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What is This?

How to Do Things with Fictions: Reconsidering Vaihinger for a Philosophy of Social Sciences

Beatrice Kobow[1]

Abstract

The article reconstructs three key concepts of Hans Vaihinger: the idea of mental fictions as self-contradictory, provisory, conscious, and purposeful; the law of the devolution of ideas stating that an idea oscillates between dogma, hypothesis, or fiction; and the underlying assumption about human consciousness that the psyche constructs thoughts around perceptions like an oyster produces a pearl. In a second, constructive part, these concepts are applied in a discussion of John Searle's social ontologically extended theory of speech acts. The article introduces the Vaihingerian as-if to Searle's account of declarations. The explanatory work in a model of social reality as Searle has proposed it rests on the ability to show a necessary connection between collective and individual intentionality facilitated through linguistic structure. The methodological individualism of the model requires that motivational assumptions about collective structures be realized in individual brains. The as-if stance of the declarer provides just this connection.

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1. Introduction: Why Philosophers of Social Science Should Revisit Vaihinger

So sei denn auch hier gleich zum Eingang die Frage klar und scharf formuliert, welche in diesem Buche aufgeworfen wird: Wie kommt es, dass wir mit bewusstfalschen Vorstellungen doch Richtiges erreichen?

—Hans Vaihinger, *Die Philosophie des Als-Ob*

It is Vaihinger's project to show what "things" we can do with fictions. He understands their preliminary goal to be epistemological, and their ultimate goal to be agency affording. Revisiting Vaihinger's work will allow us to extrapolate how "fictions" as logical operations of the mind come to be present in the individual mental representations of collectively constituted deontic actions. They describe the mental representations necessary for making status function declarations. So far, little attention has been paid to Vaihinger as a potential contributor to contemporary philosophical theories of human social–societal interaction and collective intentionality, partially because he himself defines his project as epistemological investigation and has little concern for social ontological questions.

In this paper, I will largely be following the model of declarations and status function declarations as tools for deonticity that John Searle has put forth in *The Construction of Social Reality* and, more recently, revised in *Making the Social World* (Searle 1995, 2010). One success condition of declarations is the declarer's realization that collective acceptance is requisite for the coming about of the declared state. As we shall see, this notion fulfills all four of Vaihinger's fiction requirements. Vaihinger characterizes fictions as self-contradictory, provisional, conscious, and purposive. In just this way, the as-if initiating a declaration can be defined as contradictory: the maker declares something to be the case that he alone cannot guarantee; as provisional: pending until acceptance is granted, then falls out; as conscious: as part of the success conditions; and as purposive: necessary for making a declaration.

In particular, Vaihinger's concept of the "devolution of ideas" (Gesetz der Ideenverschiebung) can be put to use in an explanation of the mental states and mental representations of agents who are making declarations. These agents are performing (speech) acts in a deontic exchange of instating, reaffirming, and using "status functions" (Searle 1995, 113). The concept of the devolution of ideas fills a theoretical gap by providing the backdrop for a description of the mental representations that become part of the conditions of satisfaction of declarations.

The grounding of an as-if notion in recent social ontological theory adds to a comprehensive account of declarations. It furthers an understanding of how the deontic background of communities is shaped and changes.

In the end, we will not simply have Searle plus Vaihinger but a model that analyzes how Vaihinger's theory is relevant for understanding deonticity as a form of agency. I am working on an explanation of the relation between tacit understanding, so-called background know-how and know-that, and explicit rule-structures in Searle's model. A first part of such an explanation consists of explaining how intentional actions can shape the cultural background. A second part, just sketched here, entails the discussion whether declarations and rule-structures themselves can be seen as Vaihingerian fictions (Kobow, forthcoming). My endeavor is toward a theory of social reality that is based in a comprehensive theory of human consciousness and perception *about this reality*. A new look at Vaihinger's work through a social ontological lens can direct the interpretation of Vaihinger away from purely epistemological topoi and focus on social ontological concerns. As a Vaihingerian element of a comprehensive theory of society, the idea of a specific as-if stance as mental fiction can be shown to be requisite for declaration-making.

I begin with the reconstruction of three central concepts of Vaihingers' *The Philosophy of the As-If*: (1) the "law of the devolution of ideas" that charts and explains the changing status of an idea from dogma to hypothesis to fiction and reverse, (2) the concept of "fictions" with its four-part definition as self-contradictory, provisional, conscious, and purposive, and (3) the analysis of human interaction with reality that is underlying these concepts in Vaihinger. I then take into account some of the more recent reception and criticism of Vaihinger's work that sheds light on some aspects central to my objective.

First, Bouriau's recent investigation of Vaihinger helps us understand how Vaihinger is not a pragmatist proper—a position that would equate usefulness with truth but rather a fictionalist who emphasizes the usefulness of falsehoods (Bouriau 2013).

Second, Mäki's realist reading of Vaihinger proves relevant for a theory of scientific model-building. I apply such Vaihingerian realism to the realm of social construction.

Third, Iser compares Vaihinger to Bentham on the issue of a relation between language and fiction. This will be important for my application of Vaihinger to speech act theoretical concepts taken from Searle.

In the second part of the paper, I propose a constructive social ontological reading of Vaihinger. I outline the concrete application of the notion of the as-if to an explanation of the mental representation of declarations. I first review the collectivity assumption as part of the conditions of satisfaction of

declarations and as their unique feature, and I oppose it to a general contextuality requirement for all representational mental states. Second, I address the overall question of language dependence of declarations. If what is asked of Searle's model is a comprehensive explanation of the role of collective intentionality for the linguistic mechanism employed therein in connection to an individually motivating mental realization, the mental as-if will provide just that (Roth 2012, 124).

