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3 On Tacit Knowledge for Philosophy of Education

4 Oliver Belas¹

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30 Introduction

31 This article offers a detailed reading Gascoigne and Thornton's *Tacit Knowledge* (2013), in
32 which the authors attempt to account for the tacitness of tacit knowledge (TK) while
33 preserving its status as knowledge proper. Against two conceptions of knowledge which
34 they call the Principles of Codifiability and Inarticulacy—which state, respectively, that
35 “[a]ll knowledge can be fully articulated, or codified, in context-independent terms”, and
36 that “[t]here can be knowledge that cannot be articulated”—Gascoigne and Thornton posit
37 the Principle of Articulacy: “All knowledge can be articulated, either in context-inde-
38 pendent terms (i.e. it can be codified) or in context-dependent terms” (2013, 4, 5). Context-
39 dependency is their mark of tacitness, for it is propitious context that allows TK to be
40 articulated or, as it were, to speak. They thus define TK as “context-dependent but con-
41 ceptually structured practical or personal knowledge” (167).

42 While there is much to recommend Gascoigne and Thornton's book, I take issue with
43 their characterization and rejection of the existential-phenomenological Background, and
44 with their claim that TK can be articulated “**from within**” (see, e.g., 167). In what follows,
45 I argue that much of what goes for TK, so-called, goes for knowledge generally; that
46 knowledge cannot be separated from the Background (or, preferably, “worldhood”); **and**
47 **that knowledge is not articulated from within: to claim that it is betrays a residual**
48 **Cartesianism, and is a result of Gascoigne and Thornton's elision of conceptuality and**
49 **propositionality.** Knowledgeable acts, I contend, instantiate capacities which we might
50 know we have and of which we can be aware, but which are not propositionally *structured*
51 at their “core”. Nevertheless, propositionality is necessary to what Brandom (2000) calls
52 “explicitation”, which also of necessity presupposes a tacit *dimension*.

53 Having made their way through the sections dealing with tacit and other modalities of
54 knowledge, readers may wonder what the implications are of such an account for theory
55 and philosophy of education. Firstly, the present essay stands opposed, and, hopefully, as a
56 corrective, to the modish (in England, at least) yet critically flawed discourses of
57 “knowledge-based” education (the programmes and critiques associated with and offered
58 by, for example, E.D. Hirsch and Daisy Christodoulou).¹ Secondly, at a moment in Eng-
59 land when the teaching and learning of knowledge is a going political concern, careful
60 reassessment of TK—the best-known slogan of which (“we know more than we can tell”
61 [Polanyi 2009, 4]) is familiar to educational philosophy and taken as a given more often
62 than it is analyzed—cannot fail to have implications for our understanding of knowledge,
63 per se; of our conceptions of the knower and what it is to know. This article's educational
64 purchase, then, is primarily at the level of educational policy-making and curriculum-
65 building. I hope to expose the continued, apparently “commonsense” diremptions of
66 knowledge/skills and knowledge/(higher-level-)understanding as *nonsensical*, and to con-
67 vince the reader that no conception of knowledge can do without the embodied and
68 corporeal person: *the knower*. On the view pressed herein, there is no knowledgeable act
69 that can be understood as such separately from the notion of *skilled corporeal*
70 **AQ1** *performance*.

1FL01 ¹ See, e.g. Hirsch (1988), Christodoulou (2014), Policy Exchange (2015).



71 Conceptuality, Fluidity, and Background Being

72 In Heidegger and Dreyfus's reading of him, Gascoigne and Thornton find that "both
73 knowing *how* and knowing *that* are" thought to be "founded on a sort of *ur*-knowing how,
74 which comprises the background" (47). However, they claim, "no such (putatively
75 explanatory) domain" as positive accounts of the Background propound is needed, because
76 where TK is concerned "nothing is (in principle) hidden from view" (131). If the contents
77 of the Background are inarticulable, then there is no sense in which they can be called
78 knowledge, which must be *of* something. If they *are* articulable, then there is no sense in
79 which they are constitutive of a background: instead, "*it is Foreground all the way*"
80 (118–19).

81 Gascoigne and Thornton's critique of the Heideggerian Background is carried out
82 indirectly, in part, by reading Dreyfus's notion of fluid coping ("simultaneously the highest
83 and most basic form of engagement with the world" [Wrathall 2014, 4]) unfavourably
84 against McDowell's defence of pervasive conceptuality. Repudiating the so-called "Myth
85 of the Pervasiveness of the Mental" (see Dreyfus 2005a, 2013), Dreyfus claims not to
86 reject mindedness, *per se*, but the *priority* of conceptual mindedness to intentional action.
87 McDowell, in his turn, agrees with Dreyfus that this myth of the Mental is to be rejected.
88 The twinned ideas that, "if mindedness informs an experience, the subject has a detached
89 contemplative relation to the world she experiences, and that if mindedness informs an
90 action, the agent has a detached monitoring relation to what she is doing" have little
91 purchase (McDowell 2013, 41). However, mind-detachment is not what McDowell means
92 by claiming "that mindedness is pervasive. [...] We should not pretend to find a detached
93 self in all our experiencing and acting" (*ibid.*), which would amount not to mind-perva-
94 siveness but to a "Myth of Mind as Detached" (*ibid.*). Pervasive "conceptuality", for
95 McDowell, does not entail mind-detachment; it *does* guard against the reductive naturalism
96 that runs alongside the Myth of the Given, which "we can avoid", writes McDowell, "if
97 we hold that in the experiencing itself, capacities that belong to their subject's rationality
98 are in play" (*ibid.*, 42). McDowell does not dispute that we cope fluidly in the ways
99 Dreyfus describes, but, he argues, such coping must nevertheless be conceptual.

100 Take colour-recognition. No matter how large a person's colour vocabulary, her cor-
101 poreal sensitivity to chromatic differences, all things being equal, outstrips her linguistic
102 ability to name them. But being unable to affix a unique name to a particular shade-
103 occurrence is not an instance of non-conceptual experience, for our always-already
104 operative concepts of colour and shade allow for such situation-specific demonstrative
105 utterances as: (i) "*that* shade of *x*"; (ii) "*this*, rather than *that*, shade of *x*"; or (iii) "*that* ...
106 is the same shade of *x* as"² But such utterances **alone do ensure** conceptuality; it is also
107 necessary "that the associated capacity [for recognition] can persist into the future, if only
108 for a short time, and that, having persisted, it can be used also in thoughts about what is by
109 then past, if only the recent past" (see [iii]).³ So conceptuality is not, for McDowell, mind-
110 detachment, a matter of adopting a putatively third-person orientation to one's own first-
111 person Being-in-the-world. The critical distance that Dreyfus takes to indicate this stance
112 in McDowell is actually an experiential-temporal distance (see McDowell 2013, 43–45),
113 by which conceptuality can emerge significantly.

2FL01 ² On colour-recognition, see McDowell (1994, Lecture III, sect. 5).

3FL01 ³ McDowell (1994, 57; qtd 2013, 44).



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114 Having defined conceptuality in these terms, McDowell claims that Dreyfus has yet to
115 explain why engaged, non-reflective rationality cannot be operative all ways through—
116 *pervasively*, one might say—human-Being and agency; he has not explained why fluid
117 coping and conceptuality must be mutually exclusive (McDowell 2013, 54). Fair comment,
118 this, for where fluid coping results from practiced repetition,⁴ McDowellian conceptuality
119 is surely involved: without it, repeated actions would count only as reflex motions and
120 twitches. However, just as Dreyfus fails to show why pervasive conceptuality cannot
121 accommodate or be accommodated by fluid coping, neither does Gascoigne and Thorn-
122 ton’s siding with McDowell clearly nullify the existential-phenomenological Background.

