

thinker. So his position must be something like the following: it is the conventionally determined use, or application, of signs which determines in advance what thought (proposition with Sinn) is expressed by any given sentence, and which thus determines its Sinn in advance. We can therefore talk of thoughts as existing in advance of being entertained. But they do not exist necessarily, since they only exist in so far as, and so long as, there are signs with an appropriately determined conventional use. We shall explore the strength of this position in the chapter which follows.

### SUMMARY

A *Gedanke*, in the terminology of *TLP*, is any proposition (sentence together with its mode of signifying) which has Sinn. Both spoken sentences and thoughts-in-the-mind are equally *Gedanken*, provided that they have Sinn. But spoken sentences do not have truth-conditions in virtue of their association with a thought-in-the-mind. On the contrary, both are related to reality in the same kind of way, consisting of significant arrangements of signs with a conventionally determined use. But they do exist independently of, and prior to, being entertained by a thinking subject.

## The Existence of Thoughts

This is the first of two chapters to employ the principle of Charity in defence of our intermediate interpretation of *TLP*, argued for on textual grounds in chapter 8. Here I shall defend Wittgenstein against the first of the twin extremes of necessary existence for thoughts, on the one hand, and psychologism about language on the other hand.

### 9.1 MIND-DEPENDENT THOUGHTS

In the last chapter we found Wittgenstein to be committed to the existence of thoughts as abstract types which are independent of their tokens being entertained in judgement. And since, for him, a thought is a sentence together with its mode of projection, we should also expect a commitment to the existence of abstract sign-types as well. (And indeed, 5.535 allows that there may be infinitely many names – 3.203 making clear, if further argument is needed, that in *TLP* terminology names are types and not tokens.) So both thoughts and signs have an existence as abstract types, their existence being independent of whether tokens of them are ever entertained or constructed.

Wittgenstein is committed, on the other hand, to denying Frege's doctrine that thoughts exist necessarily. Nor is there any trace of idea that thinking consists in the subject coming into some relation to (i.e. 'grasping') one of these abstract entities. On the contrary, the *TLP* doctrine is that all thinking consists in the employment of logical pictures: structured arrays of sign-tokens (whether linguistic, in speech or writing; or psychical, in private acts of thinking) which have a conventionally determined application. For Wittgenstein, acts of thinking *exemplify* thought-types, rather than consisting in the thinker standing in some *relation to* a thought-type.



Thinking is a matter of entertaining a propositional sign-token which is itself a projection of some possible state of affairs in virtue of the conventions governing the use of its component parts and their mode of combination.

Wittgenstein's position is thus apparently a species of conventionalism: the idea is that we fix rules for the primitive signs and for the significance of their modes of combination, and that the senses of all possible propositional signs of the language will thereby have been determined. (On the role of convention, see 3.315, 3.342, 4.002 and 4.0141.) Then since the relationship between the initial conventions and their consequences is thought of as being wholly objective (those conventions 'reaching ahead of us', as it were, to determine the significance of all possible combinations of signs),<sup>1</sup> there can be no real objection to thinking of all thought-types as existing in advance of their tokens being used by us. Yet those thought-types depend for their existence upon the initial conventions. If we had never existed, then those thoughts would never have existed either. Moreover, prior to the initial conventions being fixed, and prior to the existence of the human race, thoughts (*Gedanken*) did not yet exist.<sup>2</sup>

An analogy may help to make the position sketched here seem plausible. Consider the existence of sentence-types, and their relation to sentence-tokens. Having fixed the rules of sentence-formation for a particular language, and thinking of those rules as having determinate consequences for cases so far unconsidered, it would be entirely natural for us to think of all the possible sentences of that language as already existing, in many cases independently of tokens of them ever being employed. And indeed, this is just what we say: there are many sentences of English which no one ever has, or ever will, express. Yet we should not be tempted to think of those sentences as existing independently of the syntactic rules which govern the language. No one should think that the sentence-type exemplified by 'It is raining' existed in the year 20 million BC, or even in 200 AD. For at those times there was no such language as English. (Human languages have histories: they begin and develop and end.) Nor (probably) would that sentence ever have existed if the Normans had not invaded England, or had failed in their attempts to conquer her. Thus sentence-types are naturally thought of as abstract but mind-dependent entities, in precisely the way in which thought-types are.