2. A Reconstruction of Vaihingerian Concepts

Today, Vaihinger is remembered as an important figure in the South-German Neo-Kantian school of philosophy and as one of the first Nietzsche scholars. Vaihinger is also considered to be one of the founding fathers of the theory of fictionalism. The phrase "as-if"—with or without direct reference to Vaihinger as originator—has been used in economic theory and the philosophical theory of model-building. Fine, for example, acknowledges the importance of Vaihinger as a precursor to contemporary thought in this context[1] (Fine 1993).

Vaihinger's theory is marked by two unusual theoretical commitments: First, he shows us (against a pragmatist intuition) that falsehoods can be useful; in his own sense, this assumption is as a "fiction" itself highly enlightening. We will be able to compare the conception of a "mental as-if as logical conscience" as potential theoretical fiction in Vaihinger with the notion of "status function declarations" as potential theoretical fiction in Searle.

Second, Vaihinger understands fictions and the mental operation of the as-if to be epistemically essential and indispensable. His theory results in a realism about perception and consciousness that is compatible with and indeed aims at an understanding of agency as guided by mental frameworks.

How is it that by employing *consciously false* mental concepts we are still able to work out correct conclusions? The initial puzzle about the utility of conscious falsehoods serves as a guide for Vaihinger's research into different kinds of "mental fictions."[2]

Vaihinger uses the term "fictive" with the connotation "false"; to be "fictive" is to be "false," always. "False," on the other hand, for Vaihinger means

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[1]Mäki points out that Friedman's 1953 *Essays in Positive Economics* makes use of a Vaihingerian concept and also the phrase that has subsequently, at least with reference to Friedman, become a theoretical staple (Mäki [2010] 2012).

[2]Initial quote (p. XII Vorbemerkungen zur Einführung) and citations throughout from Vaihinger (1992); occasional translations of passages into English by the author of this article.

"subjective," as opposed to "objective." "Subjective" is then another term referring to mental representations, "objective" refers to the states of affairs represented. Vaihinger sees the conceptual understanding of these terms as parts of a theory of all fictions as they are used in the sciences.[3] The distinction is based on premises about consciousness, perception, and reality. In nuce, Vaihinger believes that underlying the system of our beliefs ("Vorstellungswelt") is a reality that cannot further be reduced. In just this sense, it is incomprehensible ("unbegreifbar").[4] Systems of belief represent an underlying unchanging reality in ever-changing forms. The form of the system of beliefs is strictly subjective and owed to the contingent psyche reacting to the surrounding world. The objective reality with which the psyche interacts is the causal occasion for its subjective rendering. The purpose of the subjective rendering is the functionally smooth orientation of the organism in reality. Therefore, the life of the mind is separated but not divorced from reality. Its functional goal is orientation in the world; it constitutes and enables the specifically human way of successfully navigating in the world.

Consciously false are concepts of which we, as engineers of these thought concepts, have realized a necessary divergence from the states of affairs they render. Knowledge and cognition are the only provisional and collateral goals of thought. It is the ultimate goal of thinking though to enable agency. Vaihinger emphasizes a psychological-naturalistic explanation of what he calls the logical forms of thought (Vaihinger 1922: Allgemeine Einleitung, 1). Both methods of thinking (such as deduction, abstraction, and the like) as well as concrete thoughts functioning as models (such as the idea of the atom, the infinitesimally small or the "Urtier" that Goethe invented and that was later replaced by Darwin's theory) are the mind's (or soul's) way of coping with reality (Vaihinger 1922, 143-46).

Vaihinger suggests that *all* representational operations of the mind are different from the things they represent and that, therefore, the entirety of the mental realm is "separated" from the world and can, therefore, only be "fiction." That is, it is "false" because it is "subjective," and this is the way

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[3]Vaihinger is interested in and committed to the recent scientific findings of his day and the state of the art of natural science. One example is his embracing of the new discipline of psychology that is being developed by Wundt at the time.
[4]Being cannot be comprehended because for Vaihinger, this would necessarily entail "to reduce it further to something other": "begreifbar ist es (das Sein) nicht, weil begreifen heisst: etwas auf ein Anderes zurückführen, was doch beim Sein selbst nicht mehr der Fall sein kann" (Vaihinger 1922, 94).

Vaihinger uses these terms. Yet, all mental operations, including all types of "fictions," are themselves part of the real world and can be explained as mechanisms serving a functional purpose for humans. The "aboutness" of intentional, representational mental states is, we could say, contained in what we call "representing": It describes the process of processing information about the world in thought and according to certain (logical) operations (Vaihinger 1922, 175).

Therefore, even those parts of the mental life involving—voluntary or involuntary—falsehoods help aiming at knowledge of the surrounding world and ultimately action. Truth and usefulness are not equated: Something that is useful is not by virtue of being useful "true." The correction of mistakes and furthering of insight and factual knowledge is an ongoing process of progress for the individual and for mankind (Vaihinger 1922, 194 and following).

Vaihinger seems to emphasize the function fictions have as individual mental realizations. The assumptions of their use for communities is tacit, whereby the idea that "science" constitutes a community of knowers and the idea that there is a general progression toward a more widespread realization of the as-if as our specific way of relating to the world both seem to remain in the realm of the "man." There is no explicit detailed explication of a sense of collective intentionality or a "we" in the heads of individual agents.

