

A Sketch of Methodology of Logical Actionism¹

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Abstract: This paper is the script of the lecture the author made at the University of Oslo, Norway in August 2007. Based on an attempt at a new integration of the theory of speech act, Husserlian theory of mental act and Marxist theory of social praxis (objective action), the paper sketches a methodology of logical actionism and illustrates its basic approach and function of problem-solving through the discussions of “sense”, “reference” and other issues.

Key words: logical actionism, Speech Action, Mental Action, Praxis

The separation between Anglo-American analytical philosophy and the European Continental philosophy is a peculiar phenomenon in the 20th century western philosophy. Since 1960s there have been influential efforts to change this situation, among which I think the work of Dagfinn Føllesdal and Juergen Habermas is very important as I will illustrate later in this talk. Up to now, facing the common strong challenges of the new types of relativism under the name of “postmodernism”, it seems there is greater urgency for the two sides to have further efforts in this kind of constructive integration. The “Methodology of Logical Actionism” that I’m trying to construct has been motivated with the same appeal. In the meanwhile, my work is partly grounded on the background of the traditional Chinese philosophy. Different from the ancient Greek philosophy, the Pre-*Qin* Chinese philosophy was founded on the axis of the theory of action. The most influential schools of that time, such as Confucianism, Moism and Daoism, have abundant thoughts of philosophy of action. But here I am not preparing to discuss the questions of the traditional Chinese philosophy.

“Methodology of Logical Actionism” can be also regarded as a new attempt in the orientation of the so called “Analytical Marxism”. However it differs from the previous schools of analytical Marxism whose main concerns are in the areas of politics, economy and society. Instead, the Methodology of Logical Actionism focuses more on its philosophical foundation. The aim of my attempt is a new analytical reconstruction and expansion of Marxist theory of social praxis on the setting that modern logic has made great progress. I intend to integrate the quintessence of different modern action theories, especially those of the theory of speech acts of the Wittgenstein-Austin-Searle tradition and the Husserlian theory of mental acts. The relation between logical actionism and Marxist theory of social praxis is similar to that between logical empiricism and classical empiricism and that between logical pragmatism and classical pragmatism.

The naming of “Methodology of Logical Actionism” is to show an appeal to provide simply a philosophical methodology to solve a series of difficult problems in modern philosophy and

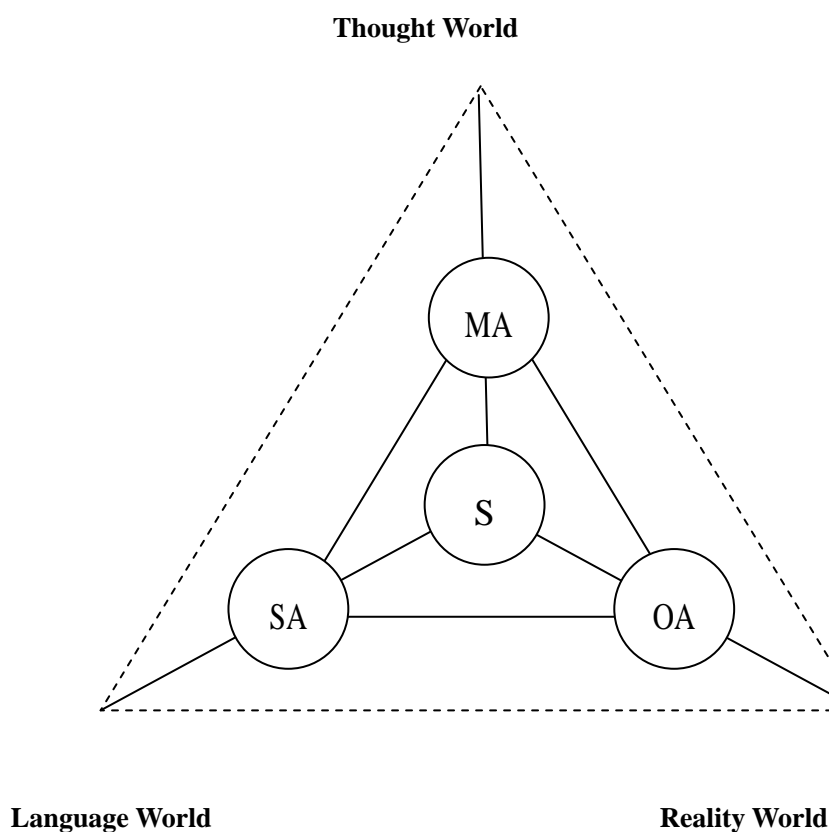
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related areas, instead of attempting to constitute a Kant-Hegel like “system”. Its goal is to employ analytical means to incarnate Karl Marx’s idea that “All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human praxis and in the comprehension of this praxis.” This is claimed in *Theses on Feuerbach* which is a landmark for the establishment of his new methodology of philosophy. (The word “praxis” is used in the original text of Marx, often translated as “practice” in English. In order to avoid the ambiguity, I prefer to use the original word “praxis”.)

The basic frame of the methodology of logical actionism can be diagrammed as follows:



This is an embedded figure of two triangles. The central circle represents the subject of the action which can either be an individual agent or the subject of collective action. The three corners of the outer triangle are Language World, Thought World and Reality World respectively. The three corners of the inner triangle are between the subject and the three “worlds”, which are respectively Speech Action (SA), Mental Action (MA) and Objective Action (OA). The Objective Action is just what Marx called “Praxis”. Marx once used the phrase “objective activity” in *Theses on Feuerbach* as a synonym of “praxis”, the original German text is “gegenständliche Tätigkeit”.