Of course the analogy with sentences cannot by itself establish

the mind-dependence of thoughts. For one thing, there are those who maintain that sentences themselves have necessary existence.<sup>3</sup> For another, it can be pointed out that one and the same thought can be expressed in many different languages. Then since thought-types have an existence which is independent of the existence of any particular language, the question arises whether they have an existence which is independent of all. But most importantly, the analogy proceeds on the assumption that thoughts are essentially linguistic. This is a large issue, which we shall consider briefly now, and return to again in the next chapter.

## 9.2 COULD FREGE BE RIGHT?

One point at issue is whether or not propositions have an existence which is independent of the means for their expression. Frege is apparently committed to saying that they do, since he holds *Gedanken* to exist necessarily (thus existing at all times in all possible worlds), whereas sentences are (presumably) temporal entities.<sup>4</sup> For Wittgenstein on the other hand propositions have no independent existence, since *Gedanken* are propositional signs in their projective relation to possible states of affairs (3.11, 3.12, 4). They thus cannot exist if no signs exist.

Frege's position gives rise to a certain tension within his philosophy, between the central place which is given to language and the study of language on the one hand, and the thesis that thoughts exist independently of language on the other.<sup>5</sup> Most of his philosophical effort is directed towards studying the functioning of different forms of linguistic expression, and to the construction of a logical language (*Begriffsschrift*) which would have those forms reflected on its surface. But if thoughts have an existence which is language-independent, whence this concentration of effort? Why can we not go straight for the nature of thought, and bypass investigation of language altogether? Frege has only two possible lines of reply. He can either concede that the study of language is not truly necessary to his enterprise, but a mere heuristic device. Or he can claim that although thoughts exist independently of language, the grasping relation is essentially linguistic, there being no other conceivable mode of access to them. Either option would stand in need of the sort of support which Frege himself never provides.

In Wittgenstein's view, on the other hand, there is no tension. If



all thoughts consist of significant arrangements of signs, then all philosophy can become the philosophy of language (or at least all philosophy whose primary concern is thought; we perhaps should not accept Wittgenstein's prejudice that this is the whole of philosophy). Or better (since the term 'language' is generally used to designate a public phenomenon): all philosophy can become the philosophy of symbolism.

But of course the above argument is only *ad hominem* against Frege. It will fail to convince anyone who does not already believe that the study of language should be fundamental. And we should in any case need to explore the ideas that sentences themselves might exist necessarily, and that our mode of access to Gedanken might be necessarily linguistic, before we could take ourselves to have refuted Frege's position. It will prove more fruitful to ask whether there is anything which can be said directly against the view that thinking consists in a thinker coming to stand in a relation (grasping) to an abstract and necessarily existing entity (a thought).

The first point to note is that our acts of thinking have different causal (or at least explanatory) roles depending upon their cognitive content. It may be because I entertain the thought [that P] rather than the thought [that Q] that I reply in the negative when asked whether I am thinking that Q, even though P and Q are logically equivalent.<sup>6</sup> So on Frege's theory it will be the fact that I stand in R (the grasping relation) to [that P] rather than to [that Q] which differentially explains my behaviour. Now this is already hard to believe. It requires some sort of causal connection between a realm of necessarily existing abstract thoughts and human minds or brains. These connections must be of a kind hitherto unknown to science, and would force us to give up any belief in the ubiquity of physical causation. But Frege might reply that, so far, the difficulty is no worse than that faced by Cartesian Dualism, which many have, after all, brought themselves to believe in.

Suppose we now put to Frege the question whether it will always be in virtue of some non-relational psychological (or perhaps neurophysiological) facts that I stand in R to one thought rather than to another. And suppose, first, that he answers in the affirmative, claiming that whenever I stand in R to [that P] rather than to [that Q], there will be some mental event or state M in virtue of which it is true of me that I stand in R to [that P]. It can then be

said that, had M not occurred, I should not at that time have grasped the thought [that P]. But now the problem for Frege is to explain why it is not these non-relational facts which are truly explanatory of my behaviour. If it is in virtue of M that I grasp [that P], then why is not M alone sufficient to explain my subsequent negative answer to the question whether I had been thinking that Q? How is Frege to prevent thoughts and grasp of thoughts from becoming explanatorily redundant?

