

On the FACS/FACTS Review
of
Kai Sørlander's Book:
The Structure of Pure Reason:
Philosophys View of Our Situation in the World
Springer, March 2025

Dines Bjørner
Fredsevej 11, DK-2840 Holte, Danmark
E-Mail: bjorner@gmail.com, URL: www.imm.dtu.dk/~db

September 2, 2025

Abstract

I collect here the BCS' FACS/FACTS review of Kai Sørlander's Book and the e-mails exchanged in this connection. This collection may serve as an aide-memoire should it be decided that we, I, Brian Monahan and Timothy Denvir, work out a *follow-up discussion*, first for the BCS FACS/FACT, then, possibly, in edited form, for a submission to a "learned" philosophy journal – should one come to *Mind*!

I presently foresee Sects. 5-?? to form a basis for such a *follow-up discussion*.

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1 Opening E-mails: July 2025

1.1 Brian Monahan, Tue 1 Jul, 23:21

Brian Monahan <brianqmonahan@gmail.com>

Tue 1 Jul, 23:21

to me, Tim, Jonathan

Dear Dines Bjorner, (CC: Tim, Jonathan)

As you may be aware from Jonathan Bowen, we are reviewing Kai Sorlander's recent Springer book for the FACS FACTS newsletter. This review is primarily led by co-editor Tim Denvir, who has written a meticulous set of personal notes on the book. My contribution is forming the review, based on Tim's extensive notes. A key element of this review notes that you personally took the time to translate the work into English. I am contacting you really to ask a couple of clarifying questions, as follows:

Kai Sorlander as a person: I have singularly failed to locate Kai Sorlander online (admittedly, looking only in English). I note that I have seen the dates (1994 - 2022), but I assume this refers to the span of publication dates. It would be most helpful if you could provide some further biographical context for Kai Sorlander, please? Does/did Sorlander have an academic affiliation?

Please excuse my ignorance regarding the gender assignment of Danish names, but is Kai here male or female, assuming that this matters? Apparently, the name Kai is often regarded as gender-neutral, but with a slight bias towards male assignment. In the review, we have taken care not to refer to personal pronouns - we have used "the author" or Kai Sorlander explicitly.

Your explanatory exploration of Kai Sorlander's Philosophy:

September 2, 2025

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(<http://www.imm.dtu.dk/~dibj/2022/sorlander/sorlander.pdf>). Could the review reference this exploration of Sorlander's work?

We are hoping to put the finishing touches to the June issue of FACS FACTS, which will contain our review. We appreciate that, although you are busy, it would be immensely helpful if you could get back to us fairly soon.

PS: We met briefly a long while ago, on the RAISE project, for example.

With many thanks,

Brian Monahan
Co-editor, FACS FACTS

Mob: 07763 856870
Home email: brianQmonahan@gmail.com

1.2 My Reply to E-mail 1.1,

Dear Brian Q Monahan

Good, well, great, ro hear from You.
Certainly I remember You.
From the RAISE days.
Did I last time see You at Imperial College?

Kai S{\o}rlander is a male. (Kai and Kaj are usually male first names in Denmark.)
Born in 1944.
Won the Copenhagen University Gold Medal, while studying: An essay on Wittgenstein.
Graduated in the years when the "left" ruled academia around here.
So no job at the University.

Has "freelanced" ever since !

<https://soerlander.wixsite.com/home>
<https://kaisoerlander.blogspot.com/>
<https://sites.google.com/view/kaisoerlander>
<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-83301-4>

Chapter 2 in my 2021 book
<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-73484-8>
"Domain Philosophy", pages 11-18, is a published version of my "take" on S{\o}rlander.
Book.pdf
[Please - for Your/Denvir/Bowen-use only !]
Please use that !