Please notice that the three sides of the outer triangle are all dotted lines, while those of the inner one are all real lines. The dotted line means that there is no direct route in between, which has to be connected by the actions as media. The main purpose of my talk today is to show the necessity and the indelibility of each components of the figure, and the solution of any

“mysterious” philosophical problem needs to grasp the mechanism of the complicated interaction of the three kinds of actions. I will try to show the basic approach of how to achieve this goal.

I

The trichotomy of Language World -- Thought World -- Reality World in the above figure looks like Fregean, but my idea has a fundamental difference from that of Gottlob Frege. However, I will start my discussion from a defense of one of Frege’s ideas.

As all know that, the issue of proper names has long been one of the controversial topics of contemporary philosophy of language. According to the usual classification, there are two competing schools in the research of this area: description theory of proper names and cause theory of proper names. They have either an affirmative or a negative answer to the question “Do proper names have senses?”. Usually, Frege is regarded as the first representative of the description theory, and the cause theory was obtained by Saul Kripke and others in their criticism on Frege and other descriptivists. However, based on my study of these criticisms and controversies, I think there is a misunderstanding to Frege (to me this is a serious misunderstanding), which has never been really clarified in the previous discussions. The misunderstanding lies in the fact that Kripke and others assumed that to Frege proper names are abbreviated descriptions, or in other words, a proper name and the description which expresses its sense are synonyms, therefore the meaning of a sentence could not be affected if the two are substituted by each other. But I don’t think this is the original idea of Frege.

Frege’s theory of proper names is regarded as first found in his famous paper “Über Sinn und Bedeutung” which is usually rendered as “On Sense and Reference”. In this paper Frege did not clearly distinguish proper names and descriptions, but he did state that the senses of proper names can be expressed by words and phrases. From his context, we can see that these words and phrases are the definite descriptions. His ideas can be summarized as follows:

1. Proper names have senses;
2. The senses of proper names can be expressed by descriptions.

However, from these two points, the conclusion that “proper names are abbreviated descriptions” can not be derived. On the contrary, Frege especially claimed that the same sense has different expressions in different languages or even in the same language; at the same time, the same proper name can be given different senses by the user, therefore we can use different descriptions to describe “Aristotle” as “the pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great” or “the teacher of Alexander the Great who was born in Stagira”. He regarded this as the essential difference of natural language from the “perfect language” (artificial language), therefore, it is impossible to draw the above mentioned conclusion. Consequently, any refutation against Frege based on the “thought experiment” of the above conclusion could not hold water.

Bertrand Russell is believed the second representative of description theory. He did claim that “Proper names are the abbreviated descriptions” (cf. Russell 1959, p.125, Proper names are ordinary ones in natural language, not his “logically proper name”). However, though this is not a very precise expression (this often occurs in Russell’s works), I think Russell’s idea is basically

similar to that of Frege's if it is seen from the general frame of his thought.

The aim of my discussing this problem here is to arouse the attention to the word "express". It is very important in our forthcoming discussion. Till now, linguistic philosophers or analytical philosophers have clarified a series of confusions of concepts or levels in the existing research of philosophy by distinguishing carefully the usages of language. However, it is a pity that there are still very important blind points in the work of clarification. Now let's consider the following passage:

"Since linguistic reference is always dependent on or is a form of mental reference and since mental reference is always in virtue of Intentional content including Background and Network, proper names must in some way depend on Intentional content."(Searle 1983, p.232)

This is a passage taken from the famous book *Intentionality* written by John Searle who is the most important representative of description theory of proper names and theory of speech acts. What I feel puzzled here is: how could linguistic reference "is" a form of mental reference when it is "always dependent" on mental reference? There is no doubt that "dependent" is not equal to "is", neither could "is" inferred from "dependent", just as we could not derive that mental reference "is" intentional content from the saying that mental reference is always "in virtue of" intentional content as Searle related. Actually, this kind of "utterance-mind identity problem" is somewhat expressed by Searle himself. For example, he again and again stressed that:

"As far as I am concerned the issue is not really about analyzing proper names in *words* at all. ...in some cases the only 'identifying description' a speaker might have that he associates with the name is simply the ability to recognize the object." (Searle 1983, p.233)

"And remember, 'identifying description' does not imply 'in words', it simply means: Intentional content, including Network and Background, sufficient to identify the object, and that content may or may not be in words." (ibid, p.243)

And Searle further criticized Frege as such:

"Its chief demerits are that he seems to have thought that semantic content was always in words, specifically definite descriptions, and that the description gave a definition or sense of the name." (ibid, p.244)

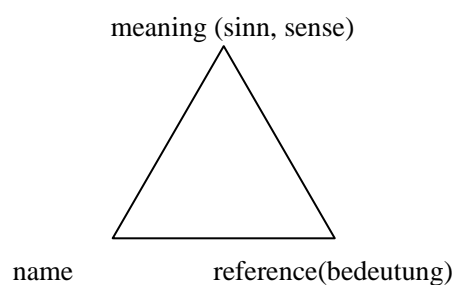
Perhaps it is the ambiguity of the word "description" in English that made Searle used it to say that "description" can be done not "in words". But as soon as we definitely use "Descriptive word", the "utterance-mind identity problem" will occur, but Searle did not realize this and make further inquiry on this problem. My question is: Is the "sense" of words determined by speech acts equal to Searle's so-called "intentional content"?

I think the answer should be "not", because in case that intentional content can be described

by words, the senses of words are only a kind of “description” of the intentional content, not the intentional content itself. In other words, the relationship between the words (such as proper names) and the intentional content is “describe” or “express”, not “identify” or “equal” .