Vaihinger differentiates "fictions" from "figments." "Figments" is the term reserved for mythological or aesthetic fictions. The purpose of figments is to entertain, delight, or otherwise engage the emotions. Vaihinger gives as example: Pegasus is a figment; the Atom is a fiction (Vaihinger 1922, 129). "Fictions" stand short for "scientific fictions," and it covers all those operations of thought that lead to a greater insight into or understanding of the world that are used for epistemic purposes.

Vaihinger states four characteristics of true fictions[5]:

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[5]We find the spirit of these four formal qualities expressed in the following quote: "Das Denken macht Umwege: dieser Satz enthält das eigentliche Geheimnis aller Fiktionen; und es handelt sich für die logische Betrachtung vor allem darum, diese Umwege streng zu trennen von den eigentlichen Ausgangs-und Zielpunkten des Denkens, während die Fiktionen eben nur Durchgangspunkte des Denkens, keineswegs des Seins, sind" (Vaihinger, 1922, 175). (*Thinking takes detours: this sentence contains the real secret of all fictions; this means for their logical consideration specifically that such detours have to be strictly separated from the origin and aim of thoughts. Fictions are only transit points of thought, by no means of being.*) (Translation Kobow)

i.   The first property of full fictions is to be *self-contradictory*; a good example is the self-contradiction of philosophical antinomies. Semi-fictions, for example, are different from full-blown fictions in that they deviate from what they represent, but they are not yet self-contradictory (Vaihinger 1922, 172). Self-contradiction, though not spelled out in great detail, describes the forceful difference found between perceptual reality and the terms, premises or consequences of an idea or concept of this reality. The lack of a conventionalist approach in Vaihinger that would explain how some ideas seem "normalized" qua socialization and habit and others seem stark or obscure due to their novelty leaves this first characteristic rather abstract and in the form of a formal claim.

ii. Fictions secondly become obsolete and are replaced by other fictions in the historical process of logical advance of mankind—they "fall out": fictions are therefore, secondly, *provisional*.

iii. The third characteristic is the thinker's explicit awareness of the fictionality of the fiction—fictions are *conscious* (and, we could add, self-referential in this sense). This aspect of their definition is perhaps the most interesting for the present purposes: The consciousness of fictions allows us to see them as part of the success conditions of declarations under the assumptions that agents are conscious of all success conditions for their actions at least in a minimal sense of having a know-how of the kind of action they are performing.

iv. The last defining observation is that fictions are always the thinking means to an epistemological end or aim, that is, they can be defined as *purposive*.

The explanation of how fictions are epistemically useful becomes particularly clear in Vaihinger's treatment of the difference between "fiction" and "hypothesis": Vaihinger distinguishes "fictions" from "hypotheses" in chapter 21 (143-54). Their main difference can be seen in the way they are validated—a hypothesis must be *verified* through experience, whereas a fiction must be *justified* by its explanatory use. In the history of ideas, fictions have become hypotheses and vice versa, and this is, indeed, nothing unusual. Yet, fictions and hypotheses are governed by wholly different methodologies. Fictions have to be "denkmöglich" (imaginable, Vaihinger 1922, 152), whereas hypotheses have to be factually possible. The methodological standard of the hypothesis is plausibility; fictions are governed by standards concerning the utility of concepts. Vaihinger first lays, as foundation for his theory of fictions, the psychological explanation of their importance and methodology (Vaihinger

1922, 194). His idea is that fictions are just intermediary steps in a process of reaching the conclusions that thinking aims at. Once these conclusions have been reached, the fictions will be thrown out, much like—much later— Wittgenstein's ladder.

One part of the logical analysis of the "mechanisms of thinking" underlying fictions is the "law of the devolution of ideas."[6] The law states that an idea has a history of its givenness to us. This history can be told as an evolutionary story of its progression of how the thinker of the idea relates herself to it. The stance of the thinker oscillates between three stages: dogma, hypothesis, and fiction. In each stage, the stance that the thinker takes up toward the idea is different as follows:

i. In the dogmatic stage, she sees world and idea as one.
ii. In the hypothetical stage, she sees that idea and world differ but assumes that the image of the world is to be made to "fit."
iii. In the last stage, the as-if stage, the thinker accepts that idea and world are necessarily split but recognizes that the as-if of the mental representation is useful for her. Therefore, she goes on operating with a— now conscious—falsehood.

After the idea has completed this "life cycle," it can either swing back and become once again hypothetically or dogmatically held, or it can also be given up as obsolete and "die." Fictions, since one of their defining features is that they are conscious, are ideas in the third stage of development, that is, in the as-if stage.

The as-if of full fictions relates to the concepts an individual holds vis-à-vis the world. It could concern, for example, a scientific theory she might believe in, but equally a religious idea, or any other doxastic attitude. Vaihinger's central claim is that false beliefs, though false, are useful for us. He goes further in claiming that this does not hold just for false beliefs of which we *only later* discover their falsehood (and then might reassess them). It also holds for beliefs of which we know that they are false while we operate with them. Their purpose lies, for Vaihinger, in their epistemic use.[7] The self-recognition of the fictional nature of the logical operations of the mind

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[6]As suggested before, this law can charitably be understood in a limited application to some, not all ideas. Vaihinger himself phrases it as such.

[7]Vaihinger (1922, 191). Vaihinger's explanation for the motor behind the development of an idea is the leaning of the psyche toward an equilibrium. Since a hypothesis is, due to a lack of verification and, therefore, the presence of doubt, a state of inherent

historically also recovers fictions that have turned into dogmas and rede-scribes them as fictions.[8]

Lastly, Vaihinger stresses that those fictions that enable discursive think-ing will not become obsolete, though logical ability does develop over time and therefore changes. Vaihinger believes that understanding those tools of thought as fictions marks the general maturing of the logical conscience of mankind, in general, as well as an increase in overall logical ability (Vaihinger 1922, 228).