123 As Dreyfus notes, Background has no fixed term in Heidegger other than Dasein’s basic
124 Being-in-the-world (1993, 90). This being the case, “worldhood” is in many ways
125 preferable to “Background”, as it avoids both the sense of obnubilation to which Gas-
126 coigne and Thornton object, and the propositional hypostatization of practical knowledge
127 (see “[Propositionality and Conceptuality](#)” section below). If Being-in-the-world “amounts
128 to a non-thematic circumspective absorption in [the] references or assignments” by which
129 the stuff of our routine involvements becomes significant (Heidegger 1962, 107), then
130 “worldhood” is a mode of Being by which *this* or *that* world (of a Dasein) is disclosed as
131 such. “Worldhood” just is the way Dasein orients itself towards and within its world, and
132 by which Dasein’s world emerges, or is disclosed, *as significant* (see *ibid.*, 92).

133 McDowell assumes that the always-already-known and always-already-articulable are
134 correlative of the “distinctive self-knowledge of an agent”, which consists not only in
135 “knowledge of *what* she is doing, but also knowledge of *why* she is doing it”. It “does not
136 matter” that answering these *What?* and *Why?* questions “will break the flow” of initial
137 activity; what is important is that answering these questions, which, in normal circum-
138 stances an agent always can, “gives expression to something [an agent] already knew when
139 she was acting in flow” (2013, 47). This is similar to Heidegger’s formulation of Dasein as
140 a locus constituted by and constitutive of always-already familiar involvements (see
141 Heidegger 1962, 107); or, in other words—and just as Dasein *as* Being-in-the-world is
142 always-already familiar with its own Being—the familiarity that McDowell presupposes is
143 rather like that which Heidegger calls the “worldhood” of a Dasein’s world.

144 In neither McDowellian mindedness nor Heideggerian disclosure is a “having-*in-mind*”
145 necessary. My fluid compartments within, towards, and by dint of the worldhood of my
146 world just are their significances; they signify involvements constituting my environing
147 contexture.⁵ Entering a room by way of the door thanks to functional command of door-
148 ways, doors and door-handles is significant of my fluid coping *vis-à-vis* doorways, doors,
149 and door-handles: it is only because such involvements necessitate conceptuality that we
150 can cope as we do; only because conceptuality pervades that disruptions in our coping-
151 streams show up *as* disruptions *in* this or that engagement. McDowell writes that “making
152 the content in question explicit—even if the subject first has to acquire the means to do
153 that—does not make the content newly conceptual [...]. It was conceptual already”
154 (McDowell 2013, 43). Recall, too, McDowell’s point about breaks in flow indicating, *not*
155 countering, presumption of the always-already-known. Heidegger writes that the modal
156 transition by which objectual involvements go from ready-to-hand to present-at-hand “is
157 thrust to the fore by the possible breaks in that referential totality in which circumspec-
158 tion”—our fluid engagements with our contexture—“operates” (Heidegger 1962, 107).
159 In Heideggerian terms, then, McDowell’s assumption of the always-already-conceptual

4FL01 ⁴ E.g., Wrathall (2014); Dreyfus (2005a, b, 2014, *passim*).

5FL01 ⁵ “Contexture” is taken from Heidegger (1988, 1–24, *passim*).



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160 nature of day-to-day compartment grounds the possibility of the (normally) ready-to-hand
161 showing up as present-at-hand in the moment of blockage or disruption. Were a door-
162 handle unexpectedly not to function, as one attempted to make one's way into a room,
163 one's normal fluid coping would be disrupted momentarily, but in a manner that is con-
164 ceptually significant—not anew, but still—and shaped in relation to the otherwise always-
165 already familiar contexture.

166 Gascoigne and Thornton, then, are right when they say that nothing in principle is
167 hidden from view, but this is beside the point: it is the always-already-familiarity of
168 Being—which is not “behind” knowledge, as the “Background” metaphor suggests, but *in*
169 it—that is at stake in worldhood and conceptuality. Perhaps the visual metaphor is a little
170 misleading: the fact that something is not hidden does not mean we are looking at or for it,
171 nor that we are bound to mark it. To the extent that TK in Gascoigne and Thornton is
172 contextually constrained, they presuppose Background-as-worldhood precisely *because*
173 they endorse McDowellian conceptuality: what they are calling “context” is surely
174 something rather like worldhood, which, I have tried to show, is also operative in
175 McDowell. Just as McDowell believes Dreyfus's objections to be correct but founded on a
176 misreading, such is the case with Gascoigne and Thornton's reading of Background-as-
177 worldhood. Worldhood is not that which hangs vaporously behind us, out of view; it is
178 bound up in the very possibility of conceptuality and is a precondition for knowledge, as
179 we will now see.

180 Embodiment, Conceptuality, and Propositionality

181 **If, rather than obviating it, Gascoigne and Thornton seem to require worldhood, then one**
182 **reason for this is seeing McDowell as cancelling, rather than correcting, Dreyfus. Another**
183 **is conceiving TK as being “articulated from ‘within’.” This takes it for granted that**
184 **knowledge, being conceptual and person-al, is “in” the mind, as thoughts are said to be**
185 **“in” one's head. The train of thought, roughly, is: because TK is personal-practical know-**
186 **how, where a person has *knowledge* it must be of something and held “in” the mind.**
187 **Knowledge is tacit when it cannot be expressed separately from an appropriate context. On**
188 **this view, knowledge lays dormant “in” the mind until one is in a situation appropriate for**
189 **its arousal and expression.**

190 The location of knowledge is problematized by the uses to which “in” is put. When we
191 say things like “worldhood is articulated *in* our bodily engagements with the world”, the
192 preposition is used to mean “by”, “through”, “as”, even “between”; it is used to mean
193 “inside” when we say things like “knowledge is *in* the mind”. The latter use indicates a
194 Cartesian-dualistic schema of inside/outside, which Taylor calls the I/O epistemological
195 “picture” (2005, 26). He argues that, despite its overt rejection, Cartesianism persists in
196 various modified forms: we often “find the [I/O] picture invoked within an argument that is
197 meant to repudiate that very picture” (*ibid.*, 29).⁶ To truly move beyond Cartesian dualism
198 requires a revised conception of the location of mindedness and a renewed appreciation of
199 both the role of the body and the condition of embodiment in grounding the possibility of
200 knowledge. Pippin explains that the type of rationality to which McDowell is committed is
201 not a “‘situation-independent’ notion of rational normativity, much less any claim that
202 successful coping must be the result of explicit or even implicit rule-following”. Rather,
203 writes Pippin, McDowellian rationality “is ‘in’ action, not ‘behind’ action” (2013, 93).

6FL01 ⁶ See also Taylor (2013).