Clearly it is not an option for him to appeal to the fact of the existence of [that P] to make the point, saying that if the thought [that P] had not existed, then M would not have resulted in the behaviour which it did. For since thoughts are supposed to have necessary existence, the counter-factual here is unintelligible. His only option is to conceive of M as being a sort of perceptual probe, sending out feelers towards [that P] rather than [that Q], and then having its subsequent causal powers determined by whatever happens at the 'surface' of [that P]. Put more prosaically, the claim would be that it is in virtue of M that I stand in R to [that P] rather than any other thought, and that there are certain non-essential properties of [that P] which exert a causal influence upon M, helping to determine its effects upon my subsequent behaviour. This at least gives us an intelligible counter-factual, despite the necessary existence of Gedanken, since it supposes that the causally efficacious properties of thoughts are non-necessary.

It is hard to know what to make of the idea that a necessarily existing abstract entity might nevertheless have contingent – perhaps changing – non-relational properties. But the real problem with the perceptual model of thinking is that it is no longer the content of the thought [that P] which explains, but some non-necessary attribute of it. So once again we get the conclusion that thoughts themselves have no real explanatory role. This must surely be unacceptable, since the whole point of introducing the idea of cognitive content was to explain fine differences in people's intentional behaviour.

It appears then that Frege must reply in the negative to our question whether the grasping relation must obtain in virtue of non-relational psychological facts, claiming rather that it is a *bare* relation. He might draw an analogy with spatial relations, which do not obtain in virtue of any non-relational facts about their subjects. And instead of the perceptual model, he might conceive of



thinking by analogy with one body moving into the gravitational field of another. Just as it is the fact that an asteroid comes into close spatial proximity with the Earth, together with the constant gravitational field of the latter, which explains its subsequent motion, so it is the bare fact that I stand in R to [that P] rather than to any other thought, which explains my later behaviour.

This model does have the advantage of delivering a smooth account of how a necessarily existing thing might have a causal role. For what is contingent, on this account, is which *Gedanke* I grasp in thinking. And it can be true that had I not stood in R to [that P] just then, I should have answered your question differently. What remains constant is, as it were, the causal fields associated with these necessarily existing thoughts; what changes are the relations in which we stand to them.

Yet the gravitational model is bought at considerable cost. In particular it follows that two subjects (or one subject on two occasions) can be exactly similar in their non-relational psychological states and yet be entertaining distinct thoughts, no matter what sort of thought is in question.<sup>7</sup> Just as two asteroids can be qualitatively identical, and yet one be in the gravitational field of the Earth and one in the gravitational field of Mars, so every event in my mind can be exactly similar to yours, and yet I grasp the thought [that P] whereas you grasp the thought [that Q]. In consequence, the contents of our thoughts are removed from our direct (non-inferential) epistemic access. The only way for me to know of myself what I am thinking would be by seeing its effects on my behaviour.

Although it would be too strong to claim that the above amounts to a decisive refutation of Frege, it does mean that we ought not to believe in the necessary existence of thoughts if we can possibly avoid doing so.<sup>8</sup> In the sections which follow we shall consider the various possible arguments in support of Frege's position, showing that none is successful.<sup>9</sup>

### 9.3 THE ARGUMENT FROM COMMUNICATION

The argument which is closest to the surface of Frege's writings is also in fact the weakest.<sup>10</sup> It is that since (a) communication is possible only if thoughts are at least potentially intersubjective,

whereas (b) all mental states and events are private to the individual who has them, thoughts must have an existence which is independent of such states.

In fact there are two different arguments here, depending upon whether 'private' is taken in an epistemic sense, or rather in the sense of 'inalienable'. Consider the former possibility first. Then the second premiss will claim that no one can have knowledge of the mental states of anyone besides themselves. This is false. But let that pass, for even given its truth the conclusion is not warranted.<sup>11</sup> For if it is knowledge of thoughts which is at issue, then the possibility of communication will require me to know what thoughts others are currently grasping. And even if thoughts themselves are genuinely objective, the grasping relation is no more open to outside observation than are the thinker's mental states. So even the thesis of mind-independence of thoughts leaves Frege no better placed to explain the possibility of communication, so long as he believes in the epistemic privacy of the mental.

