CHAPTER 1: FIRST STEPS: FROM MEDIEVAL DEBATES TO MODERNITY

I. Introduction: The Debate between Universals and Nominals

For it is still not enough to say that the concept is the thing itself, as any child can demonstrate against the pedant. It is the world of words that creates the world of things – the things originally confused in the *hic et nunc* of all in the process of coming-into-being – by giving its concrete being to their essence, and its ubiquity to what has always been.¹

‘Concept’ is the most utilised term in philosophical study, and yet, is the most under-investigated as well. To borrow a phrase from Harold Bloom, it is underdetermined in meaning and overdetermined in figuration. And yet, to talk about such a category, is to beg the question as to what is a concept in the first place? As many scholars have been at pains to inform us, the concept is not just an idea. It is a liminal, neglected space, filled with stolen meanings, and while many use the word ‘concept’ itself, no one, upon sudden questioning, seems to be able to provide satisfactory answers as to what exactly a concept is, what it is made of, its components and its characteristics.

Most would describe it as a muddle at best, a *borscht* made of diverse and seemingly arbitrary elements – a set of different units of meaning bundled together. But why not use ‘idea’ in place of ‘concept’ and be done with this nuisance of the word altogether? How did we arrive at the concept of a concept so to speak? Like I.A. Richards’ search for the meaning of meaning, a search here would not be amiss – for that most elusive of creatures, which in Eco’s terms seems made of different fabrics of semiotic meaning, much like a platypus², and yet does not provide with much comfort on a winter’s night to the ardent traveller.

The search for meaning, signification and truth in the Western world has been a long, arduous *bildungsroman*, full of mystery, intrigue, romance, and much thwarted passion. It takes us to that ubiquitous beginning called the Medieval period, wherein we meet differently abled philosophers, thinkers, Romans and even a countryman or two, all engaged in the investigations into the nature of the world and the place of humans in it (which has led to the present day anthropomorphism). This philosophical engagement has led to the various epistemological constructions and advancements, not the least of Plato and Aristotle.

1.1 The Garden of Forking Paths: Universalism, Nominalism, and Conceptualism

We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse. We could not understand because we were too far and could not remember because we were travelling in the night of the first ages...³

Much like Conrad's heroes, Plato and Aristotle wandered about in the night of first ages and did much by way of dialectical reasoning (although it was not known as such then) – Plato in his famously allegorical cave, and Aristotle on his peripatetic sojourns, but both held the same stick at either end – they both were essentially debating the nature of the world and our own mediation/expression/interpretation of it through the application and imposition of human agency and linguistic, visual, oral conceptual constructions.

In the Medieval period of courtly romances and gruesome battles, a controversy (or many) reared its head between Universalism, involving Platonic Realists – who believed that only the universal abstract categories are real, such as man, tiger, tree, and such – and the Nominalists, who held that only nominal individual categories are real, and abstract categories or Ideas such as man or tiger are non-real categories of derivative meaning. Therefore while the Nominalists would say that Socrates is definitely a man and animal, and not simply Brunellus the Ass, Realists would hold that all belong to the Universal category of 'men' and not look to genus and anatomy. As Roger Scruton sums up –

The Neo-Platonic cosmology had transformed the original Platonic realm of Ideas ... into the blessed sphere of immutability. But the old metaphysical dispute between Aristotle and Plato as to the nature of universals remained central to mediaeval thought. This was because the dispute bore on what is perhaps the single most important issue in the theory of knowledge, the issue of how far the world is knowable to reason. Using as their basic text a passage from Porphyry's Isagoge, transmitted and commented upon by Boethius, philosophers enquired whether genera and species exist only in the mind or in reality; and if the latter, whether they exist in individual substances or in separation to them.⁴

This particular problem has never quite gone away since the wheel shall always be reinvented as long as there are new beings to engage with language and thought, but what is of importance here is the fact that Plato came up with his idea of the Universal while Aristotle posited his atomistic theory of the universe in terms of Aristotelian realism. The world existed in dyadic representative terms thereafter until the entry of other dramatis personae—such as Pierre Abélard. It was not until Abélard’s entry upon this philosophical stage, that this rocky twosome turned into a ménage à trois and became really turbulent.

The Platonists or the Ultra-Realists argue for an extra-mental, universal world of Ideal forms, while the Aristotelians hold the contrary view of a differentiated individual existence of entities. Early medieval philosophers such as St. Anselm (1033-1109), Remigius of Ozerre (d. 908), John Scotus Erigena (800-877) were Platonic Ultra-Realists who maintained that only universals like ‘tiger’ or ‘man’ were true, while the medieval Nominalists such as Roscelin or William of Champeaux (1070-1120) posited the “indifferentist doctrine”, and opposed Platonist views arguing that abstracted characteristics such as man or mortal have no “real” or tangible existence.

According to the universalism of Platonism, the category of universals is the one that deals with how mental ideas or Forms correspond to things that exist in the world outside the mind, which, put differently, is the antithetical relationship between solipsistic representation encountered with empirical sense-data, which seem to refer to a world outside the mind, which the mental categories struggle to structure into understandable forms. This Platonist approach to reality is also termed Exaggerated Realism, since Ideal Forms are held to be the only real categories and worldly phenomena only a poor reproduction of those Ideal Forms. Plato calls it eîdos, idea, which is stable and ontologically pre-existent (ōntos ón; autá kath’ autá), separate from the world of external phenomena as well as being distinguishable from transcendental forms such as the divine.

According to universalism then, every idea/form has a correspondence with abstract representations, which extend across categories of species, class, genera, substance, and properties. Thus, not only categories such as man and tiger, but things such as table and tree, properties such as the redness of blood, or the mercifulness of Christ also each have corresponding forms in the suprasensible realm. The Socratic dialectical method therefore is directed towards the goal of unity, where the seeming difference among individualizations is only the Idea made manifest.
In the Platonic dialogues, we find Socrates asking time and again of us: What is excellence? What is virtue? What does it consist of? What quality do all acts of excellence or virtue have in common? He seeks the underlying form (logos) to the general idea (eidos) in order to reach a ‘life lived with the concept’ in the Wittgensteinian philosopher Cora Diamond’s terms. In Protagoras, Protagoras “resists elenchos, the technique of collapsing moral debate to an argument about concept definitions, and finally reducing all concepts to one: in this case arête”5. Socrates argues that the linguistic world that Protagoras lives in is illusory and deceptive, and moral thought consists in tearing aside the veil of deception to reach the stable reality of Form, whereas for Protagoras the external world of senses is reality, subsists in language, and is distinguished by its gradations, where the ‘good’ is poikilos and pantodapos (differentiated and plural). In the middle dialogues, Meno, Phaedo, Phaedrus, and Symposium, Platonic-Socratic maturity shows itself in the refinement of the concepts.

Beauty, good and magnitude are purely intelligible concepts inhabiting the eternal realm of Essence or Being (ousia again), although they also inhere, in debased form, in the sensory world. This is Plato, not Socrates. Concepts have become transcendent, where for Socrates they were only immanent. Wisdom is the intellection of these concepts and the suppression of bodily passion.6

In the Meno, Socrates argues the concept of virtue with Meno, arguing that whatever the actual meaning of virtue, it has to hold true and common to all instances of virtue, wherever they occur. The following extract from the dialogue should be helpful in explicating where Socrates, arguing the universal stupidity of Athenians in contrast with the universal wisdom of the Thessalians, draws Meno into a debate about virtue.

Socrates: ... Let us hear what you have to say, Meno: what do you think being good7 is, for heaven’s sake? Don’t be stingy. Let’s hear it. Show me that what I’ve just said isn’t true – I’ll never have felt so lucky I was wrong, if it turns out you and Gorgias know the answer, when I’ve just said I’ve never met a single man who knew.

Meno: Well, it’s not very difficult, Socrates. First, if you want to know what being good is for a man – well, that’s easy. Here’s what being a good man is:

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6 Ibid.
7 Arête in the Greek original, also translated as virtue, or the state of being virtuous.
having what it takes to handle your city’s affairs, and, in doing so, to help out
your friends and hurt your enemies (while making sure they don’t do the same
to you). Or, if you want me to explain what being a good woman is, no
problem: she’s go to be good at looking after the home, be thrifty with
household goods and always obey her man. And then there’s being a good
child (a boy or a girl) or being a good old man (free, if you want, or if you like,
a slave) – and there are all sorts of other cases of being good. So there’s no
need to feel baffled about what being good is! The thing about ‘being good’ is
that it’s different for each of us; it varies according to what we’re doing,
according to how old we are and according to our role in life. And I imagine
Socrates, the same goes for being bad.

Socrates: Well, what an amazing stroke of luck! There I was, looking for just
one sort of ‘being good,’ and it turns out you’ve brought along a whole swarm
of the things!... But listen, Meno – my swarm analogy gives me an idea –
suppose my question had been about bees, and exactly what it is to be a bee, and
you’d started saying that there were ‘lots of different kinds of bees’; what would
you have said if I’d asked you this: ‘Are you saying there are lots of different
kinds of bees all differing from one another in their way of being bees? Or is the
idea that, in that respect, there’s no difference whatsoever from bee to bee, and
that it’s only in some other respect that they’re different from one another, like,
say, in how beautiful they are, or their size, or something else like that? How
would you have answered if you’d been asked that question?

Meno: That’s just what I’d have said: no bee, in so far as it’s a bee, is any
different from any other bee.

Socrates: So, suppose that after that I said: ‘In that case, Meno, just tell me
about that – what’s the respect in which there’s no difference from bee to bee?
What is it that makes all of them the same thing? What do you think it is?
Presumably you’d have been able to come up with something?

Meno: Yes.

Socrates: Well, do the same with cases of being good. Even if there are a lot of
them, and lots of different sorts, they must at least have some single form,
something that makes them all cases of being good – and surely that’s what it
makes sense to focus on if you’re explaining to someone what being good actually is. Surely that’s how should answer the question. Or don’t you understand what I’m saying?8

Therefore Socrates makes the claim that differentiation within a species is of no consequence since one refers to the universal quality contained within the term rather than all its instances. Thus, when one mentions ‘bees’, one does not refer to all the particular manifestations of bees, but to a universal category typified by the Form of the bee. In the analogy to the bees, Socrates is referring to an equivalence between terms, “some single form, something that makes them all cases of being good – and surely that’s what it makes sense to focus on…”9 in which case the understanding that one has of virtue should have the similar quality of universal equivalence as that of the term bees, which denotes the universal genera of bees.