Sincerely

Dines

1.3 Brian's reply to my mail 1.2, 2 Jul 2025, 11:46

Brian Monahan <brianqmonahan@googlemail.com>

2 Jul 2025, 11:46

to me, Tim, Jonathan

Dear Dines,

Many, many thanks for your rapid and helpful reply! Very happy to use your more exact reference, of course.

I've got the definite impression that Kai clearly made a considerable impression on you personally - I can't help wondering that there must be a good story behind that!

It's been too long ...

With very best wishes and many thanks,

Brian Monahan

1.4 Jonathan Bowen's Follow-up, Wed 2 Jul, 12:18

Dear Dines, et al.,

Thank you for your fast and comprehensive reply!

Can we use your nice photo in the FACS FACTS review? If so, should there be an acknowledgement to the photographer?

Best wishes,

Jonathan

Prof. Jonathan Bowen FBCS FRSA
Emeritus Professor of Computing, London South Bank University, UK
Adjunct Professor, RISE, Southwest University, Chongqing, China
Chairman, Museophile Limited, Oxford, UK

1.5 Bjørner's Reply to Jonathan Bowen 1.4, Wed 2 Jul, 12:42

Dines Bjorner <bjorner@gmail.com>

September 2, 2025

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Wed 2 Jul, 12:42

to Jonathan, Brian, Tim

Dear Jonathan

Yes You may use the photo.
My wife, Kari, took it. In March '25.
You may wish to edit/cut it.

Dear Brian, Jonathan and Tim

You are doing a great job.
For history, for the annals, Your work
on FACS Facts cannot be underestimated.

Thanks

Dines

1.6 Brian Monahan, Wed 2 Jul, 13:00

Brian Monahan <brianqmonahan@googlemail.com>

Wed 2 Jul, 13:00

to me, Tim, Jonathan

Dear Dines,

My apologies - I had earlier completely missed that you had very generously attached a PDF of your recent Springer book "Domain Engineering".

It is a really most kind gesture - and one that curiously resonates with me, in the sense that specification for me would begin with describing the actual context that the software system was to fit into i.e. the requirement. It seemed natural to me that to build the right service, we had to understand where that service should fit in and what it interacts with in that context. This means modelling what the domain system does.

Anyway, enough of me - thank you again for your most generous gift.

Many, many thanks,

Brian Monahan

Mob: 07763 856870

Home email: brianqmonahan@googlemail.com

1.7 Tim Denvir, Thu 3 Jul, 12:52

Tim Denvir <timdenvir@gmail.com>

Thu 3 Jul, 12:52

to me, Jonathan, Brian
Dear Dines,

I would surely like to add my own many thanks for all your copious information, thoughts, book etc. You are very energetic, as always!

Very best wishes,

Tim

2 Jonathan Bowen, 4 Aug 2025, 17:14

from: Jonathan Bowen <jpbowen@gmail.com>
to: Dines Bjørner <bjorner@gmail.com>
cc: Tim Denvir <timdenvir@bcs.org>,
Brian Monahan <brianqmonahan@gmail.com>
date: 4 Aug 2025, 17:14
subject: Announcement: FACS FACTS 2025-2 July newsletter issue
(including book review)

Dear Dines, (cc Tim and Brian)

See information on the latest FACS FACTS newsletter below, including a review of your translated book, *The Structure of Pure Reason*, by Tim Denvir and Brian Monahan (pages 54-59). Thank you for the nice photo!

I hope all is well with you and your family.