The above discussion shows that in my embedded triangle figure the “sense” of words is in the “language world”, not in the “thought world”; Searle’s “intentional content” is in the “thought world”, not in the “language world”, whose relation in between is “describe” and “be described”, or “express” and “be expressed”, rather than identical. Precisely speaking, we can say a word possesses a sense, but we can not say it possesses an intentional content; instead, we can say it describes an intentional content. This kind of “description” is just the purpose of some speech acts. In my view, we can derive this kind of distinction from many of Searle’s discussions, though he himself did not consciously realize this.

Now let’s come back to Frege. In Dagfinn Føllesdal’s famous paper “An Introduction to Phenomenology for Analytic Philosophers” (Føllesdal 1972), he gave an incisive explanation to Frege’s trichotomy of name-meaning-reference which was used to solve the problem of the “substitutivity of identity”, ie. the epistemic difference problem between $a=a$ and $a=b$. It can be illustrated with the following triangle:



Føllesdal translated Frege’s “bedeutun” as “reference” (as many other philosophers), and interpreted it as the object itself which is tally with the original idea of Frege. The more popular translation of Frege’s “sinn” is “sense” (as I used above), while “meaning” is also used by many philosophers for this word. Then, where should “sense” or “meaning” be placed in the embedded triangle in accordance with Frege? Obviously, Frege would put it in the “thought world”, not in the “language world”. That is to say, to Frege, “words (names)” and the “sentences” composed of them are only things like sounds or ink blots, or in terms of logic terminology, are something purely syntactic. In other words, to Frege all “sinn” are components of “thought” called by him, and that language, thought and object and the relations among them are all purely objective, having nothing to involve with the subject, and that what people should do is just to inquire how to grasp these pure objective relations.

From this we can see a fundamental difference between my view and that of Frege: I think the senses of words (and sentences) are still in the language world rather than thought world, while Frege believed that all senses are in the thought world that he called the “third realm”.

A further important difference between my idea and that of Frege is that to him “thought” is purely objective, having nothing to involve with the subject, while my “thought world” are composed of the products of the mental acts of the subject which are of objectivity that is

grounded on the objectivity of acts. This is just what I want to elaborate.

II

Certainly the classification of the “three worlds” needs more justification. But we could take it as a starting point and see what it could lead to. And actually this is a way to justify it.

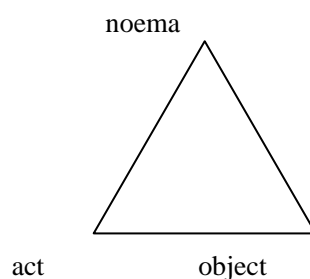
We need to have more strict distinction for the categorical terms used before if we follow the classification of the “three worlds”. For example, “individual”, “kind (class)”, “fact” and “state of affairs” etc should be classified into the “reality world”; “concept”, “proposition” and “belief” etc should be categorized into the “thought world”; while “words”, “sentences” (including their senses) etc should be categorized into the “language world”. Looking from this point of view, Willard Van Quine and others virtually rejected the world of thought by rejecting the intensional entity. I think Searle and other philosophers have given decisive refutation to this kind of rejection with their analytical philosophy of mind.

Based on the exploration of speech acts and intentionality, Searle found the “mistake which is apparently endemic to the methods of linguistic philosophy – confusion of features of reports with features of the things reported.” (Searle 1983, p.24) I have the same feeling based on my research on the literature of linguistic philosophy. I think this kind of mistake is shown especially in the use of the two words “intension” and “extension” by the philosophers (not only the linguistic philosophers). These two terms were first introduced to logic to express the logical characteristics of concepts, later they were widely used to express the logical characteristics of propositions and at the same time to characterize words and sentences. But when they talked about the “intension” and “extension” of words, they often mixed them up with the “intension” and “extension” of the concepts expressed by these words. Another frequently seen phenomenon is that, following Frege, “proposition” is often taken as the “intension” of sentences. I believe this is the origin for a lot of confusions in philosophy. We should define the using of “intension” and “extension” in the thought world instead of talking about the intension and extension of words and sentences, if we clearly distinguish the thought world and the language world.

There is a more serious confusion in the usage of “intension” and “extension” which results in the confusion of the Thought World and the Reality World. People often define “intension” in the Thought World and “extension” in the Reality World, but they do not always follow this kind of classification when they use them to discuss questions. For example, some philosophers on one side admit that having extension is one of the logical features of the concept itself, on the other they would discuss whether a concept has extension. To avoid this sort of confusion, we should firmly remember the distinction between the thought world and the reality world, and treat “intension” and “extension” more carefully taking consideration of this distinction. Now that we regard intension and extension as the features of the concept, then we should not regard them as the features of the object, not to say as the object itself. Sure, we can regard the “representation” (or “report” by Searle) of the object and its properties as the features of a concept, but we should not regard the representation as equal as the thing represented. Thus, we may make a definite convention that the intension of a general concept is the representation of the common and the only properties of objects of a class, and that the extension is the representation of the class of the objects; we can also use the term “singular concept” in our discourse, thus the extension here is the representation of an individual object, and the intension is the representation of the unique property of the individual object (or, we can use the word “description” if we go along with

Searle's usage of "description" not "in words", as can be found in another of Searle's works "the concepts we have for describing reality" (Searle 1998, p.22). We can certainly extend this kind of use of "intension" and "extension" to "proposition" as well, but the intension and extension of a proposition are not something represented, they should belong to the proposition itself.