Consider then the other possible interpretation: that a person's mental states are claimed to be private in the sense that no one else can actually possess them. This is true, but still the conclusion does not follow. For the two premisses are equally consistent with what I am taking to be the *TLP* view. If thoughts exist as abstract types, but supervening on the rules and conventions of some symbolic system, then thoughts will be mind-dependent (supposing that the rules and conventions are). Nevertheless it might still be true that communication requires speakers to be grasping thoughts of the very same abstract type, and this will be so if each employs a sentence-token with the same mode of projection onto reality. Yet it will remain impossible that either of them should possess the very same thought-token entertained by the other. So the argument is invalid, on either interpretation of it.

### 9.4 OMNITEMPORAL AND OBJECTIVE TRUTH

Sometimes Frege argues that since (a) truth is a property of thoughts (the idea of truth being the idea of a correct representation of reality), and since (b) truth is omnitemporal (if a non-indexical thought is true at one time then it is true at all), it must follow that thoughts exist omnitemporally.<sup>12</sup> This argument is



valid, but I can see nothing to force us to accept the second premiss. For the most that we actually have use for, in assessing predictions and historical claims, is the weaker hypothetical principle that if a thought is true, then anyone giving expression to it at any time in the past or future would give expression to a true thought.<sup>13</sup> This commits us, at most, to the existence of thoughts at times when there exist intelligent agents to express them.

We can grant Frege that if the thought [that sabre-tooth tigers are to be found in England in 20 million BC] were true in 40 million BC, as the omnitemporality thesis implies, then that thought would (probably) have to exist independently of the human mind. For I doubt whether any intelligent agents existed in 40 million – or indeed 20 million – BC. But we lose nothing by denying the antecedent of this conditional. In fact it consists of two independent claims: firstly, that the thought in question existed in the year 40 million BC; which we have no reason to accept in the absence of a proof of the mind-independence of thoughts. And secondly, that it is (now) a true thought that sabre-tooth tigers are to be found in England in the year 20 million BC; which merely requires that a presently existing thought can express a truth about the remote past.<sup>14</sup>

Frege sometimes seems to suggest that there can be objective truths about the remote past only if the thoughts with which we express those truths themselves existed at those times in the past.<sup>15</sup> But this is wholly unconvincing. You might just as well say that there can only be objective truths about remote regions of space if our thoughts exist at the places which they concern. For in both sorts of case we are incapable of direct verification.<sup>16</sup> (This would give us a thesis of the omnispatial nature of thoughts, as well as their omnitemporality.) The most plausible position is surely what I take to be the *TLP* one: that we use our presently existing thoughts to represent the remote past or remote regions of space, those thoughts being projected out to the world to determine a truth-value in a manner which is independent of our ability to verify them.<sup>17</sup>

### 9.5 THE ARGUMENT FROM ANALYTICITY

The final argument which can be discerned in Frege's writings runs as follows:

- (a) There are truths which are necessary: which are true about all times in all possible worlds.
- (b) Such truths are analytic, or conceptual, and are true purely in virtue of the senses of the words involved.
- (c) That in virtue of which a proposition is true, must exist at any time, and in any circumstances, about which it expresses a truth.

So: Senses (and hence thoughts) must exist at all times in all possible worlds.<sup>18</sup>

Wittgenstein would of course have accepted both of the first two premisses. Then since the argument is valid, almost the whole burden of proof falls upon premiss (c).

However, if premiss (c) is to be acceptable, then we have to regard the thought [that it is impossible for any object to be both red all over and green all over throughout the year 20 million BC] as being true in virtue of the fact that the senses of the predicates 'is red all over' and 'is green all over' were incompatible in the year in question (just as a thought about Jesus in 20 AD is true in virtue of the properties Jesus possessed in that year). But in fact we could equally well regard it as being true in virtue of the fact that the predicates 'is red all over throughout 20 million BC' and 'is green all over throughout 20 million BC' are now incompatible. We can thus reject premiss (c), in its complete generality, without having to give up either of the others. We can claim that it is relations between merely presently existing senses which constrain our talk about other times and worlds.