In terms of theorization of concepts, Ante rem realism (Platonism) holds that concepts are ontologically prior to their instances and have an existence prior to their instances. In rem realism states that concepts are immanent to the instances and exist only as ‘enclosed’ by them, and cannot be ontologically prior to their instances. Unity is at the heart of Platonic forms, which corresponds with the later Hegelian dialectic of unificatory teleology. Socrates...

... holds that the mind contains not only innate abilities such as the ability to reason deductively, but also concepts such as those of geometry and valuation. The term “innate” does not cause difficulties as long as it is used to characterize abilities. We can contrast innate with acquired abilities by stating that the latter are the result of training or conditioning. It may seem, however, that the notion of an innate idea or concept is less clear. It helps to point out that Plato’s claim is not about the slave boy or Meno in particular, but about the humans species of which Meno and the slave boy are only instances. To say that a concept is given innately to humans is to say that, given proper stimulation and a required stage of maturation, any human will utilize this concept in the interpretation of experience, and that the concept can be shown not to be acquired from experience by abstraction or by any other known process.10

9 Ibid. p 88
Here there are then twin assumptions posited about the nature of the world and the ways of conception. The first assumption is regarding the fact of universality and that there are some universal forms, which are not mere words, but do exist, either in the sensible or mental realm. As it follows from this assumption, the Platonist Ideal is not merely a mental entity held in the mind about an external world; the ideas or forms are actually substances and are the arché of things, existing prior to the sensory world, which one can talk of as ‘concepts’. The other assumption makes a moral connection between these concepts and what would be the proper way of life.

Using concepts whose meaning is unclear opens the door to Cleon, the Sophists and stasis. Socrates’ clarificatory activity is thus deeply ethical and political in purpose: but it can paradoxically appear to be, or can actually be, destructive of the very concepts it seeks so fearlessly to protect. Criticism of concepts must always appear threatening to those who live by them, and yet without it language and thought is at risk from the direction of appetite and force.\(^\text{11}\)

Socrates’ dialectical method seeks to draw attention to sensory experience being dependent on certain underlying principles and epistemic pre-eminence, which is similar to the Kantian \textit{a priori} categories, and has been termed realism in terms of what is true and real, which for Plato/Socrates is the \textit{eidos}. Indeed, so real is the underlying idea, that it achieves an almost divine stature in Plato. Conceptual knowledge leads one to live one’s life morally and ethically, filled with Beauty, Love and Truth, where, as Haines puts it, the simplicity of the idea makes for powerful poetry, which begins in love but ends in concepts.\(^\text{12}\)

In order to elucidate further the category of \textit{eidos}, one can examine the comic book character ‘V’ from the popular American comic book series/film \textit{V for Vendetta} (2006) created by Alan Moore, and the signification of V’s characterization which point to a certain transcendence of particular individuation and the universality of resistance to oppression. The comic series/movie is set in a dystopian United Kingdom of what is supposed to be the future result of the present political climate. V is an anarchist who is working to destroy the fascist government, dressed in Guy Fawkes costume and mask, which apophatically serves to hide his ‘real’ identity in a Lacanian Symbolic vs. Real faceoff.

\(^{11}\) Haines. \textit{op. cit.} p 33
\(^{12}\) \textit{Ibid.} p 39
Now the question that can be asked here is – who is V? Is he Guy Fawkes incarnate? Is he a number? Can V be considered a valid name, and therefore a valid identity? V also used to be the mark of a thief in France, standing in for “voleur” or thief, the scarlet letter branded onto the flesh of the criminal. In the supposed symbolism of the character V (both physical and nominal), there is also the resonance of war slogan used by Churchill during the World War II – ‘V for Victory!’, here transformed to a representation of vendetta (V for vendetta). The character V takes his motivation for the revolution from Guy Fawkes who attempted to blow up the Houses of Parliament as part of the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. The plot involved a group of Catholics who attempted to blow up the Parliament and kill James I, the King of England, to dissent against Protestant rule on the fifth of November, which date is also represented by the Roman numeral ‘V’. The character V as a stand in for Guy Fawkes is a contemporary recasting of the legendary character, and repeats the popular rhyme about Guy Fawkes and the significance of the fifth of November throughout the film, where the date and the number, both have been universalized –

\[\text{Remember, remember, the fifth of November,}\]
\[\text{the Gunpowder Treason, and plot.}\]
\[\text{I know of no reason why the Gunpowder Treason}\]
\[\text{should ever be forgot.}\]

This universal category represented by the name ‘V’ as portrayed in the film could also represent all people, symbolizing the \textit{vox populi}, the voice of the people against dictatorship, which in fact is the oppression of enforced capitalism and right-wing fascism in the film.

The dramatic scene where V is being fired at with a volley of bullets, evokes the debate between universal ideas (which are also \textit{moral} in the Platonic sense of the term, since V is on the side of \textit{Arête}, the Good/ Virtue) and particular despotic individuals such as Peter Creedy, who are enraged by V’s refusal to die.

\begin{quote}
Creedy: Die! Die! Why won’t you die?... Why won’t you die?
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
V: Beneath this mask there is more than flesh. Beneath this mask there is an idea, Mr. Creedy, \textit{and ideas are bulletproof}.\end{quote}

This draws a line between ideas and individual material reality, which can be destroyed, while the idea is what remains. It also draws attention to the dichotomous relation between appearance versus reality (the mask vs. the person underneath). The democratic, ethical idea of the human in the movie lies at the core of the being of the human which is a particular
instance. Thus $V$ is not a name but is a representation for the conceptual idea that necessarily points to the ungroundedness and instability of a world overrun with particulars and requires apodictic symbolisms in order to be comprehended and reordered.

The question, therefore, is to discover to what extent the concepts of the mind correspond to the things they represent; how the flower we conceive represents the flower existing in nature; in a word, whether our ideas faithfully correspond to an eidetic objective reality encountered or seen.

In contrast, Aristotelian Nominalism lays emphasis on the external world of matter encountered by the senses, and denies the existence of universal entities from which those individuated material entities are derived or are modelled on. It holds that everything is a particular, and does not correspond to any underlying logos or form. According to Aristotle, these individual forms are verbally signified by universal names, which have no essential relationship to the individual. Since names are entirely arbitrary, and a dog could well have been called tiger or man, it holds to reason then that it is names that signify universal denominators, and universality is not a characteristic of the physical entity encountered empirically by the faculty of human reason.

In terms of correspondence of the thing materially and the thing as it exists as a mental entity, Platonic and Aristotelian thought are not very far apart, since they both hold the thing to be accessible to the intellect, one via the senses, and the other via ideal forms. But in terms of characteristics, both find each other separated by a wide gulf, since one holds entities to be individual and particular, while the other holds them to be universally occurring, and to be partaking of the same essence. Therefore while Realism holds two occurring instances of the tiger to be instances of the same essence of the 'tiger', Aristotelian Nominalism regards the two as separate, conjoined only by the label 'tiger', and nothing else. The Aristotelian position holds that the substance or form inheres in things, and are therefore not transcendent but immanent, and the phenomenal world is not merely the world of appearances or a spectral world behind which there lies a transcendent reality, but the phenomenal world is the real world where form and matter inhere in the object. Aristotle did discuss the nature of logic in Analytics, which he considered the propaedeutic to philosophy, and he drew the relationship of logic to concepts where thinking subsists in reasoning from inferences which are composed of judgements, and which judgements in turn are composed of concepts expressed in terms. However, Aristotle did not discuss the nature of concepts or their relationship to being or the material world and he only mentioned them in so far as they
are definitional categories. His theoretical structure regards language and linguistic terms as the etiological source of universality, which itself does not exist in nature and which is plural and varied.

In contrast to Platonic idealism which regarded concepts as entities to be saved from the force and appetite of the world, Aristotle's aim was not reification but clarification of conceptual categories which leads us to the clarity regarding our perception of individual objects, which is borne out in his logical works (*Categories, Prior and Posterior Analytics, De Interpretatione*, and *Topics*, which are collectively apppellated as the *Organon*) and in his general works on nature, man and metaphysics (*Physics, Metaphysics, De Anima*). The appearance of the world as *phainomena* is considered, where concepts are used to order our perceptions of the world. Aristotle's teleological empiricism considers conceptual categories as organizational categories where undifferentiated reality is collated into an *aësthésis*, the notion of the *eidos* of the object.

Therefore, conceptual categories as *structural* categories are the matter of consideration in the Aristotelian *epistêmê*, and the greater the structuration, the more fundamental and general the concepts, until they concern themselves with being or *ousia* itself, beyond which it does not go with Aristotle. Where *ousia* for Socrates meant the thing at the level of the concept of the thing (what it is to be the thing), for Plato it is beyond the conceptual – at the level of pure concepts or transcendental Being, for Aristotle it is the level of the thing as it appears to the human senses and is apprehended empirically. Therefore, the real problem between the Realists and the Nominalists is at the level of representation – in Realism, concepts are representing, and representable since they adhere to the principle of generality, while in Nominalism, entities are individual and singular and are therefore unrepresentable by conceptual categories.