In my opinion, if we make a clarification to the above-mentioned confusion, we can get a better understanding to the theory of "Conscious Act" or "Mental Act" in Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. In Føllesdal's paper I mentioned above, he made a comparison between Husserl's "act-noema-object" and Frege's "name-meaning-reference". Husserl's trichotomy can be illustrated in the following triangle:



Føllesdal pointed out that Husserl's trichotomy and Frege's have the same structure. He said: "What Husserl did, therefore, was, in effect, to combine the theory of intentionality with the theory of name-meaning-reference." (Føllesdal 1972) Føllesdal's contribution in paving a way between the approaches of analytical philosophy and phenomenology is very enlightening and widely influential. But I think we should take some measures to avoid a serious misunderstanding to mix "noema" with Frege's "Sinn". These two terms have essential differences in effect. To Frege, "Sinn" is intensional, that is to say what it represents is the property of the object. But Husserl's "noema" is not the representation of the property of an object; instead, it is a direct representation of the object. The common point between the two is only that both of them represent something, but what they represent are different things.

Just as explained by Føllesdal, to overcome the difficulties of hallucinations and the empty names Husserl "was to deny Brentano's principle that for every act there is an object toward which it is directed. But he nevertheless retained the basic intentionalist view that acts are directed. ... To be directed simply is to have a noema." (Føllesdal 1972) It is obvious that if we take a concept as the product of a mental act, then the noema is the extension of the concept, not its intension. Therefore, to a concept whose object represented does not exist, it has still both intension and extension. But when the question is faced by a Fregean scholar, he/she would claim that this concept only has intension and does not have extension.

Another essential difference between Husserl and Frege is the way they dealt with the "object". According to Frege, if you answer the question whether a concept has extension, you will have to take the presupposition whether the known object exists or not. While Husserl held an attitude of "Epoché" ("put it in brackets") to whether the object exists or not. In other words, the extension of a concept is in the products of the mental acts, and does not depend on the actual existence of the object. In the light of our above discussions, we could see that Husserl's idea is

more plausible.

As is known to all that, there have been perennial controversies on Husserl's "noema". Husserl himself admitted that he put forward this new concept in the direct light of Frege's distinction on sense and reference. He even said that "The noema is nothing but a generalization of the idea of meaning to the field of all acts" (Quoted by Føllesdal 1972). But this kind of "generalization" can not lead to the conclusion that "noema" is equal to "sense". I think the significance of Frege to Husserl is that, just like sense does not depend on the existence of object, therefore noema does not depend on the existence of object of mental act. This explains why the product of mental acts sometimes makes mistakes. Therefore, in the light of Husserl or rather in the light of my understanding of Husserl, the extension of a concept is one of the properties of the concept itself which is a product of mental act; it is not the object itself or the class of the object. In the meanwhile, Husserlian theory of mental acts can provide an explanation for the formation of the concept as a thought entity. To put it in Husserl's saying, any thought product of the conscious acts has both "noematic content" (noema) and "the real noetic content". "The real noetic content" is virtually what we call "intension" which is in Searle's words "intentional content". I think, the understanding of the question in this direction can help dissolve the mystery of these terms.

III

With the above understanding, we can explain the formation of the intension and extension of the thought entity by employing the Husserlian theory of conscious acts or mental acts. However, if the "Epoché" attitude is thoroughly adhered to like Husserl, then it would be hard to resist the challenges of relativism and subjectivism. In order to adhere to his persistent objective pursuit, Husserl had to turn to Kantian apriorism for help in his middle years, and then to the life-world and intersubjectivity in his late years. I think if we want to maintain the objectivity of mental acts and its products, we will have to come out from the mental acts, ie, to give up the absolute "Epoché" attitude toward the object. As far as I'm concerned, I think we should turn to another theory of action – Marxist theory of social praxis. But before we discuss this theory, we will need to further clarify some tools of concept that we use.

In the previous discussion, we've been using the concepts of "speech acts" and "conscious acts" without defining them. They are core concepts of Searle's and Husserl's theories, which have the same characteristics of "intentionality". Many researchers define "act" as "behavior with intentionality" to distinguish act and the pure behavior. But the "act" here is applicable to both human beings and other higher animals; this is already adequately shown in the study about "perception". In order to distinguish the acts of the human beings and the acts of the animals, we need to further "restrict" the concept on the ground of intentionality. I think this kind of restriction should be conscious-awareness of the subject to the intentionality, i.e. there should be a clear purpose consciously when the act is performed. (To use a favorite term by Mao Zedong, it is the "conscious activity" of act.) Therefore, human being's acts can be distinguished from the animal's acts according to the conscious-awareness, which is not spontaneous and instinctive.

We can employ the difference between "act" and "action" in English. Some philosophers proposed a distinction between "acts" and "actions" that while an act is the deed that is done, an action is the doing of it. But this proposal has not been widely accepted because this distinction is far away from the actual use of the two words, and they are still often used as synonyms. Here I

would like to suggest a convenient and useful distinction, that is to use “act” for all the behaviors with intentionality, and “action” to refer to all the acts with conscious-aware purpose. Consequently, we can get a clear sequence of species-genus of action-act-behavior.

If we use the above idea, “speech actions” can be conveniently distinguished from the “speech acts” of Searle. But it is strange to me that, Searle who believed that linguistic intentionality is a derivative of mental intentionality is however against the Husserlian theory of mental acts. To Searle, “believe”, “hope”, “fear”, “desire” etc which are regarded by Husserl as “(conscious) acts” are not acts or mental acts at all, for “Acts are things one does, but there is no answer to the question, ‘What are you now doing?’ which goes, ‘I am now believing it will rain’, or ‘hoping that taxes will be lowered’, or ‘fearing a fall in the interest rate’, or ‘desiring to go to the movies’”. (Searle1983, p.3) In this connection, he only called these so-called acts “mental states”.