If Frege's argument is to be successful, then when we say that analytic propositions express truths about all times and all possible worlds, we should have to be construed as saying something which will be true (if at all) in virtue of relations which obtain between senses at all times in all possible worlds. So the necessity of 'No object is both red all over and green all over' would have to derive from a truth of something like the following form:

For all times *t*, and all possible worlds *w*, the senses of 'is red all over' and 'is green all over' are mutually incompatible at *t* in *w*.

This would certainly give us the necessary existence of senses. But in fact we could equally well be construed as saying something which will be true in virtue of relations between merely presently



existing senses, where those relations are such that they remain invariable so long as they occur in thoughts relating to the same times in the same possible worlds. Thus the necessity of 'No object is both red all over and green all over' could just as well derive from a truth of this sort:

For all modes of thought of a time,  $\alpha$ , and all modes of thought of a possible world,  $\beta$ , the senses of 'is red all over at  $\alpha$  in  $\beta$ ' and 'is green all over at  $\alpha$  in  $\beta$ ' are mutually incompatible.

Here by quantifying over modes of thought about times and worlds (that is, entities belonging to the realm of sense) we have avoided commitment to anything other than the present existence of senses.

One can thus believe, as both Frege and Wittgenstein did, that there is a class of objective analytic truths: believing that all internal relations between senses were determined, independently of us, as soon as the conventions constituting the senses of our expressions were fixed; believing, indeed, that these relations are genuine objects of discovery. And one can believe that analytic truths are necessary; constraining our talk about remote times and counter-factual worlds just as much as they constrain our talk about the present. And yet one can, consistently with both beliefs, believe that senses depend for their existence upon our existence: only coming to exist when we first begin to use a symbolic system in which those senses may be expressed.

### SUMMARY

There are no good reasons in favour of Frege's belief in the necessary existence of Gedanken, and some powerful arguments against it. So it is more plausible to believe, as Wittgenstein does, that thoughts (senses) are mind-dependent entities, supervening upon the rules and conventions which govern the languages of intelligent agents.

## 10

# Thinking and Language-using

In this chapter we continue to explore the strength of the *TLP* theory of thinking, defending it against the second of the twin extremes between which we placed Wittgenstein's position in chapter 8; namely: out-and-out psychologism.

### 10.1 PRELIMINARIES

The *TLP* view is that both private thinking and public speaking are on a par, each consisting of representations of possible states of affairs by means of structured arrangements of sign-tokens, where both private and public signs are projected onto the world in essentially similar ways. There are then two sides to the psychologism with which such a view contrasts, which we shall proceed to criticize in turn. On the one hand there is what might be called 'The Code-breaking Conception' of speech. This holds that our public signs derive their significance from the private acts of meaning with which they are associated, understanding the public utterances of other people being a matter of decoding them correctly into private thinkings of one's own. And on the other hand there are non-linguistic theories of thinking, which hold, in their various ways, that it is possible to characterize private thinkings and their contents without employing notions which presuppose language or grasp of a language.

It is important to be clear at the outset that our concern is only with thought in the narrow sense, in which thinkings are conscious acts in which people engage on specific occasions. This is not to be confused with the wide sense in which any propositional attitude whatever may be described as a thought.<sup>1</sup> This wide sense covers not only events such as wondering, judging and entertaining a supposition, but also standing states such as belief, desire and



- 4 Provided, of course, that they understand the other words in the statement.
- 5 I am inclined to agree with Davidson that the semantic content of a live metaphor is exhausted by its literal (non-metaphorical) meaning. See essay 17 of his (1984).
- 6 See *PI* 65–9. This was the only option I thought available in my (1984b).
- 7 Moreover, even within the area of factual discourse, conditions for understanding might be expected to vary with context. Thus someone who knows only that elms are a kind of tree may be said to understand statements involving the word 'elm' in contexts where the rational grounds for those statements are not in question. In these contexts they can defer to the understanding which other people possess of the term, knowing that they can at any time fill-out their understanding by consulting reference books or competent speakers. This enables them to build up a file of information about elms in advance of knowing what distinguishes elms from other sorts of tree, and enables them to serve as a channel through which information about elms can be passed on. But if the context is such that they themselves need to be in a position to challenge or to appreciate the justification for those statements, then they require an ability to tell elms apart from other sorts of tree. And if they lack such an ability, then they cannot be said to have understood those statements.
- 8 See Essay 13 of Lewis (1983), 'Scorekeeping in a Language-game'.
- 9 I intend this vague formulation to be ambiguous between internalist and externalist accounts of knowledge, since this is not an issue on which I need to commit myself for present purposes.
- 10 Indeed it seems to me on the basis of these considerations that the Wittgenstein of *PI* goes wrong in insisting that understanding is a family resemblance concept. We can provide for unity in diversity by construing the concept as purpose-relative.
- 11 Can it really be so easy to side-step the philosophy-as-nonsense doctrine? Especially since Wittgenstein himself places so much stress upon it, for example in the preface to *TLP*, and in the 1919 letter to Russell where he says that the main point of the work lies in the showing/saying doctrine (see his 1974, p. 71). One reply is that Wittgenstein's failure to allow for purpose-relative concepts is all-of-a-piece with his lack of attention to the context-dependent aspects of language generally, such as indexicals. But a different sort of reply is that he did not really *want* to avoid the philosophy-as-nonsense doctrine. On the contrary, he needs it in a place to give symmetry with his views on the inexpressibility of the Ethical; providing, as it were, innocence by association.