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204 “Conceptuality” is the condition of possibility of rational experience, for without it “we
205 would have no basis for the kind of attentiveness and discrimination by virtue of which an
206 experience of a single subject through time would be possible” (Pippin 2013, 98). As
207 suggested above, it is in the temporally grounded unity of corporeal-mindedness (or,
208 indeed, minded-corporeality) that a distinctly human subjectivity or agency emerges as
209 such. Quotidian disruptions, of the broken-door-handles-type, are possible only on the
210 basis of our *apperceptively* taking things to be thus-and-so, in the face of the possibility of
211 our *apperceptively* revising such takings. Thus, where conceptuality does not entail
212 detached self-monitoring, seeing-and-taking something to be *that* something, whether or
213 not it ends up subject to revision, just “is the way we *see*; it is not a seeing also ‘monitored’
214 by a self-conscious I” (Pippin 2013, 101).

215 McDowellian conceptuality is therefore relocated, from “in” the mind to the corporeal
216 person—conceived as an integrated whole and not as a mere sum-total of live functioning
217 body-parts⁷—because “[e]xperience is not guided by sensations; it *is* sensory awareness
218 and can only be sensory awareness [...] if it has the power of discrimination, a conceiving
219 power actualized sensorily” (Pippin 2013, 102). We might add a Heideggerian blue-note to
220 this, by saying that *experience is sensory awareness shot through with significance*. On
221 both the McDowellian and Dreyfusian models, then, mindedness is reciprocally consti-
222 tutive of and constituted by corporeal persons, just as Heideggerian worldhood(-of-the-
223 world) is constitutive of Dasein.

224 On the view being pressed here, mindedness is not constituted by internally “held”
225 propositionally structured descriptions or pictures of the world (see Taylor 2005, 2014), but
226 emerges from what Merleau-Ponty calls “the dialectic of milieu and action”.⁸ We see this
227 in the deliberate, repeated actions of pre-verbal children, whose worldly engagements
228 signify equipmental functions and test environmental affordances;⁹ we see it in persons’
229 unexplicated understandings of where-and-when they are, which knowledge grounds—
230 even while, for the most part, it is not the focus of attention—their ability to go on
231 effectively, as the situation allows. Such scenarios depict *conceptual, knowledgeable*
232 copings. But although knowledge is always-already conceptual, this is not to say that it
233 always has or needs a tongue. The pre-linguistic child’s knowledge and my knowledge-
234 where-and-when exemplify knowledge as conceptual without being propositionally or
235 linguistically *structured at “base”*. Propositionality is **neither** the ground of knowledge,
236 nor is it synonymous with conceptuality. The corporeal person is the ground of concep-
237 tuality, knowledge, and, further “up” the chain, as it were, propositionality. Dreyfus is
238 mistaken in opposing fluid coping to conceptuality; but his work, like McDowell’s, cau-
239 tions against crude intellectualism and I/O-Cartesianism. Let us pursue this further by
240 **AQ2** considering the issue of knowledge and language.

241 **Articulability, Tellability, and Transmissibility**

242 A necessary condition of knowledge in Gascoigne and Thornton is that it must be, at least
243 in principle, “transmissible”; this marks it as knowledge *of* something. They thus end their
244 book with a brief consideration of the teaching and learning of TK. If transmissibility is

7FL01 ⁷ On this holistic conception of the person, see Hacker (2007).

8FL01 ⁸ Merleau-Ponty (1966, 169); see also Wrathall (2014, 8), Dreyfus (2005b, 132).

9FL01 ⁹ On affordances see Dreyfus (2014, *passim*), Wrathall (2014).



245 necessary to knowledge, they claim, then knowledge must be at least partially expressible
246 in linguistic form; there is, therefore, a positive connection between TK and language: “To
247 grasp the meaning of a word is to have a potentially unlimited competence in its use even if
248 it is explicable [...] in finite and particular explanations” (176). Language alone, however,
249 is not sufficient to transmit, share, or articulate fully the conceptual contents of TK,
250 which—because it can be situationally “articulated” but not “codified”—must be com-
251 plemented by practical demonstration.¹⁰ Nevertheless, because there is nothing in TK that
252 is “hidden from view”, Gascoigne and Thornton are able to claim, invoking the spirit of
253 Polanyi, that “[a]lthough we know more than we can tell, we can articulate, and hence (in
254 principle) transmit to others, all that we know” (189).

255 Although it is never explicated, there seems to be a crucial operative difference in
256 Gascoigne and Thornton between “articulability” and “tellability”, a difference close to if
257 not identical with that between “articulability” and “codifiability”. “Tellability” and
258 “codifiability” rely on words alone (hence, their supposed context-independence): all that
259 one needs to know can be captured or given linguistically, in propositional form. “Ar-
260 ticulability”, by contrast, indicates modes of knowing that are, as it were, multi-modal: to
261 know demonstrably that *this* is the way to kick a ball from *this* mid-way line into *that* goal
262 in *these* conditions on *this* pitch in the context of a game of football requires competent
263 linguistic and paralinguistic performance. “Articulation”, then, suggests the execution and
264 coordination of linguistic and paralinguistic communicative modes, the locus and ground
265 of which is the corporeal person who is in a particular style or manner of relationship with
266 their surroundings and the job at hand: TK seems to involve skilled practico-linguistic
267 performances that are date-, time-, place-, and situation-stamped.

268 The difference between codifiability and articulability, however, may be little more than
269 that between an impossible ideal and a basic reality. As Taylor writes, in terms echoed by
270 Pippin, “understanding and know-how [...] [are] not ‘within’ me in a kind of picture”;
271 they are “in the interaction” *between* me and my world (2005, 38). To understand TK’s
272 tacitness as inhering in situation-specificity is to miss the point that knowledge, *qua*
273 knowledge, is *expressed* by persons as situated solicited and evaluative expression. Correct
274 or appropriate (in the normative sense) expression is a matter of “aligning language and the
275 world”, as Cavell puts it (2002, 18).

276 Consider, for example, the proposition “ $1 + 1 = 2$ ”, which is taken as true by many on
277 trust or testimony¹¹ and partial demonstration (the performance, with props, of basic
278 arithmetic operations). So familiar does the proposition become, it is seldom questioned,
279 and most of us are able to reel it off in appropriate situations. But how far can I get in
280 saying how it is that I know this to be context-independently true, or in showing why it
281 must be so? Not very. Could I, however, I would require a setting conducive to the
282 demonstration of my rich specialist knowledge, just as demonstration of bike-riding
283 requires an appropriate *mise en scène*. The truth of the proposition “ $1 + 1 = 2$ ” may be
284 taken or treated as context-independently or analytically true, but its truth cannot be
285 expressed or demonstrated free of some determinate context (even if it turns out to be true
286 in every context in which it is uttered).

287 Gascoigne and Thornton, then, are right that knowledge per se must be knowledge of
288 something; but they are wrong if they think that this points to the propositional *structure* of
289 knowledge (whether or not this *is* what they think is a moot point to which we will return).
290 On the view I have been pressing, *knowledge-of entails nothing more nor less than*

10 See Gascoigne and Thornton *passim*, but especially chapters 2 and 4 (*passim*; 76–77; 130).

11 On testimony and tacit knowledge, see Gascoigne and Thornton (183–89).



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291 *corporeal persons, for there can be no knowledge-of at all without knowers.* What is called,
292 variously, propositional knowledge, context-independent knowledge, or codifiable
293 knowledge designates not the fundamental structure of such knowledge—propositional
294 knowledge does not rattle around “in” one’s head like marbles in a bowl—but the fact that
295 there are propositions to which most “reasonable” people assent. To speak of propositional
296 knowledge is to speak not of the conditions of possibility of *having* knowledge, but to
297 presuppose communities of assent in which propositions are shared or have some purchase
298 and get a grip only against norms of use. The fact that linguistic performance is one
299 modality of knowledge-of does not give us a theory or explanation of the *having* of such
300 knowledge-of.