The medievalists continued with the separation of matter and spirit, and the correspondence of the entities without questioning the basis of the separation itself. Within Greek and medieval thought, emphasis continued to be laid on the manner of resolution of the problem of universality versus individuation, and the Stoics were early thinkers to forward a category akin to the Abélardian concept to resolve the problem. Zeno, in particular, draws attention to the role of abstraction and compares sensation to an open hand with the fingers separated, experience or multiple sensation to the open hand with the fingers bent, and the general concept born of experience to the closed fist.
The period of Scholasticism, beginning roughly in the ninth and ending in the twelfth century, is marked by Platonic revivalism, where ideas are conceived as prior to things (universalia sunt realia ante res) and essential to them. The period beginning in the thirteenth century sees the rise of Aristotelian thought combined with Christian theology called Aristotelian realism, where universals are conceived as real and immanent in, and not prior to things (universalia sunt realia in rebus). Nominalism, in vogue during the fourteenth century, held concepts to be mere names (nomina), while individuated things are alone real (universalia sunt realia post res). Scholasticism regards the world as an ideal, logical, rational world. If universals are to be mere voces, containing no correspondence with things outside the mental, linguistic realm, then the relationship between ontological existence of things and epistemological understanding of them collapses, and we can no longer aim to know the nature of reality, and of the world around us. This was a matter of great debate between Realists such as Porphyry, St. Anselm of Canterbury, John Scotus Erigena, and the Nominalists such as Roscelin and Martianus Capella.

1.2 To Be Abélard (or Not)

In a controversial proposal, the flamboyant philosophical iconoclast Pierre Abélard (1079-1142), whose reputation preceded him on more than one occasion, posited a novel formulation. According to him, words are created out of a certain mental activity, which arises in a certain structure of human linguistic arbitrariness and imposition. The Abélardian hypothesis posited a tripartite construction of sensus, imaginatio and intellectus (where intellection is a combination of existimatio, scientia, and ratio) between the Scylla of Universalism and the Charybdis of Nominalism. In the area of language and intellection, it was Abélard who approached the issue through both logic and metaphysics, which later comes to be known as Conceptualism.

Abélard sought to intervene in this debate (rather unfortunately for him since he was castrated for both his incendiary views as well as his relationship with Heloise), and stated that although Individuals do have a manifest reality, yet in order to be comprehended and ‘made real’ as it were, one has to approach such categories through the ‘looking glass’ of conceptual structures, forming a relationship of words, ideas and things, where the word first leads to the idea and then on to the thing itself. One cannot predicate a thing of a thing, but one can predicate a universal of a thing; therefore, according to Abélard, the universal cannot
be a thing. At the same time since the universal is always predicated in relationship to a class thus denoted by the resultant concept, the universal also cannot be just a word, but is rather signified as sermones. Since concepts are a resultant of discursive reasoning and intellection, as has been argued by Abélard, they can only be designated or referred to by nominal naming, and therefore access to and the creation of conceptual categories takes place in the structures of language and linguistic reference. Yet, concepts are also independent of language in many respects, thereby inviting the charge of the universal.

The number and dates of Abélard’s writings have largely remained unclear and subject to controversy among scholars, especially due to the fact that Abélard himself constantly revised and rewrote many of his words, with different versions of his extant works being available. Also, Abélard’s writings are lecture notes that have been compiled over the course of many seminars. Brower and Guilfoy are of the opinion that, “In philosophy, Abélard is best known for his work in language, logic, and metaphysics, which – together with the philosophical theology of Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) – represents the high point of philosophical speculation in the Latin west prior to the recovery of Aristotle in the mid-twelfth century.”13 Along with his epistolary correspondences shared with Heloise, Abélard’s extant works can be categorized in four broad categories – literary writings (including his correspondences), dialectics, ethics, and philosophical theology.

His literary writings consist of Historia calamitatum (The Story of my Misfortunes) his autobiography, Epistolae 2-8, Hymnarius Paraclitensis (The Paraclete Hymnary), Planctus, and Carmen ad Astralabium (A Poem for Astralabe).

The second category consists of Abelard’s works on dialectic – works concerned with logic, philosophy of language, metaphysics, and philosophy of mind, and which follow the pattern of logica vetus or ‘old logic’. The major works in this regard are the Logica “ingredientibus”; the Dialectica, which include commentaries on Porphyry’s introduction to Aristotle, the Isagoge, Aristotle’s Categories and On Interpretation, Boethius’s On Topical Difference; and the Tractatus de intellectibus. Of these, the third, Tractatus de intellectibus deals with concepts, from the logical as well as philosophical aspects, while the others are engaged with logic. Abélard further wrote on Porphyry – Glosulae super Porphyrium (often called the Logica nostrorum petitioni sociorum’), a discursive commentary written between

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the years 1123 and 1126. During this time, Aristotle's *Categories* and *On Interpretation* had triggered intense ontological and epistemological discussion, and Abelard had developed his own views and metaphysics of the subject. The Universals versus Nominalists debate was linked to the debate concerning the *Categories* and *On Interpretation*, and the *Isagoge*, in particular the passage where Porphyry questions whether genera and species exist or are merely concepts. In addition to these there are lesser works as well – *Introductiones parvulorum*, *Logica nostrorum petitioni sociorum*, and *Sententiae secundum Magistrum Petrum*. The *Logica nostrorum petitioni sociorum* is a commentary on Porphyry's *Isagoge* and shows textual resonances with some of Abelard’s other works and shows some knowledge of theology. The *Sententiae Secundum Magistrum Petrum* is concerned with logical and metaphysical puzzles about wholes and parts.

The third category consists of Abelard’s works on ethics – *Ethica seu Scito teipsum* (*Ethics, or, Know Yourself*), *Collationes*, *Dialogus inter Philosophum*, and *Iudaeum, et Christianum* (*The Dialogue of a Philosopher with a Jew and a Christian*).

The fourth category consists of Abelard’s works of philosophical theology. The three main works in this category are devoted to a philosophical analysis of the Trinity, the several versions representing successive stages of his thought and his attempts at orthodoxy (each rewritten several times), *Theologia summi boni*, *Theologia christiana*, *Theologia scholarium*. Finally, Abelard composed an extremely influential theological work that contains no theoretical speculation at all, *Sic et non* (*For and Against*), which is a series of questions furnished with patristic citations that imply either a positive answer or a negative answer to a given question.

The central thesis of Abelard’s work regarding concepts was:

(T1) Everything is a particular,

which view signifies that only the particulars exist, and Universals do not exist as things. In the *Logica ingredientibus*, Abelard also argues that

(T2) Universals are *voce*,

where a *vox* being a word or utterance signifies that Universals are utterances, thereby linking objects to words through the Ideas. It also means that there are no universal things corresponding to universal words, and thereby both theses are consistent. There were others

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14 John Marenbon, in Brower and Guilfoy (Eds.) *op. cit.* p 19
along with Abélard who argued towards the same and were collectively called the vocalists. At that time, two groups existed, one who followed the linguistic approach to logic, and were hence concerned about the logical divide between truth and falsehood; while the other group was concerned with studying logic as a verbal/vocal discipline, and argued that logic was concerned primarily with utterances or words and not things.

Later Abélard changed his position from the vox to the sermo, thereby also sometimes being called a sermonist where he declared that sermones and not voces are universal, since voces are natural, and sermones are what are instituted by human effort.

Universality should neither be attributed to things nor to voces but to sermones. The sermo, the name, is instituted by man, while vox is the creation of nature. In its being, is essential, it is identical with sermo, but this identity is of the order of a stone and statue. One can attribute it to the latter without attributing it to the former, which as a thing, is necessarily individual ... Universal is a human creation...

Therefore, Abélard comes up with an elegant proposition that completely bypasses the question of existence and derivative meaning, and instead posits an interstitial logical category with metaphysical extensions.

Such an approach reads the object of study of the Isagoge and Categories as being about words and not things. Abélard then distinguished the philosophical tree into three broad branches: logic or the process of argumentation, physics, or the study of nature and causal relations, and ethics. His arboreal structure included metaphysics as belonging to the rubric of physics itself as, according to Abélard, it was concerned with nature. His study of metaphysics, of his irrealism in particular, is of interest here. Apropos his thesis that universals are words, he argued that there can be nothing in the world that satisfies Boethius' claim for the universal, i.e something being present as a whole in many things at once so as to constitute their substance. In the debate concerning universals, he argues against each contention then held for the universal, and attempts to show that realism concerning universals is a futile exercise.

1.3 Socrates and being Brunellus, the Ass: An Abélardian Refutation

Abélard's arrival at conceptual categories is by elimination of the major theories in existence then, regarding universals and nominals. In order to understand Abélard's position on the conceptual, one has to understand the various theoretical postulations that preceded the conceptualist position. There were quite a few theories in existence then, as Peter King points out in his essay on Abélardian metaphysics – *ante rem* realism, *material essence* realism, collective realism, and indifference theories – which as will be evident, were all conclusively disproved by Abélard, much to the chagrin of his teachers whose theories they were.

The case of *material essence* realism (MER), as argued by Abélard's own teacher William of Champeaux, holds that the 'material essence' (the genus or species with respect to their own subordinates) is a Boethian universal, since it is present as a whole in individual objects, making them the 'material' of their essential being. For example, the material essence *animal* is present in the species *ass* and *man*, and the material essence *man* is present in both Socrates and Plato as others. Secondly, it holds that the material essence is reduced in generality or contracted by the addition of forms accidental to it (since the essence is universal to individual objects, whatever is subsequently added to it, has to be accidental to it, and not part of the essence). For individuals this reduces to the notion that the objects derive individuation from accidental substances. Thirdly, it holds that individuals are metaphysically composed of material essence in combination with the *forms* that individuate them. Therefore Socrates is composed of the material essence *man* along with his particular weight, height, mental ability and the psychological predilection to drink hemlock.

Abélard presents two objections to these claims, "a view completely incompatible with physics." First, he posits the material essence *animal*, which is wholly present in the species *man* and *ass*. The species *man* is inherently rational, and the species *ass* is inherently irrational. Therefore the same material essence *animal* is inherently rational and irrational at the same time, where each species is present in each instance as a whole and is inherently inconsistent as a whole, which cannot hold true, and therefore proves material essence realism to be false. The advocates for MER have countered that contraries are not actually present in the whole and are only potentially present, to which Abélard presents the argument that since the whole in both species is one and the same, and is inherently inconsistent in each, being informed by contraries, there is definitely a contradiction.

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Pro-MER groups also counter that there is a contradiction only if contraries are present in the same individual and not in the genus or species, to which Abelard presents the argument as follows – suppose individuals are to be identified by their material essences. Therefore Socrates can be said to belong to the species *animal*, as also Brunellus the Ass, thereby with the application of transitivity where

\[
\begin{align*}
    a \text{(Socrates)} &= b \text{(animal)} \\
    b \text{(animal)} &= c \text{(Brunellus the Ass)} \\
    c \text{(Brunellus)} &= a \text{(Socrates)}
\end{align*}
\]

Socrates is Brunellus and is hence both rational (as Socrates) and irrational (as Brunellus), and therefore contraries are present in the same individual.