## CHAPTER 8 GEDANKEN

- 1 This interpretation is a rational reconstruction of Frege's position, since Frege himself makes no use of the notion of a possible world.

- 2 See in particular Favrholt (1964), ch. 3, Kenny (1973), pp. 58–60 and (1981), Malcolm (1986), chs. 4–7 and McDonough (1986), ch. 6.
- 3 Only the text-based part of the argument will be completed in the present chapter. Arguments from Charity will be pursued in chs. 9 and 10.
- 4 Maslow (1961) rightly stresses that for Wittgenstein thought and language are inseparable (*ibid.* p. 49ff), though in many other respects he gets *TLP* wrong.
- 5 See Wittgenstein (1974), p. 72. Those influenced by the letter include Favrholt (1964), p. 81, Kenny (1973), pp. 58–9 and Malcolm (1986), pp. 65–6.
- 6 Malcolm makes heavy weather of this remark, and tries unconvincingly to work it around to support his own psychological interpretation. See his (1986), p. 65.
- 7 Ogden actually uses 'the thinking' instead of 'the thought', which seems unnecessarily barbaric.
- 8 For example, at 5 he is careful to say that *the* proposition is *a* truth-function of propositions. For on the use of 'proposition' common to the 5s, which we noted in ch. 4, there exist truth-functions (namely tautologies and contradictions) which do not express genuine propositions.
- 9 For a vigorous defence of this way of interpreting Frege's notion of sense, see Evans (1982), ch. 1.
- 10 I am not aware of any significant distinction between 'das Denken' and 'der Gedanke' in the terminology of *TLP*. Indeed, see the preface where they seem to be used interchangeably.
- 11 I am aware that some have claimed our knowledge of the meaning of a proposition to be a matter of perception, claiming that we literally hear the meaning in the person's utterance. See for example McDowell (1980). For an effective critique see Cooper (1987). But in any case the distinction between sign and symbol will remain.
- 12 See for example Shwayder (1963), and Griffin (1964), p. 124ff, both of whom apparently conflate the essential directedness of truth-conditions (which we acknowledged in ch. 3) with the idea that propositions are essentially assertoric.
- 13 This remark of Wittgenstein's then embodies a serious misunderstanding of Frege's mature view of his judgement-stroke, in which he makes a sharp distinction between sense (the content judged) and force (the linguistic act of assertion) – see *BLA* 5. It is not, however, wholly inaccurate as an account of Frege's view in *Begriffsschrift* where he says that the judgement-stroke (like the predicate 'is a fact' in a language where all assertions are made in the form 'Such-and-such is a fact') is the common predicate involved in all judgements – see his (1972), p. 113.