Best wishes,

Jonathan

Prof. Jonathan Bowen FBCS FRSA
Emeritus Professor of Computing, London South Bank University, UK
Adjunct Professor, RISE, Southwest University, Chongqing, China
Chairman, Museophile Limited, Oxford, UK

FACS FACTS Issue 2025-2, July 2025:

<https://www.bcs.org/media/yd4ocehl/facs-jul25.pdf>

3 The FACS/FACS Review, FACS FACTS Issue 2025-2 July 2025

FACS FACTS Issue 2025-2 July 2025

Book review: The Structure of Pure Reason

Philosophys View of Our Situation in the World

Kai Sørlander

(Reviewed by: Tim Denvir and Brian Monahan)

The Structure of Pure Reason: Philosophys View of Our Situation in the World, by Kai Sørlander, Translated by Dines Bjørner, 117 pages, Published by Springer Nature, 2024, ISBN:978-3031833007 This is an unusual book review for a newsletter dedicated to supporting Formal Methods of software development. Notably, this book is a work of (pure) philosophy and doesnt contain any particular references to software, computer systems or even mathematical theorems not even one equation!

However, what brought Danish philosopher Kai Sørlanders work to our attention was the interesting fact that Dines Bjørner, a computer scientist (likely well-known to the majority of FACS readers, if not personally, at least by repute) took on the work of actively translating this from the original Danish into English, clearly making it something of a personal project.

In his Translators foreword, Bjørner starts by introducing himself, giving a very brief selected account of some of the events in software engineering, including requirements engineering, relating that Kai Sørlanders Philosophy as outlined in five of his books. Bjørner further states that he devoted a chapter of his latest book to a summary of Sørlanders philosophical work, which he first came across in 2014 [1]. Since Kai Sørlanders works were all in Danish, Dines Bjørner decided to, in 2023, translate the original Structure of Pure Reason into English [2]. All in all, this has piqued our interest sufficiently to explore and write this review.

At this stage, we should say that your book reviewers have no particular background in academic philosophy, apart from that gained by a general acquaintance with various philosophical ideas, reached through reading around the subject. What follows here is therefore a broad sketch of the works overall content in general terms and our attempt to convey an appreciation of the argument given therein.

The book opens with three preliminary parts, a Foreword, a Translators Foreword by Dines Bjørner, and the authors Preface. The main body of the work consists of seven quite substantial chapters, each with its subdivisions. All of this is completed by a brief Conclusion chapter. Unfortunately, the book has no index, and a query to the publisher revealed that the print edition did not have one either. It is not so necessary for an online edition because one

can search for

words or phrases using the find facility, but an index is more necessary in a hard-copy. Curiously, the Foreword by Georg Henrik von Wright given here is from an earlier book by Sørlander [3], published over thirty years previously in 1993/1994. However, the reason for this is likely due to this foreword providing considerable support and useful context for the reader, as the current book is a close development of that predecessor. Written in 1993, von Wrights foreword reveals a rich history of association with Sørlander from the latters student days, yet surprisingly, without ever having met him. From this foreword, Sørlander comes out as a Platonist, an Aristotelian believer¹ that there is a state of the world which is the case, to echo the famous opening lines from Wittgensteins *Tractatus*.

But what is this book really all about? A good pointer here is found in the authors brief Preface, where he states, Philosophy asks for the deepest truth about the world and our situation in the world: that which under no circumstances could be otherwise. The author begins with this essentially metaphysical, Platonist/Aristotelian stance, but then immediately states that the widespread view today is that there is no ultimate truth, but that there are only particular and local truths. Sørlander rebuts this position as self-contradictory, and reverts to the earlier Platonist view that: we have to start all over again and ask the philosophical question from the ground up. The author asserts that the book gives a definitive answer to the philosophical question [of what is the truth about the world and our situation in the world]. A bold claim indeed!

This position is further emphasised in the authors brief 280-word introduction, entitled *The Task of Philosophy*, which strongly reiterates Sørlanders opposition to the widely held no ultimate truth position, along with his notion of inescapable truth. He draws an analogy with Nietzsches idea that one can determine ones own spiritual strength by defining ones own moral truth, which is condemned as a misunderstanding. By contrast, Sørlander approves of Kant but declares that in this book, he will go deeper. Sørlander lists three of his previous books, since they form a progression along the same theme, especially [3].