Also, according to MER, the individual consists of its material essence along with its anterior forms which comprise distinctive features. The individual, thus, cannot be identified with only the prior accidents since that would signify that the accident is prior to substance. Abelard reasoned that the form would include the distinct differentia for a distinct type of individual, such as feline characteristic for the cat, or rationality in the case of Socrates. The differentia cannot be accidental to the form since they are what confer individuality to the individual in question. Rationality is what confers humanness on Socrates, and the feline nature is what makes the cat a cat. Thus the only conclusion to arrive at would be that the differentia is not a separate quality but already informs the material essence – as King concludes, not rationality but *rational anima*.20

As King goes on to say, since the individual is composed of material essence along with anterior forms, plus the differentia, it must mean that the individual is comprised of material essence (ME1) along with *informed* material essence (ME2), which conclusion cannot hold, since the material essence in this case becomes un-essential. Therefore, by reductio, individuals must be identified with their material essence and Abelard’s *reductio ad absurdum* of MER in the case of individuals holds. Abelard’s second objection to MER attacks its second and third tenets, which state that “individuals are made by their accidents”. As Abelard says if “individuals draw their being from accidents, then surely accidents are naturally prior to them, just as differentiae are to the species they lead forth into being.”21

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20 King, *op. cit.*, p 69
21 Spade, *op. cit.*, p 28
Also, accidents are characteristics of something, and the objects/individuals do not depend on accidents to derive their being. So, to say that Socrates exists due to the accidental form which confers individuation, is to say that the accident is not accidental but essential to Socrates, which cannot hold, because the features that characterize the individual cannot be prior to the instance of the individual. Therefore to say rational animal is to say that rationality is a predicate of the animal and not vice versa. The individual animal is held to be prior to the distinguishing feature of its being rational. This argument was proved to be so conclusive as to suspend all debate in this area for subsequent years.

Collective realism, which was one of the other theories regarding universals, takes the universal to be the collection of its instances, that is, all the men collected together are the species man, all animals taken together are the species animal, etc. This view seems to hold true when applied to natural and generic types, which "consist distributively in their present numbers". Abélard presents three conclusive arguments against this form of realism as well. First, he says that collective realism is an ignoratio elenchi and does not relate to the problem in question – collections are ‘integral composites’ and not universal groups so, and thereby, and since they are common to their members as parts of a whole, and are not universals that are present wholly in each individual instance, they fail to satisfy the condition of the Boethius universal. That is to say the Royal Bengal Tiger is part of the genus tiger and species cat, and yet cannot wholly be a cat in its being a Royal Bengal Tiger, since it is only part of the whole called tiger and cat and animal and so on. In its present instance, it seems to exist as only the Royal Bengal Tiger and nothing more, and cannot be therefore conceived of as a universal. By this assumption, Abélard concludes that collective realism is not pertinent to the problem of universals, because collections can very well exist as part of an integral whole which he has no issue with, and therefore have no relevance to the primary problem.

Abélard also states that since collections are defined extensionally, "any group of men, taken together would properly be called a universal". For example, pointing out the fallacy in claiming that Socrates qua human can be taken as the universal human being, Abelard argues that if the universal really is the individual, then consequently either individuals such as Socrates are common to many, or there are as many universals as there are individuals, which is reductio ad absurdum again.

22 King. op. cit. p 69
23 Spade. op cit. p 50
Third, he objects to the claim that while universals are anterior to their individuating instances, integral wholes exist *a posteriori* to the corresponding individuals, as according to collective realism, if Plato as part of the whole were to die, the whole collection *men* would be destroyed as well, and its subsequent constitutive parts would no longer be eligible to be called *men*.

Abélard's refutations proved to be conclusive enough to force his erstwhile teacher William of Champeaux to change his theory concerning realism, to posit the seemingly logical conundrum that things were not the same essentially but were the same indifferently. This view held that only individuals existed, and explained the universality among types by claiming that they were the same indifferently. The universal here is identified with the individuating instance under the convenient category of the 'indifferent', in order to satisfy the Boethian universal; and while William of Champeaux took recourse to a negative criterion of the view that individuals are the same indifferently when there is nothing in which they differ, on the other hand Walter of Mortagne gave a positive criterion, saying that things are the same indifferently when there is something, a *status*, in which they agree.

Apropos, Socrates is the species *man* in such that he is indifferently the same as other men, and the genus *animal* in such that he is indifferently the same as other animals. Such view is realist in terms of claiming for a real thing being a universal. This is, in Abélard's view, again an absurd argument, since if Socrates is the species *man*, then Socrates is indicative of the entire species and is hence a universal unto himself, whereas if the species is identified with Socrates, then the species is indicative of an individual, and is reduced to only Socrates. It is equally absurd to conjecture that in a multiplicity of contexts Socrates *qua* species is indifferently the same as many, but *qua* individual is not the same as many. In response to the counter argument that this view is indicative only of the individual *qua* species, and that Socrates is an individual wholly in himself, Abélard points out that the argument 'individual *qua* species' has no relevance since it would mean that it refers only to Socrates, and nothing but Socrates. As to William of Champeaux's negative criterion where he states that two things are indifferently the same when they do not differ in something (where the something is *man*), Abélard provides the counter argument that it could just as easily lead to the hypothesis that Plato and Socrates do not differ in *stone*, since neither is a *stone*, and therefore there is no other agreement in that they are *man* than in *stone*.²⁴

Abélard refutes the realist theory such —

²⁴ King. *op. cit.* p 72
Single men, who are discrete [i.e., wholly distinct] from one another since they differ both in their own essences and in their own forms..., nevertheless agree in that they are men. I do not say they agree in man, since no thing is a man unless it is discrete. Rather they agree in being a man (esse hominem). Now being a man is not a man or any other thing..., any more than not being in a subject is a thing, or not admitting contraries, or not admitting of greater and less. Yet Aristotle says all substances agree in these respects... Thus Socrates and Plato are alike in being a man, as a horse, and an ass are alike in not being a man.25

From such anti-realist arguments, Abélard arrives at the conclusion that universals exist only as semantic categories, and that everything that exists in the world is an individual, or personally distinct. He explains the individuality of a thing as –

Thus we say that individuals consist only in their personal distinctness, namely, in that the individual is in itself one thing, distinct from all others, even putting all its accidents aside, it would always remain in itself personally one – a man would neither be made something else nor be any the less a this if his accidents were taken away from him, e.g. if he were not bald or snubnosed.26

Here he postulates the conceptualist theory, where between the non-semantic ontological ‘real’ things/individuals and the ideas, there exists a category of the conceptual which relates between the sense and reference, the nominatio and significatio.

A real thing abstracted by intellection may signify either the substance of the thing, when our intellection corresponds to a sensible perception, or, a mental conception of the form corresponding to a thing in its absence whether it is common or individual. A common form is a form that has a common similitude of a multiplicity of beings, but which in itself is considered a unique thing.27

Therefore Abelard concludes that universality is merely linguistic, not a feature of the world, and that, more precisely, common nouns are universals and are thus semantically general, in that their sense indicates more than one thing, but not their reference. They, rather, distributively refer to each of the individuals to which the term applies, such as tiger, man, or animal, and our understanding of the term depends upon particular intellections or abstractions. It might be asked, such as in Kantian terms, as to what makes conceptual

25 Spade. op. cit. pp 89-90
26 King. op. cit. p 73
knowledge possible, where the answer would lie in the Abélardian thesis of abstractive intellection—

This kind of abstractive intellection may appear to be false or void since they perceive the thing in a manner other than the one in which it really subsists. Paying attention, in isolation, to only the form or only the matter—whereas neither matter nor form subsist when isolated—they seem to conceive of the thing really differently from what it is, in the sense that we would attribute to it natural properties which it does not possess; our intellection would then be absolutely void. But this is not what happens in the intellective process. If I consider a man as substance or body, overlooking the fact that he is animal, man or grammarian, my intellection refers to no such property which does not really belong to him, it only overlooks some of his qualities. And when I say that my intellection concerns this being only as far as it possesses a certain quality, the restriction applies to my attention, and in no way to the manner of existing of this being, without which intellection would be void. 28

Abélard thus proposes that the individual’s actual existence and the comprehension of his being by another are separate, through the conception of this being in the mind and through language.

The ‘concept’ by its nature, connects relationally to the ontological category of Being-in-the-world, its expression through language and the creation or generation of meaning through social praxis and through the linguistic process itself. The attempt therefore is to show that the concept, as located in language, neither completely denotes/represents the material world nor does it give completely capture thought. As stated by Giorgias—

... speech can never exactly represent perceptibles, since it is different from them, and perceptibles are apprehended each by the one kind of organ, speech by another. Hence, since the objects of sight cannot be presented to any other organ but sight, and the different sense-organs cannot give their information to one another, similarly speech cannot give any information about perceptibles. Therefore, if anything exists and is comprehended, it is incommunicable. 29

II. The Looking Glass of Concepts

Abelard postulated the category of the conceptual that is equidistant to the Universal Idea and the Nominal Entity, and proposed that even while the individual entities have tangible existence, in order to apprehend and comprehend the significance of the world, as a being directed towards understanding the world, a postulation of conceptual categories becomes necessary, where what is under scrutiny is not the thing-in-itself, but rather how it is apprehended through intellection and linguistic categories, which was later echoed by Etienne Bonnot de Condillac. Abelard proposed that although individuals have a manifest reality, one has to posit a conceptual category for the 'ensemble of rapports', similitudo habitudinum, which exists between certain groups of individuals, in order to understand the signification of these individuals in the universe.

This conceptual reality is not 'real' in the sense of being a universal, and neither is it a nominal entity, it is not a being, but it is an object that is there, and yet not there – quasi-res. It is a phenomenological conception of language, which is neither materially oriented nor does it follow any ideal telos.