3. Critique and Recent Interest

Some criticism finds general fault with the logical structure of Vaihinger's theoretical endeavor: if we assume the validity and applicability of the "law of the devolution of ideas" to ideas in general, the law will also apply to Vaihinger's own model, and with time, it too would have to be understood as a fiction (not as a hypothesis or dogma).[9] Evidently, Vaihinger does not state of his own theory that it is self-contradictory or provisional—he puts forth his thoughts as true, not *as-if* they were true. Yet, as we have seen in the compari-son of fiction and hypothesis, Vaihinger seems to indicate that "truth" is not an appropriate measure for logical tools and models of the world. Assuming that a philosophical theory may be counted as such, the proper way of assess-ing it would not be its actual factual realization but its usefulness for orienta-tion in the world. I will come back to this point in the discussion whether rules (in Searle) in general should be seen as fictions.

I now turn to three recent readings of Vaihinger that highlight his theoreti-cal commitments as they become relevant for my social ontological purposes in this paper.

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tension, the psyche aims to resolve this state as soon as it can, trying to verify the hypothesis and make it certain, that is, afford it as a dogmatically held belief. The sec-ond devolution is that of a fiction into a hypothesis. Vaihinger notes that sometimes fictions directly become dogmatic. The fiction presents an even higher degree of ten-sion for the psyche—it is not just uncertain but self-contradictory. So, the tendency is to want to resolve every fiction quickly either into a dogma or into a hypothesis. Yet, the "logical conscience" of consciously understanding fictions is a counterbalance to this tendency.

[8]Vaihinger (1922, 227). Vaihinger compares it to Comte's law of the three develop-mental stages of an idea, whereby Comte stresses the changing content and Vaihinger emphasizes the changing gestalt, the "formal change."

[9]Günther Gabriel in conversation.

Bouriau's recent book length, detailed exegesis of Vaihinger's work, provides a helpful way to understand Vaihinger's commitment to fictions in a positivist framework. Bouriau turns to Vaihinger for an answer to paradoxes of the form "fictional, yet effective."[10] Bouriau is puzzled by something we might call the reality—"*Wirklichkeit*"—of fictions. Vaihinger's own interest might not lie so much in the question of why what we imagine can be efficacious in the sense of having "real consequences," but, instead, how it relates us to what is real, that is, other than mental in quality.

Bouriau comes to the conclusion that Vaihinger shares important premises with pragmatists such as James, but that important differences separate him from the movement. Bouriau points out that in classical pragmatism, the good use of the idea provides it with a quality that can be called "true," whereas for Vaihinger, it is precisely that usefulness can go together with the falsity of an idea. Vaihinger is splitting the pragmatical-functional conflation of the terms "useful" and "true" (Bouriau 2013, 18, 93, 105, 223, and following). Bouriau secondly pays tribute to Vaihinger's reading of Kant, which brings out the aspects of as-if in Kant that had not been realized previously; thus, "fictionalism" as a theory is, according to Bouriau, the true Vaihingerian heir to Kant.[11] One example is Vaihinger's understanding of Kant's "Ding an sich" as useful fiction, not as hypothesis. We will, in turn, ask how mental representations (such as Vaihingerian fictions) relate us to the real in having real consequences.

Mäki maintains that uncertainty is not an enemy of realism—a lesson he intends to demonstrate with Vaihinger. His main *exegetic* aim is to show that a realist reading of Vaihinger is possible and why. He stresses that fictions, for Vaihinger, are not errors but strategic, deliberate falsehoods: *The awareness of falsity implies that the agent has the epistemic capacity to recognize falsehoods, to tell them from truths. This suggests that a version of*

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[10]Bouriau (2013, 10). Bouriau cites as examples for the phenomenon he has in mind three different cases—first, the emotional effectiveness of works of fiction that elicit a response despite the fact that the reader knows that the characters are mere figments of someone's imagination; second, the faith of a Christian who is moved by Christ's teachings but does not believe in the reality of Christ as son of God; and third, the autosuggestive healing powers of some "drug," which someone believes to be good for them.

[11]Bouriau (2013, 226). Vaihinger follows Lange and his own teacher Laas. Like Laas, who adapts a positivism in the spirit of Comte in the German speaking world, Vaihinger believes all metaphysical statements to be "fictions"—something that would probably make the theory in Kant's eyes dogmatic, as Bouriau points out.

epistemological realism is an integral part of Vaihingerian realism.[12] Mäki emphasizes that the use of the as-if locution itself does not commit the philosopher to an anti-realist or realist position.

A Vaihingerian as-if-notion is used in two aspects of model-making: (1) idealizing assumptions and (2) the formulation of modeling instructions. It can concern either what is represented or the "mechanics" of representation themselves (Mäki [2010] 2012, 11-12). This matches roughly with Vaihinger's distinction of concrete ideas that are fictions vis-à-vis fictions as tools or methods of thought. Mäki distinguishes between a prospective and retrospective use of the as-if locution. He cites the retrospective use as part of a scientific realism that Vaihinger himself favors where scientists retrospectively correct their false assumptions and theories.