We now turn to a brief summary of each of the seven chapters that make up this book, plus the conclusion. In Chapter 1, *Philosophy and Rationality*, Sørlander proclaims that our philosophical discourse must be rational, based on conceptual logic. Philosophy begins with a wonder, but from there it develops into a rational question about what is so necessary that it could not be under any circumstances different. The authors primary task in this chapter seems to be to establish some basic ground rules for his exploration and to motivate the central question: what is so necessary that it could not rationally be otherwise?. The author continues, writing on originality, independence and fallibility: Philosophical originality implies thinking independently and innovatively, but is not in itself infallible; philosophical errors can lead to significant advances when they are later thought through. Sørlander refers to the ancient Greek philosophers, including Plato, Aristotle, and the pre-Socratics, but does not provide an analysis of their ideas at this point. In Section 1.7, the author criticises again what he sees as the present-day position, namely more of a relativistic standpoint, represented, as he sees it, by Heidegger and postmodernism; he condemns current philosophical teaching in universities; asserting that they, and the whole of the societal culture that they represent have gone astray, a bold claim indeed.

¹Or even a post-Wittgensteinian Kantianite as von Wright says in his foreword.

Although it is stated early on that Sørlander wrote a gold medal thesis on Wittgensteins early philosophy, it is quite surprising that there is no reference by Sørlander to Wittgenstein himself in the whole of the text of this book. Sørlander must surely have read Wittgensteins

On Certainty, which has as its (depressing) thesis a severely contradictory view to Sørlanders own. Turning now to Chapter 2: Kant and Hume on Causality, this is where the author gives an account of Kants reaction to Humes previous ideas on causality, favouring Kants position but then finding that too is deficient, and finally positing Sørlanders own analysis. Further research with various resources confirms that Sørlander appears to have a sound understanding of Humes and Kants philosophies.

Chapter 3: What Philosophy Can Learn from the Special Development of Physics is an intriguing title for a chapter in a philosophy text, especially one dealing with metaphysics. Generally speaking, within philosophy, it is the general case which is seen to embody logically prior, overarching rational principles, so that the particular case would then appear as some kind of instance of that general case. But here we see that, instead, philosophy itself should heed generally how the physical sciences have themselves developed.

Sørlander gives a quick summary of Isaac Newtons classical theory of mechanics. This is then followed, even more quickly, by a summary of Einsteins Special and General Theories of Relativity. Next, the principles of Quantum Mechanics as developed by Niels Bohr and then Max Planck are briefly explored. Both these developments are contrasted with Newtons classical theory, whilst insisting that the classical theory need not be rejected: it remains a paradigm. Although some variant of the standard model might one day unify quantum theory with Einsteins special relativity, work would still need to be done to incorporate the general theory. The overall message for philosophy appears to be that, despite radically differing approaches being taken, a deeper exploration can yield significant unifying benefits in the long run. This chapter concludes with some reflections on the philosophy of science, including references to the work of Thomas Kuhn. We now arrive at Chapter 4: The Given System of Sciences. This chapter and the next are among the longest in the book, and as such, these chapters present Sørlanders primary arguments. Within this chapter, Sørlander takes a considered look at the development of mathematics and the physical sciences, all the way through natural science to the humanities, to generally provide evidence for the view that, at root, philosophy itself provides unifying conceptual patterns within the development of these areas. This is not to claim that these areas are themselves in any way similar in their content. On the contrary, Sørlander is at pains to say that the subject areas are, unsurprisingly, entirely distinctive in their content. Instead, Sørlander is stating that these areas all appear to share common conceptual basis typified by a focus on rational consideration and the need for evidence.