Words generate intellections and thereby shed light on the nature of things. One can infer a double series of correspondences between words and intellections and between intellections and things, and consequently, a correspondence between words and things... It is possible to consider a proposition either as a verbal object, or as the intellection it generates, or according to the thing on which it is based... The rapport between the word and the thing is mediatory... The word leads to the idea, the idea to the thing. 30

In this sense, his conceptual categories are directed towards objects and clothe them in a tangible 'reality' made apparent to us through language and the dialectical play within such a structure. It is in this manner that Abelard irrefutably tied up metaphysics with linguistic modes of apprehending the world, and made the two intrinsically significant to each other. Such a conception is different from and yet resonates with the postulation of Bolzano or Franz Brentano’s intentionality thesis, wherein concepts are directed towards objects in a kind of phenomenological direction, and is also different from the Kantian position of conceptual categories being directed towards understanding the nature of the thing-in-itself.

II.1 The Importance of being Shere Khan – Naming and Classifications

... Monkey-name or archangel’s name?
Or both at once? ...
Little name in eight parts?
Name that shouts, or name that sings?
Lover’s name? ...
Or utterly impossible name?
... – “But my name is Aloïse...”
“Héloïse!
Will you, for the love of art
– Abélard without the title –
Let me
Be a little bit your Abélard?”

(Tristan Corbière, “After the Rain”) 31

Much of Abelard’s philosophy of language is given over to the analysis of the logical functionality of words and classes of words, and to do so he takes recourse to the Aristotelian semantic divisions into the main linguistic categories as name, verb, and their combination into the sentence.

Abélard views names as signs that derive signification within a context of convention, with a wide array of types – proper and common names, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs etc. The exercise of naming is arbitrary in the extreme, for it follows no essential essence of the named object. Socrates could have well been called anything else, and he still would have been a man. There is no essence of the object thus named, that the name itself corresponds to. Thus ‘chatte’ in French can be called ‘cat’ in English, without losing its meaning in translation, and yet, the words do not capture any ‘essential soul’ of the object. A cat will not answer naturally to the word ‘cat’ or ‘chatte’ precisely because the names do not ‘capture’ it in language, and the names are wholly artificial impositions. It can be called different things in different languages precisely because it does not have a natural, essential name.

The difference between the being of the individual/thing, and the name given to it is a difference between what occurs sans human intervention and a later human imposition, for ease of comprehension, and falls within the Lacanian paradigm of the Symbolic where language is. This process of naming follows a certain order which can be readily perceived by us – naming and classification. For example The Adventures of Alice in Wonderland, as well as Through the Looking Glass, both generally agreed upon as fabulous accounts of human impositions on an essentially otherwise absurd world, by Lewis Carroll, throw up such questions in the fabliaux format:

‘You are sad,’ the Knight said in an anxious tone: ‘let me sing you a song to comfort you.’

‘Is it very long?’ Alice asked, for she had heard a good deal of poetry that day.

‘It’s long,’ said the Knight, ‘but it’s very, very beautiful. Everybody that hears me sing it – either it brings tears to their eyes, or else – ’

‘Or else what?’ said Alice, for the Knight had made a sudden pause.

‘Or else it doesn’t, you know. That name of the song is called “Haddocks’ Eyes”.’

‘Oh, that’s the name of the song, is it?’ Alice said, trying to feel interested.

‘No, you don’t understand,’ the Knight said, looking a little vexed. ‘That’s what the name is called. The name really is “The Aged Aged Man”.’

‘Then I ought to have said, “That’s what the song is called”?’ Alice corrected herself.

‘No, you oughtn’t: that’s another thing. The song is called “Ways and Means”: but that’s only what it’s called, you know!’

‘Well, what is the song then?’ said Alice, who was by this time completely bewildered.

‘I was coming to that,’ the Knight said. ‘The song really is “A-sitting on a Gate”: and the tune’s my own invention.’

This debate exemplified in Through the Looking-Glass, shows the difficulties posed when one questions that arbitrary link between the thing and the name, or what Ferdinand de Saussure calls the link between the signifier and the signified which concomitantly lead to the sign, for to identify a thing nominally, the concept the nominal category leads to, and

what that thing 'really is' are different, though it is the composition of both that leads to conceptualising the thing itself. It also alludes to the convention of nicknames, where the 'given' name is meant for the world at large, while the nickname is reserved only for a close group of people. In fact, one can have as many names as the number of people there are to call one anything. For example the name Romeo has in current usage ceased to be just a name, and is a referent of any male who behaves in a flirtatious fashion, and even while a man’s 'real' name might be something else, his nature gives rise to the occasion for another name to be assigned to him, which supposedly is a better indication or significator of the nature of the man.

There are those who postulate ‘universal things’ (res universales) to signify ‘universal words’ (simplices sermones universales), presuming that universal things are signified by universal words similar to the manner in which singular things are signified by 'singular words' (simplices sermones singulares). Abélard refutes all such notions, and instead adheres only to his dictum that all things are singulars and all universals are words. He says that it “remains to ascribe ... universality only to words (restatut ... universalitatem solis vocibus adscribamus).”33 In later commentaries on Porphyry, Abélard uses the term sermo instead of vox to signify universality.34 Sermo, denoting the arbitrary content of the linguistic expression, would hold true in this regard, since vox would suggest that linguistic expressions are universally understood.

Abélard was of the opinion that names possess two significant characteristics - reference (nominatio) and sense (significatio). Reference or nominatio is a characteristic of extension within the symbolic order of language, where the name refers to something within the reciprocal arena of a particular context of conventional language usage, while sense or significatio is a matter of what the term is conceived as in general for the reader/hearer. Therefore, for Abélard, the extension of the name or its reference is not a function of the sense or signification of the same. The resemblance we perceive between different things/objects/phenomena is a function of our intellectus, which conceptualises the thing in its extensions. Therefore to say that 'he yelled until he got blue in the face', is to understand that a person’s face does not actually become blue, but it is to conceive of the 'blueness' as synaesthetically related to shouting.

33 Spade. op. cit. p 63
34 Klaus Jacobi. “Philosophy of Language” in Brower and Guilfoy (Eds.) op. cit. p 135
Or one can look at the concept of ‘John Doe’, who is so ubiquitously used across varied, usually North American contexts. John Doe is not really a person, but the name given to an anonymous male, who has not yet been identified as somebody. John Doe is itself a name, but the person is really somebody else, in terms of what he is called. And yet, for the moment, much like the poem in the *Looking-Glass* where the song is something, is named something else and is called something else, the unidentified person is called John Doe for the interim, until he is called (identified as) something else. Seen thus, the name John/Jane Doe is a universal, since it can be predicated of many, where the name John Doe itself signifies ‘namelessness’ and yet it is also a name since it originally belonged to a particular person. It is a description of anonymity now in conventional usage, a bit also like the term ‘Anonymous/Anon.’ which is applied especially to quotations by persons unknown. This ‘Anonymous’ or ‘John/Jane Doe’ cannot apply to people who are recognizable in society/conventional contexts, and thus cannot be singularised.

In Abélardian discourse, every ‘thing’ is singular, and it is only in the naming, that universality is conferred upon it. The manner of naming follows a certain mode of conceiving (*modus concipiendi*), through which we arrive at conceptual domains of singularity or universality. This interesting conflict between names, and the power vested in certain names is a function of convention and the conceptualisation of which name is the right one. The analysis of the signification of things, according to Abélard, follows an investigation into the manner of signification (*modus significandi*). A proper name is a sign that relates to an individual nominating the named as personally distinct from all else. Therefore, while proper names are semantically singular significations closely related to indexicals, demonstratives, and singular descriptions (or descriptive terms), common names according to Abélard are semantic bearers of plural signification.

Language then, is the result of the imposition of human will and mental *cogitatum*, and is therefore entirely arbitrary. There is no essential relation between the signifier and signified, so to speak, and the signifier may as well have been used to signify other objects, if it had been so willed. What follows this arbitrary naming is of abiding interest to semioticians and philosophers because the natural progression of language evolves towards classification into mental categories and conceptual frameworks. This process of classification proceeds along a mental categorization or imposition that is based on *proporitio* (proportion), *similitudo* (resemblance) and the *similitudo habitudinum* (semblance of rapport).
Antiquity somehow favours the analogy of the tiger for the purposes of classification, which shall here be seen through two different texts – one firmly located in the English Romantic imagination, William Blake’s epigrammatic poem “The Tyger”, and the other part of the colonial enterprise, Rudyard Kipling’s famous The Jungle Book (1894), with a character named ‘Shere Khan’ – especially for purposes of elucidation.

The Jungle Book itself in a circular fashion, has a chapter entitled “Tiger! Tiger!” which is taken from Blake’s poem. William Blake’s “The Tyger” begins thus,

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?35

Here the ‘tyger’ is directly interpreted as a concept – ‘tiger’ pertaining not only to the universal category of the tiger, but also rendering it a metaphor in terms of the qualities that a tiger possesses, and such qualities transposed onto the revolution brewing in England and France at the time. Therefore the concept is also representative of a metaphor that can be extended in terms of the general qualities that can be abstracted from the particular instance or individual. Here, even though the poet signifies the tiger with a signifying pronoun, the reference is not just to one particular tiger roaming one forest of the night. The metaphorical allusion extends also to the general species tiger, with the qualities that collectively are fearful, and are thus also extendable in terms of the qualities qua tiger to any being, process or event that shows similar qualities.

While the Blakean tiger is called a tiger in terms of its species, it is yet unnamed as an individual manifestation, Kipling’s Shere Khan possesses certain characteristics and qualities that classify it as belonging to the category of a particular genus/class that is the tiger, with qualities, prima facie, are not shared by other individuals, and is also signified as an individual instance of the form that is the tiger. In order to particularize this instance of the tiger, Shere Khan has been provided with a limp, thereby denying it the “fearful symmetry” of Blake’s conceptualization, and is also nicknamed ‘Lungri’ or The Lame One.

