal; something which is somewhat a state of mind, wherein the *signitive substance*, “which corresponds to the sum total of the remaining, subsidiarily

⁴⁵ Hick, “Seeing-as and Religious Experience,” 47.

⁴⁶ Wittgenstein, *PI*, 197.

⁴⁷ Edmund Husserl, *The Shorter Logical Investigations*, trans. by J.N. Findlay, (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 318.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

given properties of the object, which do not themselves become apparent"⁴⁹ is present. If this is the case, then we only have "seeing as" as an attitude left to consider.

"Seeing as" as an attitude, on the other hand, seems to fulfill the said requirement. But how? As mentioned earlier, the vital link here is the definition that Wittgenstein gave to the term "belief." It can be recalled that, earlier, the discussion was able to derive four characteristics of belief from Wittgenstein's definition:

- a) It is a state of mind;
- b) Its duration is independent of the duration of the expression in the sentence;
- c) It is a kind of disposition; and
- d) It is expressed by words and behavior.

Let us now try to figure out how these characteristics will fit in our discussion of "seeing as" as an attitude.

It was pointed out a while ago that "seeing is a state." However, if one takes a closer look at "seeing as" as an attitude, one can see that attitude only gives "color" to what is seen. It merely influences what is seen so that a person takes it to be one thing or another, but it seems that it is still part of perception. One can perhaps consider it to be a notch higher than visual experience or regard it to be some sort of "mental perception." Ironically, however, this description appears to point to the right direction. Isn't it that this kind of description—of "seeing as" as an attitude as a mental perception—fits Wittgenstein's description of "seeing as" as "like seeing and again not like"? One sees in the image above the aspect of a cup (or of the two faces) and the experience can be described as truly "like seeing and again not like." If this is so, then we can say that, indeed, "seeing as" as an attitude is a state—a state of mind. "'To me it is an animal pierced by an arrow.' That is what I treat it as; this is my *attitude* to the figure. This is one meaning in calling it a case of 'seeing.'"⁵⁰ With this, "seeing as" as an attitude has obviously met the first characteristic of belief.

Meanwhile, as one tries to dig deeper into Wittgenstein's thoughts, one can notice that Wittgenstein's remarks on conviction is the key in finding the link between "seeing as" as an attitude and at least two of the other three remaining characteristics of belief. What is conviction? In ordinary English parlance, conviction is understood as a strong belief and is normally related to the ideas of emotion and behavior. Simply, conviction derives from human

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 317.

⁵⁰ Wittgenstein, *PI*, 205.

emotion and is manifested in human words and actions. These characterizations also appear in Wittgenstein's thoughts; take for instance Wittgenstein's *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology* (1992), wherein he says:

The belief, the certainty, a kind of feeling when uttering a sentence. Well, there is a *tone* of conviction, of doubt, etc. But the most important expression of conviction is not this tone, but the way one behaves.

Ask not "What goes on in us when we are certain ...?", but "How does it show?"⁵¹

Here, Wittgenstein mentions a certain feeling towards the utterance of a sentence, which hints the presence of conviction as well as the importance of behavior, which is the expression of the conviction. From this observation, it is safe to assume that Wittgenstein treats conviction in the same manner that was stated earlier—that it is related to the ideas of emotion and behavior. By introducing the concept of conviction in the picture of the general discussion of "seeing as" in the *PI*, Wittgenstein is trying to establish a connection between "seeing as" and two other characteristics of belief, namely, expression and duration, through the idea of conviction.

Conviction has two elements—behavior and emotion. On the one hand, by setting a connection between "seeing as" and behavior, Wittgenstein gives the impression that "seeing as" has the characteristic of expression as does behavior. For instance, in the case of the image above, when asked "What do you see?"—a person's normal behavior when one sees, say, Aspect A will be to respond, "I see a cup". If asked further, "Why do you say it is a cup?"—one will most likely point out the characteristics of a cup that is similar to what one sees or maybe draw a picture of a cup and compare it with the image or even, perhaps, get a real cup and explain the similar features of the cup that the person is holding and the image that one sees. Obviously, it can be seen from this person's expression, both in words and actions, that his behavior towards what he sees in the image is that of a behavior that he would normally have towards a real cup.