For example, in Section 1, the author writes: Physics is a spectacular example of a scientifically specified conceptual system, and goes on to say that this also applies to simpler conceptual systems such as, logic, number theory and geometry. He seems to regard these concepts as a description of reality. In Section 2, Logic, he gives a brief cultural-historic analysis from classical Greek times as well as a summary of logical connectives, and, or, implication etc. that the Greeks formulated in their first flowering. Nothing much happened for a long time after that until the axiomatisation of propositional logic in the nineteenth century. He records that the Greeks in classical times also touched upon modal logic, with concepts of possible, necessary and so forth. Finally in this Section he discusses the relationship between bivalent logic with two truth values, true and false, and polyvalent logics. The next few sections discuss the science of numbers, geometry and physics. The chapter finally embarks on Biology, Psychology, Linguistics, Social Science and [the study of] History. There is much that readers will find contentious in these sections, especially in sections 4.7, on Psychology, and 4.8, Linguistics. However, those rather contentious observations can stimulate readers

to private thoughts and analyses which one might not otherwise have embarked upon. In the very final Section 4.11, Philosophy and the System of Sciences, Sørlander starts by summarising the chapter so far. But then he draws some extraordinary conclusions. . . . we must also conclude that this conceptual system must basically apply for all human languages. It follows since all languages in principle must be mutually translatable. This seems to be in direct contradiction to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, also known as linguistic relativity². The author goes further: all human beings should bow to the same logic. They should recognize the same arithmetic, geometry, physics, biology, and psychology. And they should recognize the same method in social science and in the study of history. The author makes no reference to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, despite implicitly condemning it, but strongly rejects almost any form of relativism. Overall, Sørlander is returning to the initial thesis posited in the Introduction and the beginning of Chapter 1.

Concluding this chapter, Sørlander says Rationally speaking, we must thus state that we cannot justify any alternative to and thus any way out of this system of basic concepts for describing reality. But at the same time, we are confronted with a question that cannot be answered on the basis that we have used so far: the actual existence of the sciences. It is the question of why this system of basic concepts is as it is at all. Or: Why do we have precisely the system of sciences that we actually have? Could it not be otherwise?

At this point, we now reach the conceptual culmination of this book, somewhat portentously titled: Chapter 5: The Transcendental Deduction of the Conceptual Conditions for Any Possible Description of Reality. It is indeed one of the two longest chapters in the book, the other being the final chapter. Not only is this chapter lengthy, but it is also somewhat challenging to read and comprehend. For instance, the key phrase, transcendental deduction, occurs numerous times in this chapter, and was first mentioned in Chapter 2. However, despite its frequent occurrence here in this chapter, no real hint is given by Sørlander that the phrase transcendental deduction will likely be very familiar to students of Kants Critique of Pure Reason. So the phrase transcendental deduction might reasonably be safely taken to mean an absolutely undeniable and necessary inference from premise to conclusion.

From the Introduction, Sørlanders primary focus in the book has been with this question: What is thus necessary is that it couldnt be different?. According to von Wrights foreword and also his own preface, Sørlander has generally tackled this question throughout his published work, starting ²See e.g., Whorf, Benjamin Lee (2012), Language, thought, and reality : selected writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf, John B. Carroll, Stephen C. Levinson, Penny Lee (2nd ed.), Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, ISBN 978-0- 262-51775-1; Sapir, Edward (1983), David G. Mandelbaum (ed.), Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in Language, Culture, and Personality, University of California Press. Also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linguistic_relativity. in his first book [3]. Very broadly speaking, Sørlander explains the difference to Kants original approach as being: Where Kant here carries out a transcendental deduction of that system of categories, which must be presupposed by the possibility of self-awareness, I shall try to carry out a transcendental deduction of the system of basic concepts, which must be presupposed by every possible description of reality.

Sørlander claims to obtain this transcendental deduction since when we have to find a basis which is deeper than that on which Kant builds, it must be the principle of contradiction. Then it can be nothing but the principle, that the truth of a proposition implies the falsity of the negation of the same proposition. Sørlander continues: Here we must remember that the principle of contradiction does not stand entirely alone. It presupposes a theory of meaning. It presupposes that the designations with which propositions can be expressed must be defined

by relations of implication to other designations. In this way, Sørlander tries to resolve the apparent dilemma posed by seeking a system of concepts for describing reality, but without also presupposing it to start with.