301 Three points arise from these comments. Firstly, instances of apparent context-inde-
302 pendence or analyticity are often the results of truths the conditions of which are enfram-
303 ed in deeply cultural ways—so deeply that most of us do not, cannot, or more simply need not
304 notice this enframement or (in terms closer to Gascoigne and Thornton) contextualization.¹²

305
306 Secondly, at least part of the problem underlying the widespread opposition of
307 knowledge and skills, theoretical and practical knowledge, and, by extension, codifiability
308 and articulability, consists in how we think of certain activities and performances, or,
309 rather, with our failure to recognize certain *acts* as such. We fail to recognize the cor-
310 poreal-personal dimension of all knowledgeable acts when we think, for example, that
311 kicking stones or turning back-flips is experiential and practical in ways that sitting at a
312 desk and theorizing is not. Once we realize that such a view is deeply flawed—that both
313 gymnastics and theorizing require as their ground of possibility the corporeal person-
314 knower-doer—the utility of “context-independent knowledge”, and the opposition of
315 knowledge/skills, theory/practice, are called critically into question. To repeat an intro-
316 ductory remark, one aim of this paper is to dissolve both the opposition of knowledge and
317 skills and the subordination of the latter to the former, by showing that we fail to
318 understand knowledge *qua* knowledge when not in terms of skilled performance.

319 Thirdly, the viewpoint from which we see propositionality as a necessary condition of
320 codifiable knowledge is one from which we fail to see the ability to put things into words as
321 itself a matter of practical ability and expertise. No doubt this is due in large part to the fact
322 that a relatively high level of linguistic competence in persons is, in normal circumstances,
323 taken as unremarkable. But it is a mistake not to see such quotidian expertise as part of our
324 worldly, fluid copings, which are, according to **Dreyfus**, at once our most basic and most
325 rarefied ways of being. Though most persons will, all things being equal, develop linguistic
326 expertise, there are those among us whom we pick out as great wits, poets, orators, and so
327 on: those who raise linguistic skill to “new heights” in certain relatively specialized
328 contexts; there are, however, few if any persons whose exceptional linguistic expertise will
329 be recognized as running the entire spectrum of specialisms—could that spectrum be
330 exhaustively defined—in equal measure.

331 There is, then, no “explicit” knowledge that is genuinely context-independent, and
332 therefore absolutely codifiable, nor non-practical. There are simply propositions the truths
333 of which we are seldom led to question, for reasons of culture, expedience, and/or
334 expertise.

12FL01 ¹² In different terms and contexts, David Lewin (2016), drawing on Taylor, explores the constitutive-
12FL02 affective role of the propositional frame. Quine (1963), Cavell (2002), and Brandom (2000) are but three
12FL03 philosophers who have shown the bankruptcy of the analytic/synthetic distinction. Cavell reminds us that
12FL04 preserving necessity is not the same as preserving analyticity.



335 The Non-Linguistic Structure of knowledge

336 In the wake of these observations, I suggest, first, that talk of propositional knowledge, far
337 from rendering worldhood meaningless, is inextricably part of—in the sense of constitutive
338 of—worldhood: once we have been inducted into the space(s) of reasoning, once we have
339 joined the rank and file of “symbol-mongers”,¹³ language is a means by which we make
340 our way in and through the world, and we err if we think of language as being apart from
341 the world it supposedly represents (primarily or only; representation here as distinct from
342 expression [see Brandom 1994, 2000]). Second, I suggest that knowledge need not take
343 linguistic form to count as knowledge, though it *is* conceptual and significant. In these final
344 sections, we will find that we need to mark a distinction between “tacit knowledge”, so-
345 called, and implicit and explicit knowing, and that TK, once distinguished from implicit
346 knowing, starts to look and sound like a concept with limited purchase.

347 Take the expert-practitioner and her expert-teacher. On Gascoigne and Thornton’s
348 account, the expert footballer can be said to possess TK, because her knowledge can be
349 articulated performance-practically and demonstrative-propositionally—in, for example,
350 goal-scoring accompanied by demonstrative utterances of the sort, “*this* is how you *x*”.
351 The type of practical knowledge possessed and demonstrated by this expert is both, in
352 terms Gascoigne and Thornton borrow from Harry Collins, “contributory” and “interac-
353 tional”:¹⁴ contributory, because the footballer’s skill allows her to participate in the game
354 itself; interactional, because she possesses also the ability to verbalize part of what it is to
355 skilfully kick a ball. This interactional ability means that, in principle, she is able to
356 “transfer” her practical know-how (see Gascoigne and Thornton 2013, ch.6).

357 It is not clear, however, whether we should we read our archetypal sentence—“*this* is
358 how you *x*”—as indicating a first-, second-, or third-person-perspectival report, nor
359 whether it is best read as indicating what Brandom (2000) calls “commitment” or “at-
360 tribution” (assertions that commit the speaker to, or attribute to another agent, a certain
361 way of *x*-ing). One way of reading the archetypal sentence is as evidencing the mind-
362 detached self-monitoring perspective, in which one adopts a third-person view of one’s
363 own performances. There are situations in which we do self-monitor in this way; but it is
364 not, in either McDowell or Dreyfus, primarily or originally constitutive of knowledge.
365 Mind-detachment, on Gascoigne and Thornton’s account, appears to be written into a
366 theory of TK that relies in part on McDowell, even as it seems to be a basic McDowellian
367 principle that such mind-detachment is *not* a primary or enabling condition of experience
368 or knowledge. Just what has gone wrong on this score will be considered below. First, let
369 us consider another way of reading our archetypal sentence.

370 Imagine that, while I am demonstrating my ability to ride a bike, I say to my novice
371 onlookers, “*this* is how you ride a bike”. Call this situation (a) and the utterance (i). Now
372 imagine (b) that while I ride my bike, someone else utters (i), saying it *of* my performance
373 *to* the novice onlookers. While in both situations, (i) is *grammatically* in the second-person,
374 I want to adapt a suggestion made by Cavell (2002, 13) (of a different sort of statement),
375 and say that *pragmatically* (i) must be read as being perspectively first-person plural.
376 (i) claims that *this* is how *we* ride a bike, where *we* is a community of bike-riders who must
377 be governed by common bike-riding norms if: (1) we are indeed to be able to say, sensibly
378 and reasonably, that we have bike-riding in common; and (2) we wish to be able to make

13FL01 ¹³ Peregrin (2014, 1), qtd Derry (2016, 2).

14FL01 ¹⁴ Gascoigne and Thornton (179–83), Ross (2008), Collins (2004, 2010), Collins and Evans (2007).



379 and rationalize moves in the discursive “game” of bike-riding. This is quite different from
380 Gascoigne and Thornton’s formulation, for notice that in situation (b) we have separated
381 the agents of linguistic utterance and so-called “practical” performance. We will see that
382 while this does put TK under threat it does not do the same to *implicit* knowing.