## CHAPTER 9 THE EXISTENCE OF THOUGHTS

- 1 See *MT* ch. 4 for further discussion of this idea.
- 2 The talk of 'fixing conventions' in this paragraph should not be



- understood in terms of conscious selection and explanation. For on the *TLP* account of thinking to be defended in ch. 10, conscious thinking is itself language-like and hence convention-involving. But it is in any case plausible to maintain that there are other ways for norms to arise than by conscious decision.
- 3 For example Katz (1981) takes such a view, for reasons which appear similar to Frege's reasons for believing in the necessary existence of thoughts.
  - 4 Frege nowhere explicitly says that sentences have temporal existence. But such a view would seem to be implicit in the fact that he continually stresses the necessary existence of thoughts without once mentioning language in this connection. See also *BLA* xvi, where he implies that syntax is dependent upon historically conditioned facts of human psychology, and that languages are in consequence subject to change.
  - 5 On this see Dummett's discussion in his (1981b), ch. 3.
  - 6 As an aid to the reader, whenever designating a particular thought I employ square brackets to indicate its scope.
  - 7 A limited version of this idea has been defended recently by Evans (1982) and others, particularly in connection with demonstrative thoughts. For a critique, see my (1987a).
  - 8 Note that the arguments deployed here count equally against the Russellian model of thinking, which requires us to be in cognitive contact with a necessarily existing universal. This point will prove to be of some importance in ch. 16.
  - 9 These arguments are discussed in greater detail in my (1984c). I also respond there to the suggestion that thoughts might have an existence which is timeless, where this means that it is nonsense (rather than necessarily true) to say of a thought that it exists at particular times. The immediate problem with such a suggestion is that it is then difficult to see how it can be possible for thoughts to be *grasped* at particular times either, given that the grasping-relation is supposed to be a real (as opposed to an intentional) one.
  - 10 See Frege (1984), pp. 361–3 and 369, and Frege (1979), pp. 133–4 and 137.
  - 11 Of course we have also seen that there is a strong case for rejecting the first premiss as well, at least where factual communication is concerned. See ch. 5 for the argument that understanding does not require mutual knowledge of cognitive content.
  - 12 See *FA* vi, Frege (1984), pp. 363, 368 and 370–1, and Frege (1979), pp. 129, 135 and 148.
  - 13 This principle needs to be made marginally more complicated to accommodate thoughts which themselves imply that they are not asserted at the time in question, such as the thought [that there are no intelligent agents prior to 20 million BC]. We need to add the rider: 'So long as the content of the thought does not imply that it is not entertained at the time in question'.

- 14 I owe this distinction to Dummett's (1973), pp. 368–70.
- 15 See for example *FA* vii, where Frege argues that if nothing remained fixed for all time then there could be no knowledge and no truth.
- 16 There is perhaps one possible difference between the two cases, in that I cannot in principle get into the remote past, whereas it is only the laws of nature which prevent me from getting into remote regions of space. But consider thoughts about all places. I cannot, even in principle, get into all places at once.
- 17 For further development and discussion of this position see *MT* chs. 4 and 5.
- 18 See *FA* vi–vii, Frege (1984), pp. 363, 367–8 and 370 and Frege (1979), pp. 133, 135 and 148. The argument I give in the text is of course a rational reconstruction, since Frege himself does not make use of the notion of a possible world.

#### CHAPTER 10 THINKING AND LANGUAGE-USING

- 1 This use of 'thought' is especially common amongst philosophers. Indeed it is quasi-technical, since someone with a long-term desire to be famous would not normally be described as thinking or entertaining a thought at all.  
The distinction is of some importance since many of those who discuss the question whether thinking is linguistic fail to draw it, yet some of their arguments for a negative conclusion only succeed if 'thought' is taken widely. See for example McGinn (1982b), ch. 4.
- 2 One related issue, which does need to be pursued further, is that one clearly cannot maintain any simple version of the thesis that thinkings (narrow sense) are linguistic. For as Dummett points out in his (1986), p. 144, there are conscious thinkings which are not, on any account of the matter, linguistically formulated. He gives an example of a canoeist seeing two boats closing on one another and deciding that he just has time to slip his canoe between them. This decision is an occurrent event, not a standing state; yet it clearly need not have been formulated in words or anything like words. The distinctive feature of such thinkings is that there need be no events in the thinker's consciousness at the time which may be said to express them. But then just for this reason (and for reasons similar to those which will emerge in the final section of this chapter) I do not see what account can be given of what it is for such a decision to be a conscious one (as opposed to the sort of non-conscious decisions one takes while driving the car with one's conscious mind wholly occupied with something else) except to say that it is an event apt to emerge in an explicitly formulated thinking with the same content. If this is correct, then all conscious thinkings may turn out to be language-involving in the same way that I suggested in the text that conscious beliefs and desires