On the other hand, by creating a link between "seeing as" and emotion, Wittgenstein seems to imply the idea that "seeing as" has the characteristic of duration which is independent from the duration of the expression in a sentence as does emotion. For example, when a person is angry, the duration of the emotion or the anger that he feels is independent

⁵¹ Wittgenstein, *LWPP*, 21.

from its duration in the expression, "I am angry at you!" Thus, even if he has expressed what he feels, the emotion still lingers. The idea is the same with "seeing as" that even if the expression, "I see a cup" has passed, the experience of "seeing" the cup still persists. This appears to be a convenient analysis if the idea of conviction perfectly fits the description of "seeing as" as an attitude. So how does it fit the picture and what makes it fit?

"One feels conviction within oneself, one doesn't infer it from one's own words or their tone."—What is true here is: one does not infer one's own conviction from one's own words; nor yet the actions which arise from their conviction.⁵²

Here, Wittgenstein clearly points out that one's conviction does not originate from one's words or actions. Rather, it is the other way around— one's words and actions originate from one's convictions. Hence, there is indeed a place for the element of conviction in the discussion of "seeing as" and that position is, by nature, essential. With this clarified, we are still left with the task of unveiling the connection between attitude and disposition.

I think that the notion of disposition is intimately intertwined with the idea of attitude. Ordinarily, disposition relates to various terms such as nature, character, temperament, temper, outlook, and personality. All these terms are oftentimes used synonymously and interchangeably. But then, how are disposition and attitude related? Let us examine the following statement:

... what I perceive in the dawning of an aspect is not a property of the object, but an internal relation between them.⁵³

This means that to see the image above as an image of cup and not merely ink smudges on a white background is not to see something other than ink smudges on a white background. It is to see the image in relation to pictures of a cup, in relation to real cups, in relation to other depictions of a cup, and so forth. What, then, enables one to *see* this way? It is something within a person—the tendency of a person to see things in relation to something. The general term is "disposition" but, more precisely, "attitude." If the person's attitude changes, the disposition of the person also changes and vice versa. Does this mean that the terms "disposition" and "attitude" carry the same meaning? I say yes. This can be better understood through the

⁵² Wittgenstein, *PI*, 191.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 212.

help of another important idea in Wittgenstein's concept of "seeing as" — physiognomy.

But the expression in one's voice and gestures is the same as if the object had altered and had ended by *becoming* this or that.

I have a theme played to me several times and each time in a slower tempo. In the end I say "*Now* it's right", or "*Now* at last it's a march", "*Now* at last it's a dance."— The same tone of voice expresses the dawning of an aspect.⁵⁴

A similar assertion is:

But if a sentence can strike me as like a painting in words, and the very individual word in the sentence is like a picture, then it is not such marvel that a word uttered in isolation and without purpose can seem to carry a particular meaning in itself.⁵⁵

Remember that the "concept of an aspect is akin to the concept of an image."⁵⁶ Physiognomy is a term used by Wittgenstein to refer to "images" or "meanings" that can be recognized in the structure of words, music, paintings, poetry, sarcasm, and so on. The first remark above describes this concept wherein one is able to grasp the "aspect" or physiognomy of music and identify whether it is a dance, or a march, or a chant, and so forth. The second remark talks about meanings in particular sentences and words that dawn on someone with the vividness of pictures (such as when one is able to appreciate poems). Normally, these "images" can easily be grasped by most people. However, there are cases wherein some people cannot grasp such physiognomy. As discussed earlier in this paper, such instances are cases of aspect-blindedness.

Wittgenstein defines aspect-blindedness as "lacking in the capacity to see something *as something*"⁵⁷ and adds further that it is "*akin* to the lack of a 'musical ear.'"⁵⁸ However, this is not a physiological defect or a psychological incapacity of some sort; I think it is a lack in the tendency of a

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 215.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 213.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 214.

person to see something as something. A certain discrepancy in personal attitudes among people exists here. Wittgenstein clearly articulates this point:

Is he supposed to be blind to the similarity between two faces?—And so also to their identity or approximate identity? I do not want to settle this. (He ought to be able to execute such orders as “Bring me something that looks like *this*.”)