383 In either (a) or (b), (i) is equivalent to “*this is how we x*” (i’). Pace Brandom, (i) and (i’)
384 are simultaneously committive and attributive. Pace Cavell, either form is perspectively
385 first-person plural because both commit the speaker to this way of *x-ing* and attribute this
386 way to other *x-ers*. If there is something in all this that we wish to call either “tacit” or
387 “implicit” knowing, it can be neither the performance itself of bike-riding, nor the uttering
388 itself of sentences of the form (i) or (i’); nor can it be the two combined. There is nothing in
389 any of these—whether the situation be something like (a) or (b)—that is not explicit or “in
390 view”. But what it may be sensible to think of in terms of implicit knowing is, firstly, the
391 agent’s commitment to certain practico-discursive norms regarding bike-riding (or any *x-*
392 ing); secondly, the attribution of other agents’ commitments to those norms; and thirdly,
393 implicit recognition of those norms as **governing** bike-riding and bike-riders (or any *x-ing*
394 and *x-ers*).

395 What I want to convince the reader of now is that while propositionality does have a
396 role to play in any theory or description of knowledge, that role is *not* transmissive nor
397 should it be thought as structuring knowledge (in the broadly intellectualist sense of
398 modelling the meaning “behind” action). By way of further illustration, here are two
399 anecdotal sketches.

400 1. My four-year-old nephew (call him “R”) has shown himself over **the** eighteen months
401 or so to be a very promising BMX-er. I am able to make the claim “R is a promising
402 BMX-er” in part because, when I watch him ride, I am impressed by his speed,
403 control, endurance, his ability to “read” the track, and so on. In offering these and
404 other reasons for my claim, I am committing myself to the presumption that such
405 capabilities are among the norms governing (judgements of) skilled BMX-ing. (I may,
406 in fact, be wrong on this score, but these presupposed, implicit commitments
407 nevertheless steer my responses to my nephew’s performance. Moreover, if I too am a
408 bike-rider, they necessarily steer my understanding of my own performances—
409 *necessarily*, because it would not make sense for me to claim “R is a promising BMX-
410 er” on the basis of commitment to and attribution of propositions that did not connect
411 with what I take to be the norms of bike-riding. As Cavell says, “[i]f I am wrong
412 about” what other move-making agents do, “there may be no great surprise; but if I
413 am wrong **about I** (we) do, that is liable, where it is not comic, to be tragic” [2002,
414 13].) I am also able to make my claim about R because of the stories his parents tell me
415 about his BMX-ing. Here, we take it for granted that the parents are committed (and
416 believe themselves entitled) to certain propositions applied to their son. I attribute
417 these propositions to them, and in turn commit myself to these same propositions(-as-
418 conclusions), because I am also committed to certain propositions(-as-premises)
419 regarding the parents’ tendency to speak truly (to me) of R’s BMX-ing prowess. This
420 is not all: I am also impressed by my nephew’s prowess *given that he is four years old*.
421 So I am further qualifying and justifying my attribution to him of skilful-BMX-ing by
422 an appeal to and application of another set of norms—those governing what sorts of
423 performances can reasonably be expected of toddlers/young children/four-year-olds/
424 perhaps, more generally, persons of a particular age—that are not essentially or
425 intrinsically part of those governing bike-riding (of any sort), but which can certainly
426 affect my reading and evaluation of a person’s bike-riding performances.



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2. A friend of mine recently commented that he enjoyed jazz characterized by busy, frenetic drumming. I listen to jazz often, and to a reasonable variety (compared at least to those who do not regularly listen to jazz); I am also a hobbyist jazz-drummer. He seldom listens to jazz, and what he has listened to he has done so only in recent years. Since his comment, I occasionally introduce him to examples of jazz I think might appeal (with, of course, varying degrees of success). One example elicited the approbation that the drummer sounded a lot like another from a well-known rock band, a comparison I genuinely fail to hear, though I believe I can rationalize my friend's response easily enough. My point here is not to jealously guard the sanctity of jazz, but to explain our differing responses by suggesting they are articulated against very different normative backgrounds. It might be fair to say that I can make certain moves in the discursive game of jazz, while my friend cannot. Note, however, that being, in a sense, practico-discursively outside that game led him to make a connection that cannot be gainsaid, and which I otherwise would have missed. Being outside the "jazz-game" does not stop my friend from listening to the music, from responding to it positively or negatively, and so on; nor does my being able to make moves that he cannot somehow render my evaluations "more valid" in an absolute sense, though it may put me at an advantage when talking about jazz to a bunch of jazz musicians, faced with taking to the stage, or charged with writing a review of a jazz album. Note, too, that it is *not* my playing jazz-drums alone that entitles me to certain claims and commitments, and to making moves, in the "jazz-game". (This area of relative expertise on my part *may* be sufficient, but certainly not necessary, to so entitling me.)

In both sketches, context-bound, worldly engagements are taken to be conceptual in the ways we have been pursuing via McDowell: they are deliberate, purposive, and intentional. These worldly engagements are practico-discursive in that they are performances that can be subjected to propositionally *formed* reasoning; or, if one likes, they can all be put under narrative description: my being impressed by my nephew's BMX-ing can be rationalized and explicated against a finely articulated story composed of the norms governing both skilled BMX-ing and reasonable expectations of four-year-olds' physical capabilities; of my commitment to propositions that are only sensible in relation to, or when read-off against, these norms; of my attribution to others of similar committive expressions of these norms. In (2), my friend and I might be said to hear different music, even when we are listening to the same record, because our responses are articulated against very different (normative-)musical stories: while we may share many records—and in this sense be said to *have* some music in common—there is little assurance that we will *hear* and articulate a common music.

I have spent some time trying to show that so-called "practical knowledge" does not "reduce" to propositional knowledge; nor do tacit or implicit knowledge rest on agents' abilities to perform some practical task that they can also "put into words"—an unfortunate figure this, if what one means by it is a transformation or transubstantiation of one form of knowing into another: we do not, in this sense, put anything into words but words. A move in a language-game need not take propositional form—the ability of the jazz musician to know how to go on in the context of improvised ensemble performance may count as move-making in the language-game of jazz-performance—but to be comprehensible *as* a move it must be possible to "read it off" against the rational-discursive, normative background of the "game".¹⁵ Language—in both the everyday sense of our

¹⁵ This is one reason why those participants who are retrospectively credited as innovators and geniuses are often controversial if not rejected in their time. The innovator strains at the norms of their discourse, but without ever breaking entirely free of their reach.



472 shared written and spoken sign-systems, *and* the expanded sense of the pratico-rational-
473 discursive web within which distinct activities and language-games are played out—is not
474 a Euclidian grid separate from the world it purports to describe, but part of the very world
475 in which it plays an articulating role. The game of aligning word and world is itself one of
476 practical mastery, and one that is multi-dimensional, perhaps infinitely so. We do not speak
477 or write solely with words, but with gesture, movement, pitch, rhythm and cadence—in
478 short, with our whole bodies and selves—and we do so always in determinate contexts.
479 Accepting this, it is hard to make sense of the idea that “practical” performance is the bit
480 of so-called “tacit knowledge” that remains tacit without some context affording of per-
481 formance, or the idea that the linguistic portion of TK is the vehicle of context-independent
482 knowledge. These claims fall apart when one realizes that language use *is* practical per-
483 formance, that all practice is context-bound in some way, and that all knowledge is
484 practical.