Mäki does not make much of Vaihinger's distinction between hypothesis and fiction, and this delineates his position from Vaihingers. For Mäki, fictions seem to come into question not as useful in themselves but rather as future hypotheses. Mäki also emphasizes that model-systems are subject to conscious manipulation by the model-maker. Thus, the properties of the system are subject to the volitions of the maker (Mäki [2010] 2012, 9). This is similar to but still significantly different from what can be called the *as-if stance* of the thinker in Vaihinger's conception: though Vaihinger assumes it to be a necessity that there are manifold renderings of reality, he does not think we can freely manipulate them. Our responses to the impact of the world are more automatic or "organic." He employs both images: the psyche as pearl (the organic analogy) and the psyche as self-optimizing machine (the mechanical analogy); though the as-if stance leads us to realize the relation between our mental life as "embodied response" to the world, this response is not up to us and cannot be manipulated at will.

Iser appreciates that Vaihinger renders fictions as mental operations that are not reduced to a mimetic task but that with the help of fictions reality is worked through. Fictions take part in the shaping of the world.[13] Iser criticizes that Vaihinger's theory results in what he calls a "florilegium of fictions." He deems such a (negative) result inevitable since Vaihinger fails to emancipate "fiction" completely from an epistemological purpose (Iser 1991, 261). Fiction will remain the handmaiden to truth in a strictly epistemological framework. It is part of my aim to show an application of Vaihinger's ideas that exceeds strict epistemology in showing how the as-if stance is action-guiding.

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[12]Mäki ([2010] 2012, 5). Mäki thus turns against Fine's antirealist reading.
[13]Iser (1991), see chapter 3 on fiction in the philosophical discourse, especially pp. 226-261 on Vaihinger.

Iser himself develops a model in which "fictive," "real," and "imaginary" are three modes of mental engagement with the environment, alternately activating each other and instantiating the ways in which human plasticity forms the world. We will choose a different route and reapply Vaihinger to the linguistic context of declaration-making; what is needed in our context is, therefore, not an amendment in terms of adjusting the theory with regard to mental modes but a new look at how the as-if stance is tied in with the realization of collective recognition, that is, the introduction of a theory of meaning into the realm of the Vaihingerian fiction.

Iser points out that some of the unambiguousness of Bentham's linguistically oriented approach is lost to Vaihinger.[14] If "fiction" is not tied to language, anymore, but has moved into the mind as a category of consciousness, the defining features of fiction have to be found elsewhere than in language. Vaihinger does have a section on as-if as linguistic expression, but here it is simply a linguistic representation of the as-if figure of thought (Vaihinger 1922, 154). By giving us the four specific features of mental fictions, fictions have then been cut loose from their representational aspects that concern the shared public space of meaning.

Yet, interestingly, the realization of the as-if stance relates us to our own standing in the world. This does not make our mental processes arbitrary or manipulable at will, according to Vaihinger, but it enhances our knowledge of ourselves in the world which Vaihinger ultimately deems action-affording.

We can summarize Vaihinger's position as follows: The as-if as mental stance and/or locution expresses a specific form of self-reference. As-if is self-referential in the sense of expressing an understanding of the nature of thought processes. To take up an as-if stance is to understand some ideas, concepts, but also logical tools for thought, that is, some mental representations, as fictions: the bearer of a mental state in the as-if mode understands that her mental state is necessarily different from the states of affairs it represents. Vaihinger's philosophy allows us to stress the historical genesis of beliefs, both in describing a cultural evolution of knowledge as well as the individual's growing into intellectual maturity. Vaihinger also makes room for a functionalist explanation of particular thoughts or ideas as fictions and fictions as methods of thought, notably in the realm of science. This stage of understanding marks the important last phase of a growing grasp of "how the world is."[15]

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[14]Bentham's approach is cited by Vaihinger, and it is frequently seen as a predecessor (Iser 1991, 226; Vaihinger 1922, 354).

[15]Vaihinger takes into account the general difference between the world-perceived and our conceptual tools of coping with it. His account of perception does not necessarily have to be understood as strongly representationalist, leading into the difficulty of the logical "invisibility" of the world per se.

A subsequent observation is that, in terms of methodology, Vaihinger can be seen as an individualist to the extent that he assumes that ideas undergo a development of different stages for each individual thinker. This makes him compatible with contemporary theories committed to a methodological individualism, such as Searle's. It also poses the same theoretical challenges of needing to demonstrate in what way the collective is necessarily realized in the mental states, stances, and speech acts of individual agents. Vaihinger's model is already theoretically open to an intentionalist action-theory by underwriting three important premises—realism about perception, individualism about intentional motives, and functionalism about a certain form of fiction as a thinking tool.

4. Reading Vaihinger for a Social Ontology

Both Vaihinger and Searle remain methodological individualists. Vaihinger is concerned with an explanation of knowledge as the individual psyche's "organic" response to the world around it. His model can be seen as using the individual ("man") as exemplary for everybody. His focus rests on knowledge concerning the "natural world." Knowledge concerning the collective making of the world, as in a history of ideas, is taken into account in terms of a general development of the theory of as-if and logical conscience and in the explanation of the devolution of ideas. Vaihinger neither gives us an explanation of the individual's firm grounding in a *collective* constitution of beliefs and theories nor a contingent historical explanation of how theories come to be collectively accepted and collectively rejected nor a genealogy of knowledge as collective pooling enterprise that elicits truthfulness as virtue from participants and motivates them to seek truth. Vaihinger's model lacks an explanatory realm where our theories and concepts could be *real and effective* with reference to their collective constitution. The sense that they have the validity of constitution we share as sign-users is only implicit in the assumption of "science" as a collective historical endeavor.

Searle emphasizes the need to account for the *knowledge of* "social structures" and the need for an explanation of their normative makeup. This is at the heart of his project of a philosophy of society. His theory of intentionality and rationality in action commits him to always individually motivating reasons for action, whether this should concern "I intentions" or "we intentions." Searle develops a linguistic model of normativity that is backed up by the hypothesis of a cultural background that is "a mechanism that evolved precisely so that it will be sensitive to the rules" (Searle 1995, 146).