Ought he to be unable to see the schematic cube as a cube?—It would not follow from that that he could not recognize it as a representation (a working drawing for instance) of a cube. But for him it would not jump from one aspect to the other.—Question: Ought he to be able to *take* it as a cube in certain circumstances, as we do?—If not, this could not very well be called a sort of blindedness.

The “aspect-blind” will have an altogether different relationship to pictures from ours.⁵⁹

For instance, a person may see a cup in the image above but is unable see the two faces because he lacks the disposition to see the faces. One who reads a poem but cannot appreciate lacks the disposition to appreciate poems. One cannot notice sarcasm because he lacks the disposition to notice such nuance. In other words, a person may lack the attitude to grasp certain aspects and, thus, treats some things differently than most people do. Ultimately, when one is disposed or has the attitude to see a cup in the image above, the aspect of the cup will dawn on him. Indeed, one sees a cup because one’s disposition—one’s attitude—forces the image of the cup on him; as Wittgenstein puts it, “it forced itself on me.”⁶⁰ At this point, we can see that “seeing as” has met all the characteristics of a belief and, thus, has adopted a third notion, that is, “seeing as” as a belief. This brings our project of fully establishing the notion of belief as “seeing as” to near completion.

The final step towards the completion of this project is to apply this new-found understanding of “seeing as” as an attitude—or more appropriately, belief as “seeing as.” Obviously, the best and most suitable subject for this application is Moore's Paradox.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 213–214.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

In the case of Moore's Paradox, the assertion that "There is fire in this room and I don't believe there is" is a case of "seeing as" as an attitude—a case of belief as "seeing as." This claim can be proven by "the way one behaves."⁶¹ In this kind of situation, it is somehow difficult to deny the existence of fire in the room; however, this is not impossible. Obviously, since the assertion concerned is a belief statement, there is no doubt that we are dealing with a state of mind—the belief that there is no fire in the room. Recall that belief as "seeing as" is "like seeing and again not like"⁶² because seeing seems to be done by the "mind's eye." In other words, it is "seeing and thinking in the aspect,"⁶³ wherein the visual experience of seeing an aspect is influenced by one's attitude. Hence, in this case it is one's attitude—or disposition—that led the person to *see* that there is no fire in the room. It can probably be said, in addition, that the circumstance wherein the assertion was expressed might also supply the reasons why a person was able to express such an utterance.

Nonetheless, apart from reason being unnecessary in belief as "seeing as," the important point here is that a person's mere utterance of such statement is evidence enough to say that his attitude towards the fire in the room is that it does not exist since his utterance is the expression of his attitude towards the fire in the room. Unfortunately, since the only material that is available for this paper to work on the application of belief as "seeing as" is the statement of Moore's Paradox, it is difficult to ascertain whether the duration of the attitude is independent from that of the expression since this can only be determined after the assertion has been expressed. Nevertheless, assuming that the person continues to act as though there is no fire in the room, then, it can be said that, indeed, the application of belief as "seeing as" fits Moore's Paradox perfectly like how a particular puzzle piece would fit on a puzzle.

Thus, is "seeing as" a distinct action from believing? Given the analysis above, the answer is no. In light of the foregoing discussions, the conclusion reached is that "seeing as" is not a distinct action from believing, that is, believing is "seeing as."

Belief as "seeing as" is a commonly occurring phenomenon around us. In fact, it seems that one of the most potent examples for this is that which is dear to us—Philosophy. To use the words of Wittgenstein as quoted by Russell Goodman, "Working in Philosophy—like working in architecture in many respects—is really more a working on oneself on one's way of

⁶¹ Wittgenstein, *LWPP*, 21.

⁶² Wittgenstein, *PI*, 197.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 14.

seeing things."⁶⁴ Indeed, working in Philosophy can be seen as working in a hodgepodge of beliefs as "seeing as." Philosophers argue for their respective beliefs which are products of what they see in the world ("seeing as" as a visual experience) that are influenced by how they see the world ("seeing as" as an attitude). Simply put, Philosophy is an age-old enterprise of belief as "seeing as."

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⁶⁴ Russell Goodman, "Wittgenstein's Conceptions of Truth," in *Epistemology and Philosophy of Science: Proceedings of the 7th International Wittgenstein Symposium*, ed. by Paul Weingarter and Johannes Czermark (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1983), 480.

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