485 Sentence-utterances of the form of (i') should be read paradigmatically *not* as indicating
486 third-person-perspectival self-monitorings and information-transmission, but rather as
487 rationalizing one's own and/or others' practices. (i') is self-locating and committive, *and*
488 other-attributive. Placing oneself in the community of *x*-ing and other *x*-ers may come
489 relatively late in relation to those capabilities we take for granted and cannot remember *not*
490 being able to do (walking, talking, playing nicely and sharing with others, and so on);
491 relatively early in such practices as are usually taken up after language acquisition, such as
492 learning a musical instrument (even more so if, after years of considering myself a musical
493 *x*-er in the most general sense, I try to make the transition to *x*-ing *F*-ly: I don't just want to
494 *x*, I want to *Fx*). When we talk about things happening “naturally”, we often mean
495 development or learning of which the doer is not self-aware: a child learns to speak
496 “naturally”, though in fact she will receive all sorts of **implicit** and explicit cues and
497 instructions; a student is a “natural” *x*-er, because he learns things he has not formally or
498 explicitly been shown or set.

499 Propositionality, then, makes explicit the distinguishing, sorting, picking out of our
500 *already-conceptualized* responses to and formulations of our worldhood: my response to
501 Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* and to R's BMX-ing are not non-conceptual givens to be
502 turned into propositions with conceptual contents (on the model of meanings “contained”
503 by sentences). Those responses are already conceptual, or *conceptualized*. Putting them
504 under—or, better, alongside—some sort of propositionally formed description is what
505 makes those conceptualized responses explicit, and places them in some sort of norm-
506 governed context, language-game, or pratico-discursive province. Notice that “He's a
507 good jazz-drummer” explicates attributively something about the conceptualized perfor-
508 mance of the drummer, while also committing and attributing speaker and drummer to
509 other implicit norms, which we may or may not find it necessary to explicate. We know
510 more than we can tell, because we can never exhaustively explicate our implicitly held
511 commitments, nor can we always say all that we could possibly say: as Brandom puts it,
512 “one cannot have *any* concepts unless one has *many* concepts”, for “[c]onceptual content
513 is in the first instance *inferentially* articulated” (2000, 15, 162; see also Derry 2016, 4–6).
514 Propositionality is necessary to explicating what is known, but it is not the “deep”
515 structure, skeleton, or “essence” around which knowledge is built. Knowledge is always-
516 already conceptual, but it is useful to maintain a schematic distinction between the con-
517 ceptual and the propositional. If putting-into-words in the sense of “propositionalizing” is
518 itself a mode of practical know-how, then *that* ability can be subjected to further discurs-
519 sive-propositional analysis; but this is not the same as saying that the ability to proposi-
520 tionalize is itself propositionally structured, as we will now see.



521 Propositionality and Conceptuality

522 Intentionally or not, Gascoigne and Thornton elide propositionality and conceptuality by
523 synonymizing “conceptually structured” knowledge—understood on McDowell’s
524 model—and “propositional knowledge”—which appears to be knowledge of language-
525 game-specific propositions, as we are told, for example, that one can have “relevant
526 conceptual knowledge without having practical knowledge” (183). By keeping propositionality
527 and conceptuality separate, we can make good McDowell’s charge—exemplified
528 above by pre-linguistic conceptuality and knowledge-where-and-when (“**Embodiment,**
529 **Conceptuality, and Propositionality**” section)—that “the question ‘how the nonconceptual
530 given is converted into a given with conceptual content’ [...] should be rejected, not
531 answered”.¹⁶ Collapsing conceptuality and propositionality resuscitates that bad question
532 by implicitly endorsing the view that there is something “behind” action—the propositions
533 that supposedly encode it—whereas, *pace* Pippin and Taylor, there is no need for any such
534 hypostatization: conceptuality is not “behind” action, in the way that meaning is some-
535 times said to be “behind” or “contained in” words, or propositionality “behind” sentences
536 and sentence utterances; conceptuality-as-corporeal-sensory-awareness is *in* action.

537 Consider the difference between the following sentence-utterances: (i/i’) “*This* is how
538 you/we *x*”; (ii) “*That* is the same shade of ___ as....” (ii) does not require nor indicate in
539 its form any self-monitoring of the sort that McDowell and Dreyfus wish to avoid, while (i/
540 i’) might, but *only if* we accept—which I think we should not—the ability to propositionally
541 accompany one’s skilled performances as a characteristic or necessary mark of
542 TK, co-called, and as indicative of mind-detachment rather than a first-person-plural
543 committive-attributive claim (of the sort outlined in the previous section). Nevertheless,
544 both sentences do betoken *implicit* knowledge.

545 (ii) indexes knowledge-how of colour- and shade-identification and -sorting, *pace*
546 McDowell. (i/i’), however, does *not* index skilled ball-kicking abilities, which can be
547 enacted without self-monitoring verbal declarative accompaniments. For as Pippin identifies,
548 embodied responses index sensory awareness as being *in* rather than *behind* action.
549 (ii) is a way of betokening implicit knowledge of colour- and shade-distinctions; but this
550 might also be enacted in non-verbal(ized) colour-sorting. This is not to say that language is
551 necessarily not involved, or that linguistic involvements do not play a part. It *is* to say that
552 language is not the skeleton or kernel around which knowledge is fleshed out; rather, it is
553 something that gets integrated with conceptualized knowledge at a later stage. (i/i’), by
554 contrast, is an adjunct to the knowledge supposedly being enacted. It is not necessary in
555 order to demonstrate the conceptualized knowledge of skilled ball-kicking; but it *is* a
556 necessary mark of something: namely, knowing-how to read skilled ball-kicking against a
557 rationalized game of certain skilled acts. **Perhaps this sounds rather too general. However,**
558 **consider that being able to perform acrobatic tricks with a football is certainly a skill, but**
559 **not one that necessarily allows the agent to make moves in the game of football. Similarly,**
560 **a skilled bowler in cricket will not necessarily be able to make the moves of a pitcher in**
561 **baseball—and the same goes vice versa—though each likely stands a better chance of**
562 **making successful—sensible, reasonable, afforded—moves in the other’s game than do I in**
563 **either.**

564 We do not get to the “core” of a capacity by being able to render linguistically what,
565 why, and how one does what one does. If a teacher can demonstrate, linguistically and

16FL01 ¹⁶ McDowell (2007, 349), qtd Gascoigne and Thornton (164).



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566 paralinguistically, how we x , so that knowledge is successfully shared, then what is being
567 instantiated is, on the teacher's side, her practical skill or know-how of the *teaching* of that
568 activity, action, or discourse (or, perhaps, the range of these constitutive of a particular
569 **discursive-game**). It may be perfectly reasonable and sensible to ask of a person, "How do
570 you know how to Fx ?" But it may not be very fruitful to ask, "How do you know how you
571 know how to Fx ?" The latter is a bad question unless I intend to test or challenge someone
572 by putting it to them. Otherwise, I ask it of or someone whom I already recognize as
573 knowing how you—*we*— x , and therefore presume to be entitled to make claims and moves
574 (see Cavell 2002, 13, *passim*). In the case of the student making requests of the teacher, the
575 question "How do you Fx ?" is a way of asking also, "How do *you* Fx , and how *should/*
576 *might I* Fx , in order to be able to make (better) moves in the game?" In the contexts and
577 examples we have considered, remember, the use of the second-person personal pronoun is
578 pragmatically first-person plural. In declarative mood, it is both committive and attributive.
579 In interrogative mood, it is, as it were, both attributive and potentially subjunctive-com-
580 mittive: the asker attributes a certain way of doing things to other participants in the
581 game—or assumes that there is a certain way—and seeks to be able and entitled to so
582 participate, while assuming that currently she cannot. What I am calling "subjunctive-
583 committive" might indicate either desire to enter into a language-game, or to progress, as it
584 were, within it.