What both, therefore, need is a comprehensive explanation of the connection between collective *intentionality* and the individual mental as well as the tacit, non-rule-structured realizations of this collectivity: a story of how the first person perspective of experience, mental representation, and *collective* cultural accustomization translates into the third person perspective of language and deonticity that is agency affording *for the individual*.

A good way to identify ways of relating to the world, as well as showing how mental representations are causally and structurally linked to speech acts, is the analysis of their "direction of fit"[16]: John Searle establishes an entire taxonomy of mental states and their corresponding speech acts with regard to their direction of fit. Importantly, Searle's philosophy of society hones in on the way in which we can transfer status functions that let us do new things by virtue of the collective acceptance of others.[17] One way of setting them apart from other speech acts is to say that they have a "double direction of fit." The entire structure of social reality can be understood, according to Searle, once we understand it to consist of declarations of the form: "y" is declared! in which "y" is the new collectively recognized status.[18] We can only qua declaration be allowed or obligated to do things, and the things we can do that are allowed or required are of a different kind than those outside of these "deontic" categories. They have a meaning that is found not by understanding them as symptoms of a status quo but by

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[16]It is first prominently mentioned, with regard to both aspects, in a famous passage about the shopper and the detective by Elisabeth Anscombe, in Anscombe (1957, Section 32).

[17]It is here only my goal to really use two aspects particular to Searle's model: the idea of the direction of fit showing the correspondence between mental states and speech acts, and the notion of status function declarations that confer rights and obligations via collective acceptance and constitute "meaning."

[18]Earlier on, Searle used the formula, "x" counts as "y" in context "c," to describe the construction of social reality. This older formula has the advantage of explicitly showing that a material "x" is now carrier of a new status "y" qua declaration (i.e., qua collective acceptance, not qua its material constitution); it has the disadvantage of not capturing cases in which no specific "x" can be identified (cases of so-called free-standing "y" terms), but which, nonetheless, bottom out in new rights and duties for the members of the institutions in question. Regardless of the difference, the model shows that different "y" statuses can be iterated infinitely, forming the complex net of social reality, and that they translate into rights and duties, that is, into ways of acting that become possible not qua material configuration, habit, or ability but by virtue of the collective granting of permission and recognition of the new status "y" as requisite for the new action (Searle 1995; 2010, 19).

understanding them as products of someone's consciousness—they have speaker-intended communicative meaning, and their use is symbolic.[19]

Arto Laitinen has recently pointed out some formal difficulties of the double direction of fit of declarations: if we, as in Anscombe's example, look at the infelicitous cases to determine which side needs to give into the fit, we are understanding fit by understanding what constitutes failure. Yet, in the case of declarations, we find that it is unclear which side should be made to achieve fit, if there is a *symmetrical* double direction of fit—we would be at an impasse.

Let us take a closer look at declarations and the way in which they can fail: if we imagine a priest declaring a willing couple to be husband and wife, there are three contextual ways in which the declaration can fail:

i.   The priest was a fraud;
ii. The groom was a gorilla and/or the bride was out of her mind; or
iii. The community in question did not understand what "marriage" was supposed to mean.

We can see that either the declarer or the "x" upon which the new status is to be conferred or the accepting collective can fall short of the required standard, thus, making the declaration fail. Here, the context in question becomes part of the conditions of satisfaction of the declaration. On the part of the declarer, it involves knowing what standards are required for the declaration to be suitably performed and what making a declaration thus "means," this meaning being a collectively recognized, linguistic property of the particular action of making a declaration.

What is more, I think we can see that *declaring* is not merely a matter of intending to do something and knowing something else or any other combination of cognitive and volitive elements. Instead, it involves a particular connection between the intention and the knowledge that rests on the recognition of the specific nature of declarations as collectively constituted and linguistically instantiated. This *constitutive* way of interacting with the world requires language and community and is, as far as we can tell today, limited to social animals in possession of a language.

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[19]Tuomela similarly gives the example of squirrel pelt being used as money in earlier days: Squirrel pelt can be used as money because we are making it into money by taking it to be money. For Tuomela, the creation and maintenance of such facts is especially dependent upon a suitable "we attitude." See, for example, Tuomela (1995).

Mastering language for purposes of communication entails knowing the difference between natural and nonnatural signs. This distinction goes back to Grice. It is important for an understanding of deonticity and deontic forms of agency: We are able to tell apart situations that are meaningful for us by understanding their qualities as symptoms indicating a status quo, from those situations in which meaning is created by others as speakers intending to reach out to us communicatively. Once this knowledge is reflected theoretically, we can also explain how speaker-intended meanings can be conferred onto objects that then have a new significance and power resting on collective recognition of meaning. Their use enables actions other than mechanical actions but instead deontic actions that are based on the acceptance of said status. Yet, this theory needs to show a connection between the individual's motivating intentions and the collective recognition of linguistic structures. Such a connection can be established by introducing a Vaihingerian as-if as mental stance:

The self-reflexive as-if stance that we have seen in Vaihinger's law of the devolution of ideas *is* the mental state that speakers take up when they are making declarations. The mental as-if of declaration-making is part of a collective endeavor of establishing deontic structures and relations that afford agents a whole range of different actions. If this mental operation going on while making a declaration should have the Vaihingerian as-if structure of a fiction, then it must be—as we have seen—self-contradictory, provisional, conscious, and purposive. Let us see if it fulfills these requirements.