Now to say that Shere Khan is not just a creature from a fable but is also a tiger is to say that Shere Khan resembles other such creatures, which are similarly called tigers such as the Blakean tiger, and which share certain distinctive features which comprise the ‘tigerness’

of the tigers. This might include any additional impression one might have received/formed about Shere Khan in particular and tigers as a species per se, over time. Therefore, while reading *The Jungle Book*, one notices that the characters Shere Khan the tiger and Bagheera the panther are different, even though they share certain characteristics, and may belong to the same family of cats.

In the folk-tale format, their particular natures are signified through human natures, such as Shere Khan being the 'villain' while Bagheera saves Mowgli, the human child. This impression is received even as a child, which signifies that such conceptual categories are easily understood, even though the particular instances may be close in their particular feline natures. This also may be extended to include such information as the image of the reigning Khan of Bollywood, Shahrukh Khan, who is also named Shere Khan in certain pan-Asian regions, which indicates the fact that being a 'tiger' is a matter of honour and pride, and signifies certain traits across species and genera. It also must be mentioned that the name Shere Khan in *The Jungle Book* itself may have been borrowed from the name of an Indian Pashtun prince Sher Shah Suri (1486-1545) from India, who founded the Sur dynasty, and was conferred the title 'Sher Khan' when he killed a tiger in his youth. Here, much like the song *A-sitting on a Gate* in *Through the Looking Glass*, Shere Khan is a tiger, is Sher Shah Suri, is Lungri, is, for the current reader at least, Shahrukh Khan. Therefore this information adds to all the other information one has of Shere Khan, all of which forms a certain concept of tigers, expandable to Indian cinema stars, princes and the nominal category Shere Khan. The conceptual category like the Platonic category thus is an allusion to quality or characteristic that lies at the core of the thing perceived as such.

Therefore individuals such as Shere Khan and his virtual namesake Shahrukh Khan have a manifest reality, while through abstraction and intellection, we form conceptual categories for the classes and types they belong to, such as *man* and *tiger*. Therefore while Shere Khan in the particular context of *The Jungle Book*, will always be a *tiger*, all tigers will not be Shere Khan, for some can also be movie heroes, and yet others are members of the dwindling population of the race *tiger*, which governments across the world are attempting to save from extinction. Whereas, John Doe, even though denoting a name and not a class in itself, has *come to denote* a class of *non-identity*, and thus all unidentified men can be called John Doe – which goes to show how concepts gain or lose currency over time, in a transactionary arena of reciprocity.
II. 2 One Longs to Walk on all Fours

The notion of reciprocal commerce being the basis of the fecundity of concepts has been used later by semioticians and poets alike. Take for example the famous reply made by Voltaire to Rousseau, when the former read about the concept of the Noble Savage as propounded by Rousseau in his essay the “Discourse in Inequality”. Voltaire wrote back to Rousseau after reading the essay, stating that “I have received, sir, your new book against the human species, and I thank you for it. You will please people by your manner of telling them the truth about themselves, but you will not alter them. The horrors of that human society – from which in our feebleness and ignorance we expect so many consolations – have never been painted in more striking colours: no one has ever been so witty as you are in trying to turn us into brutes: to read your book makes one long to go on all fours. Since, however, it is now some sixty years since I gave up the practice, I feel that it is unfortunately impossible for me to resume it: I leave this naturel [sic] habit to those more fit for it than are you and I... I must confine myself to being a peaceful savage in the retreat I have chosen – close to your country, where you yourself should be.” This sentence is unambiguously clear to a native speaker of English, but would leave a non-speaker confounded, since it employs different concepts, that take their complete meaning from a moral position.

At the semantic level, it employs the usage of what seems like numerical values, but which in fact have nothing to do with numbers. Here “one” refers not to the numerical value of one, but to the person assumed to be the writer of the letter (Voltaire himself) and is therefore a pronoun, and therefore also refers to the ‘being’ of the writer; “fours” meanwhile, have nothing to do with the numerical value four, but instead is an idiomatic expression that signifies crawling, or ‘walking’ on one’s hands and knees. Also, overall the sentence seems like a statement of fact, but in fact carries a pejorative value attached to the notion of crawling, or walking on one’s fours, which in turn is an indictment against Rousseau, and therefore we gather from this statement alone that Voltaire was not a big fan of Rousseauvian ideas, and was opposed to the notion of the Noble Savage, which might have seemed like an immoral anti-Platonist position to a man so steeped in the arts and sciences. Therefore the statement here is not an exhortation to become a four-legged animal such as our friend the tiger, but is in fact a statement to the contrary.

Abélard is of the view that the signification of a term forms the informational content of the concept that is allianced with the term. Names depend upon convention for signification, and the kind of concepts associated with particular names/words depends upon the contextual webs of reference that the user exists in. The word 'tiger' can bring to mind the concept of the tiger in all its references – all the supposed characteristics of the tiger, such as bravery, arrogance, pride, king of the jungle (which can relate to humans in the 'urban' jungle as well), Shahrukh Khan, Shere Khan and the like, although Abélard does claim that the concept carries the full (perceived or not) informational content that the term possesses and not merely the psychological associations or mental images that it is bound to bring to mind. Ideally, the concept will relate to the nature of the thing that is signified and the significations of some names are ‘abstractions’ in the sense that they include only certain features of the things to which the term refers.

The Abélardian tripartite hypothesis posited for human comprehension: sensus, imaginatio and intellectus was explained in his Tractatus de intellectibus. Abélard theorises that the intellect or the faculty of conceiving things is related to the senses, where primary apprehension of a thing leads to its subsequent conceptualisation. The faculty of intellection differs both from sensus and imaginatio in that both latter categories only facilitate in forming impressions of experiences, both present (in the case of the sensus) and absent (as with imaginatio). But with conceptual categories, there is a composite construction of the thing/ event/ experience, present and absent. But it is at the level of intellectus where we grasp the nature of the thing so experienced and conceived. At this level, Abélard insists, knowledge or understanding of the thing is not related to its meaning, but its way of conceptualisation. According to him, there is an essential difference, which relates to the Hegelian view, in how the thing exists, and the way it is apprehended through conceptualisation. This is where nominalism differs from conceptualism, because nominalism holds only instances to be true, and does not consider the linguistic-conceptual mode of apprehending the instances where it is introjected in the mind; whereas conceptualism considers the apprehending entity as separate from the thing to be apprehended and conceived of, and thus argues for the construction of conceptual categories which mediate between the things and words. Thus Shere Khan can be understood and conceived of as a type of tiger, but is also understood to be a character in a tale, as also being a metaphoric representation of something else, all of which correspond to its concept.
There is thus a movement from the physical world to the world of intellection and the conceptual. From a primary experience of thing/s, one conceptualises the universality and the contexts of the thing/s, and forms alternate contexts and discourses proceeding from the thing/s. But contrary to philosophers such as Condillac, who shall be taken up for study later in the chapter, Abélard refuses to admit the correspondence of the sensuous experience and the conceptualisation formed. According to him, human knowledge does depend on sensuous experience, but this experience has no direct correspondence with the concept. There is only a similitude formed due to abstraction and intellection. For example, metaphors are highly crystallised forms of conceptual categories, as are Zen koans, metaphors, metonymies, folk tales etc., where the thing shown/expressed brings to mind the concept it relates itself to.

Therefore the old Zen koan that asks: 'Two hands clap and there is a sound; what is the sound of one hand?' (attributed to Hakuin Ekaku (1686-1769)), is metonymical and not to be taken in its given sense, since it signifies an evolved spiritual/philosophical concept of being, and in current contexts has also achieved the dubious status of a joke and in such contexts evokes only laughter, where others were wont to achieve illumination. Zen koans generally investigate the essential meaninglessness of statements that seemingly relate to the world in conventional usage, thereby rupturing the process of signification, and generally produce seemingly meaningless answers, thereby denoting the singularity of the question itself (answers differ according to students; there is no one or correct answer). In another example of a Zen koan,

A monk asked Unmon, 'Not a single thought arises: is there any fault or not?'

Unmon said, 'Mt. Sumeru!' 37

Here Mt. Sumeru does not correspond to any recognizable answer in the system of questions and answers that we are used to in conventional usage of language. But in the Zen-Buddhist philosophico-spiritual context, it provides illumination and enlightenment, precisely through the rupture of putative paradigms and patterns.

Proverbs and idiomatic expressions similarly provide intellective epiphanies, such as 'let sleeping dogs lie' or 'skeletons in one's cupboard' could have been abstracted from the world of direct experience, but now refer to concepts different from their literal sense, where the terms dogs, sleeping, or skeletons and cupboard are predicative of many and also stand in or are representative of a coded metaphorical reality.

In the Abélardian discourse constructed through the respective faculties of sensus, imaginatio and intellection, all of these combine to form a conceptual category of the thing. Concepts, according to Abélard, function in a reciprocal commerce, and cannot be separated from the contextual relations that they are part of. Similar to Bakhtinian hermeneutics, Abélardian discourse also signifies in a synchronous world of contextual correspondences. Therefore, Zen koans supposedly produce enlightenment because they operate in a highly contextual/conceptual Buddhist world where it is presumed that hitherto conventional signifiers will conceptualise a different paradigm, and where the apparently meaningless is actually charged with intense signification, whereas a joke operates with similar conditions and evokes a different set of conceptual comprehension.

III. Condillac and Hume: The hylomorphic plateau

Abélard recognised the importance of the sensus in the formation of conceptual categories, and although the sensus was but part of the project of conceptualism, it forms a significant and pertinent part. One of the most recurrent questions about concepts concerns whether concepts are innate in nature. Empiricists such as Etienne Bonnot de Condillac (1715-1780) maintain that in contrast to the Socratic conceptual understanding, there are no innate concepts and that cognitive abilities are acquired through social transactions and through one’s empirical experience of the world. Traditionally, empiricists have argued that all concepts derive from sensations. Concepts were thought to be similar to derived copies of sensations or their representations, and assembled according to the manner in which they are learnt, such as Hume’s principles of association. Contemporary analytic philosophers such as Lawrence Shapiro argue that the type of body that an organism has, profoundly affects its cognitive operations as well as the way that the organism is likely to conceptualize the world (Shapiro 2004). This view has resonances with Condillac’s own theory about ideas and conceptual categories being contingent on the body.

Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, was an 18th century philosophe, a few decades junior to John Locke and a contemporary of Rousseau, who argued for hylomorphic entities, in such that substance inheres in matter and form, and also that the medium of comprehension and apprehension of these entities is through language. Refuting Locke’s distinction between sensations (from outer sense) and reflection (from inner sense), Condillac argued that external impressions through the outer senses can account for all ideas and all mental
operations. By 1746, apropos his development of the Lockean notion of knowledge, he published his *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* which presents his refutation of Locke's ideas, since for Condillac although sensory impressions are received through embodiment, yet in order to *know* and comprehend these sensations as well as one's contextual environment, language is necessary.

Condillac took holy orders, and in 1768 he became a member of the French Academy of Sciences. His major works were *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* (1746) and *Traite des sensations* (1754) in which he attempted to explicate and simplify Lockean theories of knowledge with the argument that all conscious experience is a result of sensations, without reneging on his adherence to Cartesian dualism.

Abstracting, in its proper sense, means drawing – separating something from something else whose part it was: consequently abstracted ideas are partial ideas separated from their whole. There are two opinions on such ideas; some people consider them innate and some others claim that they are the work of the mind. If the former are in the wrong; the latter are hardly correct. The action of our senses is sufficient for the production of some abstract ideas; the mind also joins in to produce several of them; and finally, with the help of all these ideas put together, it forms a large number of ideas all by itself.\(^\text{38}\)

Still later, Condillac shows the connection between ideas, sensations and *reflections* – which are derived from language.

[... ] As for the abstract ideas we acquire from the proceedings our soul, it is sufficient to know how all our spiritual faculties are the very sensation which transforms itself differently, in order to understand that our senses give us the abstract ideas of attention, comparison, judgement, etc. – but not unless they are aided by the reflections of the mind.\(^\text{39}\)

Condillac's theory of the development of epistemic capacities was informed by a hylomorphic idea of the mind and the way in which we attempt to understand it through language. He argued that the mind must be an unextended or immaterial substance, on which the action of the changes effected by the senses on the body serve to produce sensations.

\(^{38}\) Etienne Bonnot de Condillac. *Traite de l'art de penser.* in Gill and Poitier (Eds). op. cit. p 41

\(^{39}\) *Ibid.* p 42
Condillac, in his essay on "The Use and Abuse of General Ideas", goes on to compare his position with Locke, finding that Locke, in believing that animals do not abstract, is in error, since he himself holds that animals do abstract and generalise, but are incapacitated by the absence of language, which in his opinion, "can multiply our ideas to infinity."40 Taking the Lockean view of epistemology as the point of departure, he went further to state that all mental understanding could accrue from sensation, without the aid of reflection as an etiological source of ideas or as a way of conceptualising about the world. Second, by denying the existence of any innate faculties, he proposed an extreme sensationism where empirical sensual data are the sole source of mental categories, thereby radically differing from both Platonic and Aristotelian modes of knowledge. Where Locke was of the opinion that the function of language was solely communication of ideas, Condillac offers a radical perspective in such that language itself is constitutive of thought, and therefore being closer to Abélardian metaphysics and linguistic categories. Since language operates in the external realm for Condillac, it holds to reason then, that language being constitutive of ideas, is constitutive of knowledge in general by extension, and therefore here one witnesses the conjoining of knowledge, language and conceptual categories, which exist contiguously.

He compares language as related to the mind, as "statics" is to the body, in adding to its forces. It is here that he corresponds with Abélardian discourse, since he holds that abstracted ideas are the work of the imagination, and that 'reality' or the things as we apprehend them in the world in terms of sensations, are related to our ideas only through language. We conceive of these objects through our faculties of intellection and abstraction, such that they become 'mental objects'. This is to say that although we apprehend the world of sensations, we do not comprehend this world without conceptualising it through the mediatory usage of language. However, Condillac's position on sensation differed significantly from the Lockean position. First, Condillac is of the view that all mental operations are derived from sensations alone, thereby rejecting reflection as a source of ideas.

Second, in furtherance to Locke's anti-nativist position on the innateness of ideas, Condillac denies the existence of any innate faculties with which to reflect on ideas as well. According to his thesis, mental faculties such as memory and attention are themselves generated from simple sensations. Third, while Locke was of the opinion that the function of language was only the communication of ideas, which had their independent existence, Condillac maintained that language was itself generative and constitutive of the ideas

40 Ibid. p.43
themselves. This claim resulted in the notion that *knowledge* itself is a 'well-made language', and that the basic form of a well-made language is algebra, which consists of tautological propositions (*Traité des sensations*). It was on this third point that Condillac was closest to the Abelardian position on the nature of language and concepts.

Firstly, let us recall that we said that the names of substances hold that place in our mind which the subjects hold outside: they are the link and the support of simple ideas in our mind just as subjects are that of qualities. That is why we always tend to relate them to the subject and-we-imagine that they express its very reality. Secondly, we can recognise all simple ideas which enter our notions that we form without any model. So the essence of a thing being, according to the philosophers, that which constitutes what it is, we can, as a consequence have the ideas of essences: that is why we have given them names...Thirdly, there are only two ways of using words: to use them after having fixed in the mind all the simple ideas they must signify, or else only after presupposing them as signs of the very reality of things.41

He further says that "a general proposition is just the result of our knowledge of particulars, to realise that it can lead us to nothing other than that knowledge which has helped us reach it, or to others which could have equally paved the way," which is analogous to Abélard’s own thesis about universals and particulars.

As Abélard presents his views on abstraction in the essay “Intellection”,

Let us first speak of abstraction. We know that form and matter never exist in isolation from each other, but that mind has the power to sometimes consider only the matter, sometimes the form by itself and finally sometimes to conceive of them in their union. In the first two cases a process of abstraction is involved – a process through which the mind abstracts an element of a synthesis to consider its proper nature alone. The third case is that of synthesis. The substance of a man for example, it is body, it is animal, it is man, it is covered with an indefinite number of forms; when, putting aside all these forms, I consider this substance in its material essence, the process of my comprehension is abstractive. [emphasis added]42

41 Ibid. p 49
42 Abélard. in Gill and Poitier (Eds). op. cit. p 15
Here Abélard is speaking of hylomorphic entities which inhere in substance, and here he comes close to Condillac's concept of the 'statue', which is covered with marble and is gradually 'uncovered' to engage with the environment with the aid of senses. He therefore posits a synthetic unity to knowledge, where comprehension arises from the substantive and mental synthesis of elements. One can therefore argue that this prefigures the Kantian Transcendental Apperception and later Hegelian productions of knowledge, where synthesis in the concept leads to understanding.

III. 1 A Rose by any other Name

Abélard had previously progressed from Porphyry's three questions: 1. whether genera and species are real or mental, 2. whether as real they possess materiality (body) or are incorporeal, 3. whether they are separated, and still possess reality in their components. Abélard adds a fourth category to these three questions, and asks, do universals possess nominal components? And if the nominals themselves are destroyed, does understanding still inhere in the nominal term?

Do 'universals' so long as they are 'universals' necessarily have some thing subject to them by nomination? Or alternatively, even if the things named are destroyed, can the universal consist even then in the signification of the understanding alone? For example, the name “rose” when there are no roses to which it is common.43

Abélard refutes this, arguing that when there are no longer any roses, the nominal category rose can no longer claim to be a universal, for it no longer signifies discrete individuals. If the roses were to return, only then would a full understanding of the term occur.

According to Condillac however, sensations are impositions and modifications of our very being. He, contrary to Abélard, makes an important point about ideas, being and sensations. Condillac brought in the concept of the 'embodied self', which apprehends objects in the 'real' world through the senses (particularly as touch, in his view), and goes on to comprehend this as “sensation”. In his view, to view sensations as 'images' of things separate from our embodied selves is to treat them as ideas rather than sensations which would be fallacious, for in his opinion, comprehension is rooted/routed in/through language.

43 Spade, op. cit. p 10
Unlike later theorists like the Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid (1710-1796), who argued for distinctions between a) sensations, considered a faculty of feeling experienced by the mind, and b) perceptions, considered a faculty of reflection upon the thing\(^{44}\), Condillac maintained that sensations lend themselves to being treated as ideas. Refuting the idea that sensations are “something that only occurs aside from thoughts and modifies them” he insisted that they are as representative as any other thought experienced by the mind. It led to the Treatise’s claim that having a sensation does not imply being conscious of everything that sensation involves.

To further elucidate his views, Condillac posited the example of a statue, which is alive like humans, but is shackled by its marble exterior and is unable to experience sensations. Gradually, parts of its exterior are removed, beginning with the olfactory senses. Thus endowed with only the sense of smell but no motive power, Condillac supposed that the statue would be capable of receiving sensations – pleasure or pain from the experience of different odoriferous objects, and in order to distract itself from newer unappealing/uninteresting smells, it only had the faculty of memory and imagination. It gradually evolves as parts are continually uncovered, but since it only has the sense of smell, and not judgement, it does not perceive what kind of smell it is. Therefore, if a rose were placed in front of it, it is patently clear that the statue would not be aware of it as being a rose, and would treat it only as a ‘smell’, not even being aware that it is only a smell. It would, in Condillac’s opinion, be conscious of its own being as pertaining to that of the smell of the rose. It is only from the point of view of human convention that one would recognise it as a rose.

Yet, the statue in question does not possess that notion of an object external to itself, and its consciousness of being would, in Condillac’s view, be analogous to the object itself, which is the rose. At this point, since there is only a single sensation which has impressed itself on our statue, this sensation becomes attention.

Let us think, for example, on a flower whose smell we are not accustomed to, we shall recollect the name of it; we shall remember the circumstances of our having seen it; we shall represent to ourselves the fragrancy of it, under the general idea of a perception that affects the specific perception. Now the operation which produces this effect I call it memory.\(^{45}\)

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\(^{45}\) Condillac. in Gill and Poitier (Eds). *op. cit.* pp.38-9
Next, to aid the statue’s *Pygmalion*-like metamorphosis, one can take away the rose, and replace it with another flower, say a carnation or a jasmine. It will now compare the memory of the rose with the newer impressions received, and form judgments and desire. These judgements and the desire (for certain smells and not others, say asafoetida) are yielded from the act of abstracting the characteristics of certain smells that are associated with certain sensations.