In my opinion, Searle’s objection does not hold water, if it is evaluated according to the definition that “acts are behaviors with intentionality”. My saying so is because that “believing”, “hoping” etc. are all accompanied by mental behaviors, to which Searle might not object. To answer the question “Is a behavior an act?”, we can employ a simple test – deontic test – to see whether we can talk with significance an behavior ought to be done. For instance, we can say, “You ought to/ not ought to believe in God” or “You ought to/ not ought to hope so”, etc. But we can not raise such questions to the pure behavior which does not have intentionality. Here, the word “deontic” is used in a broad sense, not limited to the moral sphere. For example, there is no moral color if we say “You ought not to believe in a contradiction”. As to which of these acts have conscious-aware purpose and can be called “action”, this is usually not hard to tell. For example, generally speaking, “believe” is an action with the purpose to represent objective states of affairs, while “fear” is only an act, not an action.

Based on my study at length, I think the reason for Searle’s problem is that he did not carefully clarify the distinction of “mental acts” and “objective acts”. He demanded that each act must have a real object to it, and that the act should bring somewhat change to the object. For instance, he gave such examples in his book (Searle 1983, p.80):

I want to vote for Jones.

I intend to vote for Jones.

Searle insisted that “want” and “intend” are not intentional acts, but “vote for” is an intentional act. Actually, the difference between the two are in that the former is “mental act”, while the latter is “objective act”. I think this can be explained by the test given by Searle himself:

“A good rough test for whether or not a verb phrase denotes an action type is whether or not it can occur in the imperative. ‘Walk’, ‘run’, and ‘eat’ all take the imperative, but ‘believe’, ‘intend’, and ‘want’ are not names of actions and so do not have a natural imperative mood form.” (ibid, p.81)

The examples of “walk”, “run” and “eat” once more confirm my understanding of Searle. Actually, only when Searle insisted in advance that “believe”, “want” and “intend” are not acts, could he think that they “do not have a natural imperative mood form”. My question is: what reasons do we have for not permitting one to give advice to another not to believe, want or intend to do something?

The above discussion can lead us to the concept of “objective acts”. The fundamental distinction between objective acts and mental acts (and their derivative speech acts) is that the intentional object of the objective acts must be actual, must exist in the reality world, and that the subject intends to bring some actual change to the object through the act. In my embedded triangle, it is in the interaction of the subject and the reality world. If we confine it with the above clarified terms, the objective acts of human beings which are different from the acts of other animals should be objective actions, ie, objective acts with conscious-aware purpose. As mentioned before, the objective action is what Marx called “praxis”.

Just as what we quoted at the very beginning that Marx believed that all the mysteries which lead philosophical theories to mysticism should turn to and can find their rational solution in human praxis. For instance, about the theory of truth, he said, again in *Theses on Feuerbach*:

“The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth — i.e. the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in praxis. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking that is isolated from praxis is a purely *scholastic* question.”

That is to say, if Marx were here to join our discussion, he would claim his stand as such: the truthfulness of human thoughts as products of mental acts can not be evaluated by the mental acts themselves, instead it should be evaluated by praxis. However, we could not regard Marx’s theory as pragmatist view. Essentially different from the pragmatists, Marx persistently insisted on the reality of the external world and its laws which are independent of human being’s will. Mao Zedong understood this by saying as follows:

“If a man wants to succeed in his work, that is, to achieve the anticipated results, he must bring his ideas into correspondence with the laws of the objective external world; if they do not correspond, he will fail in his practice.” (Mao Zedong 1977)

I think this kind of interpretation of correspondence theory is correct for the original idea of Marx. But we should notice that this kind of “correspondence” is not direct mirror-like, neither is it like the “picture” of later-Wittgenstein. Instead it is obtained gradually in the praxis, with it as medium. This was also elaborated by Frederick Engels, Marx’s collaborator, when discussing his idea on the nature:

“It is precisely *the alteration of nature* by men, not solely nature as such, which is most essential and immediate basis of human thought, and it is in the measure that man has learned to change nature that his intelligence has increased.” (Engles 1974, p.235)

That is to say, though the subject should pursuit the right representation of thought, the product of mental acts, for the reality world, this kind of representation is not direct, it must have the mental acts and praxes as its media. This is why I used the dotted line between the thought world and the reality world.

Based on the similar reason, the expression of language to thought also takes speech actions and mental actions as its media. Speech action is subordinate to mental action, and it can not express the reality world directly. Therefore, the sides of the outer triangle are all dotted lines.

No objective action -- praxis -- can go without being accompanied by mental action, while all mental actions are accompanied by the speech actions (if we generalize the speech action to cover all the actions employing symbols, then it can be universal assertion here.) Therefore, all the three sides of the inner triangle are real lines. The subjects, or human actors, are confined by these three kinds of actions, through which human beings inquire and change the objective world. This is the fundamental destination of human beings.