The maker of a declaration claims something to be the case because it is collectively accepted, but she herself cannot bring about the collective acceptance; we could say that she must "suspend the collective disbelief." This fact about declarations makes them self-contradictory in some sense because the maker of the declarations wants to and, indeed, "pretends to" make something the case without being able to do so herself. This fact also makes declarations provisional because the suspension must cease and be replaced by real acceptance lest the declaration fail. It makes them purposive because it is directed toward the telos of a felicitous coming about of the declared relation or deontic fact, and it must be conscious in the same sense that Vaihingerian fictions are conscious—that is, the maker of the declaration is not required to actively think about the disparity between the represented and the representation but in general must (tacitly) know that there is a difference between statements/beliefs, directives/intentions, and declarations.

The as-if as a self-reflexive quality of certain logical mental operations occurs in the minds of individuals. It can therefore be understood as one of the motives for action intended by the individual as agent in that it has a motivating force on the individual agent. At the same time, it is the idea of an as-if

as part of the mental representation of the conditions of satisfaction of *declarations* that forms the nexus between the individual and the collective. In such an application, the as-if not only still remains situated in individual minds and functions there as part of the success conditions the individual is aware of but also forms the connection to collective practices such as instantiation and maintenance of deontic relations, that is, interpersonal rights, and duty relations.

My analysis is based on a moderate version of methodological individualism. I locate the as-if as mental operation in the heads of individuals. It is understood functionally as a motive. It secondly orients the representation of the collective practice in the heads of individuals, whereby the (epistemic) stance of the individual vis-à-vis this practice plays a role. In this respect, my proposal is different from other current social ontological models (e.g., Searle's) because the conscious self-referentiality of agents toward their actions plays a constituting role for the practice in question. I have identified this stance as a Vaihingerian as-if stance toward a mental operation that might be labeled "fiction" with Vaihinger. It is expressed as a knowledge about practices as shared and deontic, knowing it is reflected in knowing what it means to be obligated or allowed to do something.

For an initial discussion of my proposal, I will focus on two issues. I will first ask how the mental state of declarations is specifically different from that of directives/orders. This question arises especially with regard to some of their seemingly similar conditions of satisfaction. I will secondly turn to the question whether we can and need to find a mental state corresponding to declarations, at all, since declarations are uniquely language dependent, a feature they do not share with intentions and beliefs.

4.1. The Conditions of Satisfaction of Declarations

A question poses itself with regard to the specific set of conditions of satisfaction of declarations: Is the collectivity assumption that I propose and that I call the declarer's "suspension of collective disbelief" part of the conditions of satisfaction of declarations? Or do declarations rather have a more general contextuality requirement for success, something that they share with representational mental states, in general? At least for directives and intentions some external context requirement needs to be met—a status quo needs adjusting, an action needs completion, or the like—in order for the mental state to be successful and in order for world and mental state to achieve fit. Even for beliefs and statements, though here the mental state achieves fit by reporting truthfully on the state of affairs, there is some contextuality requirement in place because the truthfulness of the report will be matched against how things are.

Mäki insists on the volitional aspect present in model-making that corresponds to the as-if of Vaihingerian fictions; this is reflected in our case in the balance between the volition of making a declaration and the noncorrespondence of the actual facts in the world to this initial making of the declaration. They declare something the case that cannot be the case, yet (1) because it is only so after or because of the declaration and (2) because it depends on collective acceptance. Before this acceptance has been achieved, the success of the declaration is in question.

What are the specifically different conditions of satisfaction of declarations?

It is the *stating* of the declaration that presumably makes it the case. The stating rests on a "suspension of collective disbelief." For all agents, the logical requirements of the action they are about to perform become part of the conditions of satisfaction of the action and that they are consciously known to the agent, otherwise the agent could not aim at achieving success with that particular action. The same holds for makers of declarations: They need to be conscious of the collectivity requirement while attempting the declaration. Whether or not this collective acceptance is later on—contextually—granted and, thus, makes the declaration successful is yet another question. Declarations share the contextuality requirement for the granting and evaluation of their success with other states that have world-to-mind direction of fit. It is not the same as the collective acceptance assumption that marks the specific difference of the set of conditions of satisfaction of declarations for the making of declarations.

4.2. The Language-dependence of Declarations

We find speech acts and mental states in accord depending on their direction of fit: beliefs and statements must fit the world they report on, intentions and orders must aim at making the world fit to their contents. Declarations, too, have a mental equivalent, namely, the as-if structure of the suspension of collective disbelief. Beliefs and intentions are independent of language and can be realized by the solitary individual in a way that is precluded to the mental equivalent of declarations. It does not allow for a realization completely "outside of language." This is due to the collective nature of such actions.

Now, we can also see that in order to make statements, we have to presuppose the mental state "belief," and in order to give orders, we have to have the mental state "intention" in place. The speech act is in this way derivative of or dependent on its corresponding mental state. It must be discussed whether there could be a corresponding mental state to declarations on which they are

based in a similar way. Yet, there is nothing that the individual can do *qua individual* that is an equivalent of declaration-making, whereas individuals *can* hold beliefs and intentions on their own without further linguistic expression or realization as speech act. Nothing an individual can do individually and merely mentally could be the equivalent to declaration-making.