In the second section of the *Treatise*, the statue is invested with the sensation of touch, with an exemplification of the different kinds of touch – the sensation of touching its own body, the touching of external objects separate from its own body, the experience of movement and different surfaces – with which it becomes aware of an externality, and develops its perceptions of extension, distance and shape. The third section of the *Treatise* deals with the consolidation of touch with the other senses, while the fourth section deals with the desires, activities and ideas of an isolated man who enjoys possession of all the senses, and in the conclusion of the *Treatise*, Condillac presents an account of the observations on a feral child who was found living among bears in the forests of Lithuania.

While the statue is being uncovered to reveal different sensory faculties such as smell, hearing, sight and touch, the perceptual dimensions will consequently also be endowed with greater complexity. Yet, the idea of the object itself that leads to these sensations will elude the statue, and it will fail to draw any causal relationship between the sensations and the objects producing them.

Condillac concluded that the statue would not have any conception of the causal objects as distinct from itself or even any conception of its own state of being or beingness without language. When it encounters a rose, or rather the smell of the rose, it experiences its state as rose-scented. If the statue encounters other smells, they will probably coalesce into an amalgamation of smells. Experiencing different smells in succession would lead to the notion/concept of time, and the idea that time has elapsed, while it endures. In Condillac’s view, the introduction of sound would be too different from the faculty of smell for the being to be aware of the two, to be coalesced (which he assumed would be more likely a proposition if there were a complexity of smells only). To be endowed with two senses would only render the being to have a double experience, but not necessarily an irenic one.

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47 Ibid. I.i.10.
In terms of hylomorphic entities, Condillac also maintains that were the being to experience a smell with a combinant sound, it would conceptualise both as belonging to each other, and not as two separate substances. Otherwise put, each would play the role of property to the other. Therefore in terms of conceptualising substance, it is according to the Condillacian position, an amalgamation of sensations/qualities/properties experienced in a contextual paradigm of simultaneity.48

Some sensations yield pleasure, while others are disagreeable, and it is the faculty of abstraction which gives rise to the notions of concepts of pleasure and pain, even while the being itself is only, in Condillac’s view, the sum of its sensations, which are transformed.

It would be remiss here not to adopt for analysis the lines from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* (1594), where Juliet beseeches Romeo to give up his name in order for them to be able to be together, since it is the unholy and unwise combination of the Montague-Capulet nominals that have caused the two lovers and families so much grief. And as is seen here, the name refers back to the father, and therefore to the etiological origin of the Self.

*Jul.* O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father, and refuse thy name;
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

*Rom.* [Aside.] Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?
*Jul.* 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;
Thou art thyself though, not a Montague.
*What’s Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man.* O! be some other name:
What’s in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet;
*So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call’d,*
*Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title.* Romeo, doff thy name;
And for that name, which is no part of thee,
Take all myself.49

48 *Ibid.* III.iv.2
49 William Shakespeare. *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 2, Scene 2, ll 33–49
In this all-too-familiar passage from Shakespeare, one can see Juliet’s struggle to reconcile identity and difference, logos and discourse, being and knowledge. The process of naming here is part of a later abstractive process, where sensation of the object encountered is treated \textit{a priori} to the abstraction. As Juliet says the name is not concerned with the physical reality of pure Being, and therefore has no direct relation to the various assortments of ‘hand, foot, face or any part which belongs to a man’.

Therefore, here one can put forward the claim that while Abélard and Condillac were both concerned with conceptual structures; Abélard approached the concept as a mediatory position between the dyadic positions of Universalism and Nominalism, wholly located within and pertinent to \textit{being}, whereas Condillac approached the concept (although he never himself uses the term), through empirical externality, where it is known through the sensory impressions received, although unlike the Lockean position, he still uses it as a mediatory position between impressions received and the awareness formed of those impressions. And yet there are very obvious similarities between their positions, since both operate within the triadic structure of \textit{sensus}, \textit{imaginatio} and \textit{intellectus}, where the point of departure is the material senses, but move on to memory, imagination, intellection and articulation.

In Condillac’s discourse, the ‘other’ as the external world which the self encounters through the senses, is required in order for the self to have conceptual categories, where it encounters such concepts through the interactions with this fictive other. In the Abelardian discourse however, although the other may have entered the discourse, Abélard himself never considers its presence as a requirement for perception and conception to arise. This knowledge of the other, is one of the primary areas where Abélard and Condillac differ, even though they agree in terms of the role of language and conceptualisation. Abélard never perceives the knowing self or the Dasein, as an embodied presence, always depersonalising it through his discourse on an all-knowing mind which grapples with ideas and concepts. Condillac, on the other hand, only looks at the self as embodied, and always located in a synchronous universe, without coming into conflict with ideational contradictions.

Where Condillac differs from Locke, is on the primacy of language, and its role in the formation of ideas and concepts. In Locke’s views in his \textit{Essay} (1690), language is central only in so far as its representative ability is concerned, where it gives expression to the mental ideas and concepts already formed in the mind, whereas Condillac maintained that language has a generative role, and is not restricted to only the episteme of representation.
Though examining and judging of Ideas by themselves, their Names being quite laid aside, be the best and surest way to clear and distinct Knowledge: yet through the prevailing custom of using Sounds for Ideas, I think it is very seldom practiced.\textsuperscript{50}

According to Locke the human mind is capable of a clear and distinct knowledge from the outset, prior to the use of verbal language. The mind is capable of analyzing and synthesizing ideas, of abstracting and generalizing them, prior to the translation of them into an external language. It is in relation to the pre-established mental language of ideas that external verbal language is arbitrary. The mind and the will utilize ideas prior to language so as to give language meaning arbitrarily by deciding which ideas are to be related to which sounds:

Thus we may conceive how Words, which were by Nature, so well adapted to that purpose, came to be made use of by Men, as the Signs of their Ideas; not by any natural connexion, that there is between particular articulate Sounds and certain Ideas, for then there would be but one Language amongst all Men; but by a voluntary Imposition, whereby such a Word is made arbitrarily the Mark of such an Idea. The use of Words then, is to be sensible marks of Ideas; and the Ideas they stand for, are their proper and immediate signification.\textsuperscript{51}

Thus, in relation to the Lockean position, Condillac forms his own theory of signs, which prefigures Saussurean signification, and introduces signs as the principle which "unfolds all our ideas as they lye in the bud."\textsuperscript{52}

After the printing of my \textit{Essai}, from which the largest part of this work is drawn, I have completed the demonstration of the necessity of signs in my Grammar and in my Logic.\textsuperscript{53}

And he further goes on to say in his \textit{Logic}, "In the first part, we have seen that words are absolutely necessary for us to formulate ideas of any kind.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid. p. 405
\textsuperscript{54} Condillac in Gunderson. \textit{op. cit.} p 388
In the realm of signs and signification, while Condillac’s other contemporary, David Hume (1711-1776), is commonly known for his theory of association of ideas, where reality and human perception of that reality is composed of an association of ideas, which he relates to the unconscious (similar to the Jungian thesis) over which the conscious has no control, Condillac himself held that the only person to be able to speak with clarity is one who knows the conceptual association of the words and their signification - “What accustoms us to this inaccuracy, is the manner in which we form ourselves to language. We do not arrive at the age of reason, till long after we have contracted the habit of speech”.

In the introduction to the Treatise, Condillac declares that he has arrived at the solution to every philosophical problem, which solution is concerned with the connection between ideas, la liaison des idées, and their relation to the linguistic sign, and according to him, every idea can be traced back to this principle.

Everything is composed through the connection of ideas. But – this is the supplement and what he proclaims to be the new in relation to Locke – the connection between ideas takes place through the idea's connection with the linguistic sign. External language is a condition for the existence of both mental ideas itself and the connection between them... The ideas are connected with the signs, and it is only by this means, as I shall prove, they are connected with each other.

When Michel Foucault later elucidates his linguistic theory of representation, Condillac figures significantly in terms of the episteme thereof, which has two distinctive features,

a) There already exists a Cartesian mind which constructs a verbal language (L1) which precludes a mental language of idéas
b) L1 is a tool used in the analysis of the mental language of ideas. The internal language of mental ideas is the foundation for the mind's construction of L1.

But on the other hand it is only through the construction of the external, verbal language that we reach clarity in the internal language of ideas. The external, verbal language is a presupposition for the internal mental one, and vice versa. But because the mental language without further ado is presupposed as already formed, there really is no theory of the sign

55 Ibid. p 302
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
within the episteme of representation. This double origin is also what Jacques Derrida focuses on in his introduction to Condillac in *The Archaeology of the Frivolous*. Derrida classifies Condillac as a metaphysician since in his theory the last is the first, or the other way round.\(^{59}\)  
The archaeology of the frivolous, then, is the excavation of the relationship between the two theses of Condillac’s *Essay*.

Condillac criticizes language for frivolous idleness in the case when each and every linguistic expression is not well founded through being connected in a non-equivocal way to determinate impressions or ideas. This is a theory that he adopts unchanged from Descartes and Locke. He says,

> We must ascend to the origin of our ideas, we must unfold their formation, and trace them to the limits which nature has prescribed, to the end that we may fix the extent and boundaries of our knowledge, and new model as it were the whole frame of the human understanding.\(^{60}\)

Simultaneously, he insists on the theory that language is a necessary presupposition for the mind’s having ideas, for the connection of the ideas with each other, and finally for the mind reaching clarity and distinctness about them. This he characterizes as his own epoch-making discovery. What, according to the previous thesis should come before language, as its foundation, according to this second thesis presupposes language as a condition.

Therefore, one returns to the problem of representation, and whether language is representative of matter/spirit, or whether it itself constitutes the matter/spirit in ways that are intricately linked, one cannot think in categories beyond language. While Condillac is in this sense closer to the Deleuzean notion of transcendent empiricism, as we shall see later, there are echoes also of phenomenological categories of the self as embodied within the world, and of language and knowledge as they relate to the world of appearances or phenomena, as the next chapter shall seek to examine.


\(^{60}\) Condillac. in Gunderson. *op. cit.*