It should be emphasized that Marx discussed the issue of praxis in the context of the interaction between individual action and collective action throughout his discourse, that is why his theory is called the theory of social praxis. To Marx, the subject of collective action is formed in the interaction of individual actions, to use a popular term of contemporary philosophy, it is to say that any praxis can not go without the “intersubjectivity”. Just in the light of this, Juergen Habermas found that the tradition of the speech acts theory of Wittgenstein-Austin-Searle can play an essential role in developing Marx’s theory of praxis. Any communication between subjects can not go without speech acts (in the broad sense). According to Habermas, any evaluation on the rationality of any action can not be made without following the common rules, while the regularity of actions could not be private, for human beings actions are all in a network of intersubjectivity at the very beginning. This kind of intersubjectivity depends to a great extent on the intentional conscious-awareness of the speech actions and the related “identity of meaning”. This is well elaborated in Habermas’ book *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984). In this connection, we can also make a comparison with Searle’s convincing discussion:

“Since, when one gives orders, one orders people to perform intentional actions, one can only order people to do things that they can do intentionally, and indeed it does not make any clear sense to say ‘I order you to perform A unintentionally’”. (Searle 1983, p.81)

Just due to this view, Searle not only recognized the individual intentionality, but also collective intentionality, based on which he introduced a concept which to me is quite similar to Marx’s concept “objective social reality”. But Searle did not bother on further discussing in depth the interaction of individual subject and the collective subject, only taking the collective intentionality as a simple primitive existence. He stated: “in real life collective intentionality is

common, practical, and indeed essential to our very existence.” (Searle 1998, p.120) “Just take the collective intentionality in my head as a primitive. It is of the form ‘we intend.’ That will have consequences for what I believe and what I intend, because my individual intentionality derives from my collective intentionality.” (ibid, p.119) But if we raise a further question: “Is the ‘we intend’ in ‘my head’ genuine ‘we intend’”? In this connection, it is necessary to further discuss the mechanism of the interaction of individual intentionality and collective intentionality, and then that of individual action and collective action. I think Habermas’ work done in this area is excellent. Certainly, we should also employ the work done on the theory of action in many other fields for reference, such as that of the sociologists Max Weber and Talcott Parsons.

IV

In the time of Marx and Engels, there was no systematic theory on mental acts and speech acts; therefore it was impossible for them to have systematical discussions on the interactions of the three kinds of actions to solve philosophical problems. But it was them who realized the “action turn” for the first time in the history of western philosophy. Their efforts in looking for the approaches and methods from “praxis” to solve the existing mysterious problems, and their related achievements in this connection are quite worthy of our deeper exploration and further study. Here I can only give a very brief discussion to show the necessity of the study of their related thoughts through illustrating a couple of examples.

The first example is about the problem of causality. Just as Searle pointed out: “Since Føllesdal’s article on the subject, it has been widely accepted that certain forms of causal statements are intensional. For example, whereas statements of the form ‘x caused y’ are extensional, those of the form ‘x causally explains y’ are intensional. (Searle 1983, p.117)

I think, if we relate the discussion on the relation between “x causally explains y” and “x caused y” to the Engels’ discussion below, perhaps we can draw some light from this:

“Not only do we find that a particular motion is followed by another, we find also that we can evoke a particular motion by setting up, the conditions in which it takes place in nature, that we can even produce motions which do not occur at all in nature (industry), at least not in this way, and that we can give these motions a predetermined direction and extent. *In this way*, by the activity of human beings the idea of causality becomes established, the idea that one motion is the cause of another.” (Engels 1974, p.234)

Engels used a lot of examples to explain why the theory of praxis can overcome David Hume’s skepticism and provide objective foundation for the thoughts of causality and give them “double test” both positively and negatively. This is something which can show Marx’s general thinking about the approach to solving the “mysteries”.

Another two examples are about the theory of language. Jon Elster in his *Making Sense of Marx* made a summary of Marx’s thought on the difference between man and other animals in the following six aspects: (i) self-consciousness, (ii) intentionality, (iii) language, (iv) tool-using, (v) tool-making and (vi) cooperation. I think these six aspects are all very important to the theory of action.(cf. Elster 1985, p.62) As to language, Elster elaborately chose the following two passages

from Marx:

“Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical, real consciousness that exists for other men as well, and only therefore does it also exist for me; language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity of intercourse with other men.” (Marx and Engles, *The German Ideology*. Quoted by Elster 1985, p.63)

This passage echoes with Habermas' discussion on intersubjectivity and speech actions. The other passage has a direct discussion on the theory of names:

“Men do not in any way begin by ‘finding themselves in a theoretical relationship to the things of the external world’. Like every animal, they begin by eating, drinking, etc. that is, not by ‘finding themselves’ in a relationship but by behaving actively, gaining possession of certain things in the external world by their actions, thus satisfying their needs. ... By repetition of this process, the property that those things have of ‘satisfying their needs’ is impressed on their brain; men, like animals, also learn to distinguish ‘theoretically’ the external things which, above all others, serve to satisfy their needs. At a certain point in their evolution, after the multiplication and development of their needs and of the activities to assuage them, men will baptize with the aid of words the whole category of these things that experience has enabled them to distinguish from the rest of the external world.” (Marx, *Comments on Wagner*. Quoted by Elster 1985, p.64)

The “words” used above by Marx is just “names” (here it refers to general name). It is obvious that Marx looked for the sources of names from nowhere but in man's actions. General names originate from classification, and classification comes from the need of man and the intentional conscious-awareness decided by the needs. Based on this clue, it is impossible that all names (even the names of the so-called natural kinds) entirely do not have senses, like what Saul Kripke and Hilary Putnam argued. This idea can also be generalized to proper names, for all proper names are the naming to the objects (even if it were a hallucination or fiction). If there were no recognition of kinds, how could we come to the identification to an individual object? And how could we complete the so-called “naming ceremony” by Kripke? Searle's following argument would no doubt have got Marx's support:

“What counts as an object and hence as a possible target for naming and referring is always determined relative to a system of representation. Given that we have a system rich enough to individuate objects (e.g., rich enough to count one horse, a second horse, a third horse ...), and to identify and reidentify objects (e.g., rich enough to determine what must be the case if that is to be the same horse as the one we saw yesterday), we can then attach names to objects in such a way as to preserve the attachment of the same names to the same objects”. (Searle 1983, p.259)

In the perennial debate on whether proper names have senses, the existence of the individual

object is often taken as presupposition without any discussion. But the trouble may lie just in how to verify an “individual” object. If we do not recognize the human kind, how could we confirm that Aristotle is an individual object and further inquire his essential properties by various thought experiments? In the light of the theory of praxis, the individuation of kinds or objects should both find origin in the individuation of actions and action types.