Individuals can form thoughts that Vaihinger calls "fictions" independently of collectives. We have not conclusively demonstrated that they are the same kind of states as the as-if stance that causally corresponds to declarations, and I shall here not aim at such a general demonstration. But individuals must hold a particular type of mental state while making declarations, which is self-referential, self-contradictory, provisional, purposive, and conscious (in a minimal way)—in a word: a Vaihingerian fiction. This as-if stance is held vis-à-vis the fact that a declaration is different from other speech acts and other ways of relating to the world. Declarers must know that declarations neither simply report on state of affairs nor do they order them to be altered. They are *taking something to be the case by making it the case*. This requires the help of the collective. Makers of declarations are required to have a minimal realization that declarations are something categorically different from other forms of representation of states of affairs in the world. They differ in that they represent a state of affairs that has collectively conferred meaning, that is subject to collective acceptance, that can be changed by making a declaration, and that depends upon collective agreement or "realization."

Searle sometimes indicates that the whole complex deontic machinery of a society with its institutions and many iterations of status functions "works best" if the people do not think about it.[20] Are we to presume that the thinking about the deontic machinery could be left to a few devoted experts—philosophers, for example? The "thinking about it" would then have to remain epiphenomenal, in general, because it is unclear how the whole enterprise would benefit functionally from those expert thoughts. The majority of participants would never need to think about anything.

Following Vaihinger, the stance of the maker of a declaration plays an important role for the deontic practice in question. This claim should be understood to entail only a minimal requirement of awareness on the part of the maker of a declaration. It is simply the awareness that there are different types of validity that come with the different ways of relating to the world,

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[20]This is one of the reasons why Searle appeals to the Background as explanation for "unconscious rule-following": Searle (1995, 127) and a critique on this notion in Turner (1999).

whereby "true/false" validates reports and beliefs, "executed or not" validates orders and intentions, "useful or not" validates mental fictions (as Vaihinger suggests), and "accepted or not" validates declarations. Only the last case, "accepted or not," entails the assumption of a collective, and (1) the declaration is, thus, dependent on a linguistic realization in the wider sense (it must be communicated)—and until that realization the declaration remains pending, (2) the "suspension of collective disbelief" is given in the as-if stance or mental fiction of the maker of the declaration, and (3) only given this stance, we can agentially constitute a realm of deonticity, meaning as a special case the making of a declaration (as linguistic realizations).

> Somebody might object, Aren't you really saying that it is "as if" we were following the rules. But then that doesn't really explain anything, since if there is no real intentionality, the "as if" intentionality doesn't explain anything. As-if intentionality has no causal power because it does not really exist. (Searle 1995, 145-46)

Searle attempts a twofold explanation to meet this interlocutor's objection—first, an evolutionary story of the causal mechanism that establishes a "real" connection between the mental framework of individuals and their accustomization to a normative, cultural background; second, a general explanation of a "socially created normative component," which hinges on collective intentionality (Turner 1999, 223). Such an explanation depends on a "we accept" that is realized epistemically. Vaihinger tells us the evolutionary story of how a "we accept" can be both as-if *and* causally effective.

Searle faces yet another challenge with the revision of "'x' counts as 'y' in 'c'" to "'y' is declared": if the material "x" is given up, Searle is much closer to other constructivist accounts as before. As Turner points out in his critique, the status of mental realizations that are "purely fictional," that is, not realized in speech acts, remains problematic:

> And if these formulae are not actually spoken by anyone, are purely fictional, then it may seem that we are no better off than we were when they were disembodied, tacit rules, as they were in *Speech Acts*. (Turner, 1999, p. 220)

In consequence, the postulate of the Background seems to partially call into question the linguistic, intentionalistic explanation of the rule-structured model of deonticity.

A Vaihingerian solution to this cluster of problems surrounding the mediation between tacit rules, non-intentionalistic, potentially "behavioristic" explanations as in the hypothesis of the Background, and intentional normative

rule-structures as in a model of declarations could be the following: Status Function Declarations are rule-governed speech acts. Yet, in an epistemic reality, nobody needs to state them and nobody needs to really follow any rules because their assumption is not a hypothesis that must be demonstrable but rather a fiction that has to prove itself fit according to the explanatory work that it does. Searle himself seems to have moved closer to this answer with the revision of his model in his 2010 *Making of the Social World*.

Vaihinger's main point is that the as-if structure of certain thought operations he calls "fictions" is useful for us: Such fictions are characterized as self-contradictory, provisional, conscious, and purposive. They are representing but are, therefore, also necessarily nonidentical with what we might call "brute reality" (Searle)—for this reason, Vaihinger calls them "false." He describes as "logical consciousness" an as-if stance of thinkers toward their thought operations in which they realize them as such Vaihingerian consciously false but useful fictions. He demonstrates how our orientation, indeed our advancement in the world, depends on them.

Searle's model revolves on a necessary connection between collective intentionality, the linguistic tools to instantiate it, and on individually motivating mental states. The individual mental as-if structure of the stance that I have baptized "suspension of collective disbelief" is, as I have shown, self-contradictory, provisional, conscious, and purposive, and therefore qualifies as Vaihingerian fiction. The as-if mental state corresponds causally to the speech act "declaration." Because it is part of the conditions of satisfaction of declarations, it is *conscious*. To understand how tacit cultural background knowledge and intentional agency can be mediated, we need to show how third and first person perspectives are interlinked: The as-if of the mental representation as the individual's awareness of the collective constitution of deonticity enables the declaration of status functions. They enable *collectively* ratified deontic actions. Declaring allows us, on the other hand, to *individually* shape the part of the world that we constitute with others. We not only do so with aesthetic fictions, Vaihingerian scientific fictions, such as models or theories, but also with deontic practices. If status function declarations are rule-structured, and rules are a Vaihingerian fiction, the model put forth is neither descriptive as a hypothesis would be nor normative as an ethical postulate would be, but rather it is valid for us as a logical tool.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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