585 I am disputing neither that knowledge is articulable, conceptually structured, or "vis-
586 ible"; nor that one can **be both** aware of one's ability to consistently and deliberately x at
587 will, and able to narrate how one xs . What cannot be linguistically captured is the
588 "baseline" *how of the how-of-things*, and it is in relation to this that we will need eventu-
589 ally to ask whether we can prise apart the tacit and the implicit. One can know that one
590 can perform a certain task and can enact that knowledge by volitionally doing so on
591 different occasions (this is the temporal persistence that McDowell claims is necessary to
592 pervasive conceptuality). But the capacity to put-into-propositional form—which must be
593 recognized, as it is by Brandom, as itself a matter of *practical* mastery—cannot, at the risk
594 of regress, be itself linguistic, in the sense of a capacity that is propositionally structured at
595 its "core". To assume that propositions are the analogues or external mirror-images of
596 internally held thought and knowledge is to backslide into the crude intellectualism par-
597 odied by Ryle. Verbalization, itself a practical matter, need not—quite possibly cannot—be
598 accompanied in the very act of utterance by propositionally structured, third-person self-
599 monitorings (which would amount to what: parallel "internal vocalizations"?), just as
600 skilled goal-scoring and acrobatic manoeuvring need not be propositionally paralleled.

601 Saying how one xs might, as McDowell notes, block the x -ing, but one does not
602 separately monitor one's ability to answer as one answers. Being able to say "*This* is how
603 you do it" does not undergird the conceptual nature of the practical ability. Once again: the
604 conceptual nature of the ability is *in*, not *behind*, the executed action. The ability to say
605 points to a different practical ability: the ability to express linguistically, and, in the case of
606 archetypal teacher-student question-and-answer exchanges, to express linguistically *how*
607 one xs , and to understand one's or another's x -ing as discursively-normatively shaped. One
608 does not self-reflexively "say" "inwardly" how it is that one is talking well at the moment
609 one is indeed talking well, just as one does not self-reflexively "say", either "inwardly" or
610 "outwardly", how it is that one is kicking a ball as one kicks a ball. In a sense, Gascoigne
611 and Thornton are saying the right thing with the wrong emphasis: the point is not to be able
612 to say "*this* is how you do it" as a way of shoring up some practical performance as
613 knowledge proper; the point is to recognize that this is how *you*—i.e. *we*—do it when
614 making moves in the game. It is wrong to **think** on Collins's model, of a non-gymnast who



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615 is an expert gymnastics pundit as having *only* interactional expertise in relation to gym-
616 nastics, when they may have contributory expertise in relation to gymnastics-punditry
617 (analysis, narration, diagnosis, and so on, of gymnastic performance). The *x-er* and *x-*
618 writer, though their practices dovetail in certain respects, are not making moves in identical
619 games; they are entitled to make moves in different spaces of reasons.

620 To McDowell's point that the flow of action must be broken when one puts into words
621 what one is doing, let us add that when one stream of flow is interrupted—that of fluid
622 vegetable dicing on the chopping board, say—another stream takes over—for example, a
623 stream of verbalizing capacity. Thinking in terms of different streams of flow and different
624 practical capabilities avoids the pitfall of regress that Gascoigne and Thornton so carefully
625 investigate and critique, but risk reproducing by hypostasizing knowledge with concep-
626 tuality and then collapsing conceptuality and propositionality. No amount of situation-
627 specific contextualizing solves this, so long as action and verbalization are taken as binarily
628 opposed aspects of the same know-how, on the model of the theory/practice (or interac-
629 tional/contributory) opposition. If knowledge is thought to come from “within” and to be
630 propositionally *structured*, then we find ourselves in the very I/O picture we thought we
631 had escaped. But if one sees verbalization as corporeal and practical, and language as *part*
632 *of* rather than *apart from* the world, then verbal and non-verbal knowledgeable acts can be
633 understood as different in degree but not in kind: reciting a line or two of verse is not the
634 same as clicking one's fingers, yet both are deliberate, corporeal, practical; and while we
635 might be able to say how one goes through the motions of such acts, yet we cannot get all
636 that far in saying how it is that we can say how we know how we can go through such
637 motions. But nor do we need to be able to do this, if what we want is to better understand
638 the constitutive possibility of knowledge; the relationship between language, proposi-
639 tionality, and conceptuality; and their bearing on education.

640 Conclusion

641 While Gascoigne and Thornton's *Tacit Knowledge* has a great deal to recommend it, I have
642 attempted to tease out two problems—their dismissal of worldhood, and their residual I/O-
643 **Cartesianism**—in order to develop an account in which knowledge of any sort or “species”
644 is not understood as propositionally structured, for knowledge is not “in” the mind in the
645 way a thought is casually said to be “in” one's head. Know-how might be said to be tacit,
646 inasmuch as it does not need a tongue to count or show up as knowledge: an ability
647 *A* counts as knowledge-of when persistently and repeatedly we see that knowledge *enacted*
648 *significantly* and *situation-appropriately*. But there is no knowledge that is not context-
649 dependent, and therefore no knowledge that is not practical. I have sought to give body
650 back to text, by seeing the ability to verbalize one's capacity for *x-ing* as corporeal and
651 therefore practical, rather than “merely theoretical” in the common (often pejorative)
652 sense, for to *theorize* is certainly to *do* something. The account developed herein thus
653 draws TK out of the sole purview of so-called “vocational” education, but with the aims
654 neither of “dignifying” vocational education nor defending it as “equal” to “academic”
655 **education**. Rather, I have aimed to emphasize the practical because personal nature of all
656 modalities of knowing, and, in a sense, to elevate the supposedly “academic” disciplines to
657 the human because personal level of the practical or “vocational”. Gascoigne and
658 Thornton are right to equate the practical and the personal, but they are wrong to see the



659 personal as particular to *tacit* knowledge, rather than knowledge per se. What space, then,
660 if any, is there left for a theory of **tacit knowledge**?

661 TK is often contrasted to explicit knowledge—a poor contrast, this, for explicitness is
662 not the “natural” opposite of tacitness. But were we to contrast tacit and verbal knowing,
663 we would surely confuse our efforts to see non-verbal performances as properly knowl-
664 edgeable acts. I prefer to stop talking of TK, while recognizing the constitutive role of a
665 tacit *dimension* to knowledge: the corporeal person is the ground of the possibility of
666 knowledge. No knower, no knowledge. Posing wh-questions of any knower’s performance,
667 we might accept mechanical descriptions (e.g. of the stages of the clean and press),
668 recitations of rules, or expressions of taste or principle. But if we are asking such questions
669 of the doer-knower, we are taking for granted their corporeal-personhood. Though we may
670 ask wh-questions pertaining to bodily conditioning (“how do you *x* so *F*-ly?”), we do not
671 generally ask them of the mere fact of embodiment (“Wh-__ is your body?”). Any theory
672 of knowledge as concerns philosophy of education does well to bear this in mind, for
673 embodied-being-in-our-worlds is constitutive not only of *whether* one learns, but directly
674 of *what* is learned and in what way or style. Students and teachers might operate in
675 common milieux without being in common world(hood)s. The disclosed significances of
676 the workshop, for example, are the same neither for novice, intermediate, and expert
677 student, nor for them and expert teacher. However, while corporeal-being-in-the-world is a
678 very real issue for student and teacher, it is not one around which the policy-maker can
679 sensibly build an account of what is to be taught and learned. It is for this reason that I
680 suggested in passing (“[The Non-Linguistic Structure of knowledge](#)” section) that what has
681 previously been called TK is, in the context of philosophy of education, an idea of limited
682 purchase.