There is a very good example about the proper name in the politics of China – the controversy on the “One China” issue. The Chinese Government and the international community claim that there is only one China, and that Taiwan is a province of China, while the current leader of Taiwan claims that Taiwan is a “country”. The understanding of the kind and meaning of “country” must be involved in this debate. There is no doubt that we should turn to the human collective actions for historical evidences. This is something that any theory of “direct reference” can not solve.

V

The above discussion has shown the basic ideas of the methodology of logical actionism which is diagrammed by the embedded triangle. Certainly, there are still lots of questions to be discussed in its systematic construction, and there is a special need to reclarify some basic philosophical concepts.

Among the contemporary philosophers, Kripke might be the closest to the idea of the “three worlds”. In his *Naming and Necessity*, his threefold classification of necessary-contingent, *a priori-a posteriori* and analytic-synthetic is homologous to the classification of the Reality World, Thought World and Language World. However, Kripke did not carry this idea throughout his discussion. This can be seen from the following two points: First, in his repeated argument that “necessity” being an ontological concept and “*a priori*” being an epistemological concept have fundamental differences, but he frequently used the terms such as “necessary truth” and “contingent truth”, and draw from his discussions the concepts of “necessary *a posteriori* truth” and “contingent *a priori* truth”. But if with the clear distinction between ontology and epistemology in mind, his result can only be described as “*a priori* truth may represent contingent state of affairs” and “*a posteriori* truth may represent necessary state of affairs”.

Second, and more important is that Kripke did not really insist his view that *a priori* and analytic belong respectively to epistemology and linguistic theory. He accepted Kant’s “all analytic judgments are *a priori*” without any criticism (cf. Kripke 1980, p.117), neglecting Quine’s convincing refutation on this view. If we clarify and adhere to the distinction between the language world and the thought world, then Quine’s argument on the *a posteriori* of the generally acknowledged analytical sentence, such as “All bachelors are unmarried” can only logically reach the conclusion that “some analytical sentences represent the *a posteriori* propositions”, but can not lead to his conclusion that no distinction can be found between analytic and synthetic sentences. In my view, truth (or falsity) is a property of propositions (thoughts) which are products of mental actions; it can not be the property of states of affairs in the ontological sense. Because sentences express propositions, sentences can also be truth-bearers derived from it. But the “truth of sentence” and “truth of proposition” are two different concepts of “truth” which should not be mixed up, because there is the relation of “express” between them.

Similar distinction should also be made to the concept of “meaning”. Though this is a core concept of contemporary philosophy of language, its multiple senses are far from clarified, and on

the contrary there is a tendency that it is widely spread unchecked. Philosophers are talking about the meaning of language, the meaning of thought, and the meaning of the reality world. Some scholars regard “meaning” as equal to “information”, and believe that the nature is full of meanings. My suggestion is not to apply the term “meaning” in the reality world, because this could cause a lot of confusions. I think the levels of “meaning” should be placed correspondingly to the levels of “truth”, and the “meaning in the language world” and “the meaning in the thought world” should be strictly distinguished, for the former consists of the “reference” and “sense” (as the expression of the thought world), and the latter consists of the “intensions” and “extensions” of the thought world (as the representation of the reality world).

Here the use of the word “reference” should be paid special attention, for this is another typical example of the “confusion of features of reports with features of the things reported by the linguistic philosophers” as Searle said. Now the popular use is still the Frege-Russell tradition of “object itself”, however, this use is not always followed as in the case of “extension”. For instance, if Searle’s saying “reference is always in virtue of Intentional content including Background and Network” was replaced by “the object itself is always in virtue of Intentional content including Background and Network”, I am afraid this would not be agreed by Searle himself. I suggest to restrict the use of “reference” strictly in the language world to avoid this kind of unexpected confusion.

In the framework of the above discussion on actionism, both “expression” and “representation” are the “purpose” of some speech actions and mental actions. The realization of the purpose must be realized through the three kinds of actions and the interactions between them. There is no direct path for “expression” or “representation”. From this we can naturally get their fallibility. But because of the fundamental function of the objective actions (praxis), the interaction of the threefold actions possess a kind of mechanism of rectification of errors.

An instance in our previous discussion can explain this kind of fallibility. Russell once said: “Proper names are abbreviated descriptions”. This sentence has a definite meaning in our language system, but we may say this meaning may have not expressed the actual thought of Russell, and perhaps his actual belief is the same with Frege’s belief as we have exposed. Whether or not this belief represents the actual relation between the proper names and the descriptions is just a question that demands discussions at length.

At the same time, we can draw the following inspiration from this example: the speech actions and the mental actions and their products can all be taken as the objects for us to inquire and to grasp. That is to say, all of them in our embedded triangle can be placed in the Reality World. Therefore, what we should make clear is that, our trichotomy of the worlds is either epistemological, or in the category of the theory of language and the theory of action, but not ontological. There is only one Real World in terms of ontology. Everything in the Reality World can be taken as object to inquire and to perform praxis on by the subject. For example, those actions which aim at changing others’ beliefs, like teaching, are also kinds of objective actions. Therefore, the “semantic facts” and “pragmatic facts” emphasized by the philosophers of situation semantics can also be covered in the “Reality World”. I don’t think this is hard to understand.

Now we can answer a question which might be raised by a Fregean scholar: if we take thoughts as the products of the mental action, then are there any “propositions” which have never been in our mental actions? For instance, before Goldbach Conjecture was put forward, had the

proposition that “any big even number can be represented as the sum of two odd prime numbers” existed? My answer to this question is that, if no one had ever conjectured this proposition before Goldbach, then this proposition did not exist in man’s belief system. But now we have got the concept of the ontological “possible world” (as explained by Kripke), we do not deny the possible existence of this proposition, that is to say, we do not deny there is the possibility that someone had conjectured this proposition before Goldbach.

The above discussion can preliminarily show the function of solving problem with the methodology of logical actionism. But limited by our aim here which is to sketch the frame of this methodology, we could not involve more problems and discussions at length. However, we can discuss one more problem: the issue of “fiction” stimulatingly discussed by Olav Asheim in his paper “Creatures of Imagination and Belief” (Asheim 1996). A fictional character, Sherlock Holmes for example, being a product of man’s mental action and speech action (broad sense), can naturally be regarded as an object for man to explore. But we will need to appeal to the nature of man’s action and examine on which level could we define it as an “object”.

First, the purpose of the activity of creating fictional characters, which is a combination of mental actions and language actions, is not to represent the actual states of affairs of the reality world; instead, it is to conceive a possible world on a certain level of “possible”. (The levels of “possible” are very important. The possible world of the story of Sherlock Holmes and those of the magic stories like Harry Potter are on different levels.) Only when the readers have a clear idea of the purpose of this activity, can they understand the “existence” of object in that possible world. As long as the “trans-world fallacy” is avoided, we can quantify over them just as how we treat the individuals with respect to the actual world.

Second, when we do literary criticism, we need to distinguish the threefold “objects”: the objects in the possible world described in the literary works; the thought system that the author represents the possible world; the linguistic expression of this thought system. The latter two are both actual objects in the Reality World, which can be appreciated according to the purpose of the collective action in literary appreciation.

Therefore, I think the above discussed theory of actionism can support Olav Asheim’s following view: “when we quantify over fictional characters we have indeed to recognize them as objects of a kind; the question is only what kind of object”. (Asheim 1996) Just as Asheim proposed that, we could use “Existence” to discuss whether something is an object in the actual world, and “Being” to discuss whether something is an object in the possible world. Here only the intersubjectivity of the collective action is needed, while the Ockham’s razor is not necessary.

Last but not least, I’d like to briefly discuss the naming of the term “Logical Actionism”.

The meaning of “Actionism” is already shown above. Maybe a note of emphasis is needed here: “Actionism” differs from all schools of behaviorism or functionism in the respect of philosophy of mind, and from those of the empiricism and pragmatism in epistemology. It belongs to “materialism” in Marx’s sense, for it recognizes the essential foundation of objective actions. But it is not materialist in the sense of behaviorism as what Searle understands, which would be called by Marx as “vulgar materialism”. Logical actionism is also against the “contemplative materialism” so-called by Marx that human being’s thoughts can tally with the external world directly. The key defect of contemplative materialism is that it “does not conceive human activity itself as *objective* activity” as Marx pointed out.

“Logical Actionism” has no direct terminological connection with the tradition of Pareto-Parsons’s concept of “logical action”, though there is similarity in the use of the concept of “action”. Parsons takes “whether or not the means and purpose are coherent” as the criterion to distinguish “logical action” and “non-logical action” so as to evaluate the rationality of the action. (cf. Parsons 1968, pp.185-196) I think maybe “reasonable action” and “unreasonable action” are more appropriate terms. To the methodology of logical actionism, “reasonable action” and “unreasonable action” and the interaction between them are all the important issues for research.

As what I said at the very beginning, the sense of “logical” in “logical actionism” has something in common with “logical empiricism” and “logical pragmatism” in the point that the method of logical analysis and linguistic analysis are greatly stressed. But it differs from the two in that logical actionism does not reject the “dialectics” and “dialectical logic” so-called by Marx and Engels, or the “transcendental logic” by Kant and Husserl, that is to say, it does not reject the application of the speculative method originated from Aristotle’s *Categories*. The speculative method does not discriminate against the logical analysis method as widely believed by the analytical philosophers, instead they are complementary, whose value of application all have their roots in the structure of human beings’ actions. Based on my previous research, I think the study of logical paradoxes plays a key position in the inquiry of this kind of complementary mechanism.

Naturally, we need new logical tools for grasping the mechanism of the interactions of the three kinds of actions and other related factors. The achievements and problems of researches on various logics of action in the recent years are all worth paying great attention to. As far as I am concerned, I think the recent growth and development of situation semantics might suggest a suitable orientation for exploring this kind of new logic tool to satisfy the need of the study of the theory of action.

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逻辑行动主义方法论构图

摘要：本文系作者2007年8月在挪威奥斯陆大学的演讲稿。文章试图通过对言语行动理论、胡塞尔型心智行动理论和马克思的社会实践论（客观行动理论）的一种新型整合，提出逻辑行动主义方法论的研究纲领，并通过对涵义、指称等问题的讨论，显示其基本进路和解题功能。

关键词：逻辑行动主义 言语行动 心智行动 实践