683 For Brandom, “the fundamental form of the conceptual is the *propositional*, and the
684 core of concept use is applying concepts in propositionally contentful *assertions, beliefs,*
685 *and thoughts*” (2000, 12). Drawing on McDowell, I have pressed a view that allows for
686 non-linguistic conceptuality, while Brandom claims that “expressing something is [...]”
687 putting it into conceptual form” (2000, 16). It is not always clear in Brandom whether
688 propositionality is to be understood as the expressed form of conceptuality, or whether the
689 terms are interchangeable: both terms are central to Brandom’s project of accounting for
690 explicitness, and given my use of Brandom in “[Propositionality and Conceptuality](#)” **sec-**
691 **tion** and the views I have been pressing throughout, a little clarification is in order.

692 It must be borne in mind that Brandom is guarding against a reductive view of con-
693 ceptuality that would fail to distinguish between merely reliable response and genuine
694 sapience (2000, 15, 157–59, *passim*). When he asks what separates thermostats and
695 “knowers” (2000, 162), he is, of course, wryly begging the question: we are not moved to
696 say, other than jokingly or inadvertently, that the thermostat *knows* at all. For a thermostat
697 to respond to temperature differentials requires no concepts, while for a child to respond
698 with the word “lamppost” to each lamppost encounter requires a number (think of all that
699 would be involved in sorting lampposts and non-lampposts). So, for Brandom, concep-
700 tuality comes into play once the implicit “becomes *explicit* in the application of the
701 concept” (2000, 17). If my nephew understands that, when riding his bike on the pave-
702 ment, he must stop either at every third lamppost or every corner and must not stray into
703 the road, he is being-in-the-world-conceptually (though **not** linguistically) when he
704 deliberately adheres to *or* contravenes that rule; equally, he is being-in-the-world-con-
705 ceptually-linguistically (in inferential relation to the rule) if he says to me, after I stray into
706 the road or fail to stop at the third lamppost, “You shouldn’t do that!”



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707 To build on comments made about the role of propositionality at the end of “Propo-
708 sitionality and Conceptuality” section, I suggest a distinction—one which indicates
709 compatibility between McDowell’s and Brandom’s uses of “conceptuality”—between
710 conceptual and propositional expression: the latter is simply a specific modality (linguistic)
711 of the former, which is just another way of referring to any purposive, corporeal
712 engagement with the world. Both, I want to say, denote *explicit* acts: nothing is “hidden”
713 either by the claim “I like chicken sandwiches” or skilled musical performance. Import-
714 tantly, Brandom writes not of *explication* but *explicitation*. While explication, I submit,
715 need not take linguistic *form*, explicitation cannot *not* take such form. With the explicit, we
716 are always-already making moves in a “game”, moves that only make sense in context of
717 that game; in the case of explicitation, we rationalize in the form of some formalized
718 (sometimes semi- or pseudo-formalized) vocabulary that which is implicit in the already
719 explicit: I can explain why I did or did not stop at the third lamppost, and I can also
720 rationalize why I think So-and-so and a good *x*-er. “Implicit” in Brandom’s lexicon means
721 not only the norms governing “correct” usage, or some equivalent, but also those
722 implicitly antecedent commitments which might serve as reasons for my now saying-doing
723 *p*, and those implicitly consequent assertions either entailed or licensed by so saying-doing
724 (2000, 19, *passim*). The possibility of explicating is parasitic upon explicating; more
725 plainly, specialist vocabularies are possible only because we are already “native” speakers
726 of our “natural” language(s).

727 To sum up the general philosophical claims of this article, then: (1) the corporeality of
728 personhood is the grounds of the tacit dimension that makes knowing possible at all. (2) To
729 know implicitly is to **know** not only what normatively appropriate responses a situation
730 affords; it is a precondition of being able **to enter in the rational-critical** game of giving and
731 asking for reasons, of oneself and others. (3) Worldhood, whether explicated linguistically
732 or not, is always conceptual and therefore always explicit in the sense of being in plain
733 view. (4) Explicitation is what we do when we further rationalize, in propositional form,
734 our explicit acts in terms of their implicit, inferential, practico-discursive relations to other
735 acts. McDowell, while pointing towards corporeality more so than Brandom, can seem to
736 offer a picture of individual ability that ignores the social nature of knowledge, whereas
737 Brandom, by appealing to normativity and explicitation, brings out the social nature of
738 knowledge-as-practico-discursive activity.

739 What has the foregoing to say of education and educational philosophy? Apart from
740 paving the way to **future work, hinted at in the introduction**, the somewhat tortuous account
741 of knowledge I have pursued offers a counter-narrative to that which dominates much
742 current educational discourse concerning knowledge. If knowledge is *in* interaction—*in*, as
743 Merleau-Ponty has it, “the dialectic of milieu and action”—and if conceptuality runs all
744 the way through what there is in being-human, then, in the milieu of the classroom,
745 subject-area and subject-knowledge emerge discursively and dialectically—*inferentially*—
746 and not as the residue or result of the “transmission” of **knowledge** building-block
747 fashion. *Contra* Hirsch, Christodoulou (2014) and others, “knowledge” taught amounts not
748 to the “fundamentals” of a subject. Rather, the teacher is in the position of critic and
749 diagnostician, drawing to attention this or that detail, in the way one might regard a detail
750 excerpted from a larger painting. As Aldridge formulates it, subject-matter proper is dis-
751 closed *in* the three-fold dialectic of teacher, student, and text (the so-called “contents” of a
752 lesson or lessons).¹⁷ Thus, it is less important to formal schooling that knowledge be
753 *transmitted* than that it be *shared* via a common milieu: one does not learn how to score

17FL01 ¹⁷ Aldridge (2015, ch.4).



754 goals until one has a more general, even if rudimentary, grasp of the language-game of
755 football.¹⁸ Brandom—whose work, Derry claims, “opens the way to a more fine-grained
756 account of pedagogic practice and of subject knowledge” (2016, 1; see also Derry 2013)—
757 fits neatly with this view, despite his apparent disinterest in corporeality: to have one
758 concept, as he points out, is always-already to have many. The business of formal edu-
759 cation is not to usher students into cultural storehouses of “raw data” and “plain facts”,
760 nor to “transmit” information—radios transmit (and receive), knowers apperceive—but to
761 assist in expanding their explicating (critical) and explicating (metacritical) capacities,
762 and to help them enter practico-discursive “games”, either as new-comers or developing
763 move-makers (see also Derry 2016, 9). The account I have offered cannot make sense of
764 so-called “knowledge-based” and “back-to-basics” models of education, which suggest
765 that knowledge must necessarily come before (higher-level-) understanding (e.g. Chris-
766 todoulou 2014), because on the phenomenological and inferentialist lines followed above,
767 the one has no purchase or meaning without the other.

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769 Retreat marked the beginnings of what has grown into the present article.

770

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18FL01 ¹⁸ For a Heideggerian perspective close to this, see Heidegger (1962, 213), Aldridge (2015, 110).



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