As one might expect, the author naturally makes much reference to Kant, but also to more modern writers, Zinkernagel (1988) and David Favreholdt (1999), although mainly to contradict their positions. There is a discussion of self-awareness and consciousness, in the context of Kants following Descartes starting point. However, in his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, not actually referenced or referred to by Sørlander, Descartes asserts that *Cogito ergo sum, Je pense, donc je suis*. Since I am aware of myself thinking, I must exist. Sørlander examines this and finds fault with its foundations. Accordingly, Sørlander contends that consciousness cannot be the foundation for a transcendental deduction of what is so necessary that it could not be otherwise under any circumstances, as Kant claimed, since it amounts to a form of solipsistic self-belief, and moreover, such an empirical fact cannot be taken as a necessary consequence because it could of course be contingent.

Sørlander further examines the logical basis of Kants and Descartes arguments in minute detail, cruising through *The Logic of Propositions* and *The Logical Framework for the Possibility of Propositions About Reality*. Numbers, Time, Space, Geometry and Causality all receive the authors attention. The author rapidly embarks on an increasingly wide ranging series of somewhat technical studies throughout the remainder of this chapter. One gets the impression of a surging exploration from a basis of enquiry into logical necessities to reach some questionable conclusions. FACS readers, especially those with an interest in philosophy, will find this chapter full of challenging interest, but not all will accord with its conclusions, or indeed, its argumentative process. It is worth noting that despite containing a subsection on Knowledge and Rationality, the author nowhere makes reference to Imre Lakatos, the champion of rationality, one might say [4, 5]. We finally arrive at the last two chapters, namely Chapter 6: *Pure Reason in Ethics* and Chapter 7: *Pure Reason in Politics*. In these chapters, Sørlander takes on the issue of human nature with all its profound difficulties, providing ample opportunity for commentary across a vast range of general topics, from ethics and social justice to religion and democracy. Broadly speaking, Sørlanders frequent target here lies with postmodernism and the incessant relativisation of what counts as truth. At this point, although much more could be said in our review, it is already substantial in length, and therefore, time to close. Overall, in this book and despite its relatively short length, Kai Sørlander has largely attempted a substantial review of Kants metaphysical foundational approach, basing it not on self-consciousness but on a foundational rational understanding of the nature of truth (the principle of contradiction). That being said, it is certainly not for our review to claim how successful Sørlander has been in this endeavour only time will tell. Finally, we cannot close here without again thanking Dines Bjørner for his extraordinary translation efforts of what must have been a thoroughly challenging project.

References

- [1] Bjørner, D. (2024). *Domain Science and Engineering*, Springer Nature, 2024
(See: Chapter 2 "Domain Philosophy", pp 1118)
- [2] Sørlander, K. (2022). *Den rene fornufts struktur [The structure of pure reason]*. Ellek
- [3] Sørlander, K. (1994). *Det Uomgængelige Filosofiske Deduktioner*
[The inevitable Philosophical deductions,

with a foreword by Georg Henrik von Wright]
(168 pp.). Munksgaard. Rosinante.

[4] Lakatos, I., (1976). Proofs and Refutations, Cambridge University Press.

[5] Lakatos, I., (1978). The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes,
Cambridge University Press

4 Bjørner's Reply to Jonathan Bowen et al. – on 9

Re: Announcement: FACS FACTS 2025-2 July newsletter issue (including book review)

Dines Bjorner <bjorner@gmail.com>

5 Aug 2025, 18:47

to Jonathan, Tim, Brian

Dear Jonathan, Brian and Timothy

Thanks a zillion for (1) the thorough
and fine review of S{\o}rlander's book,
and (2) setting a high for FACS FACTS.

Both are a testimony to a culture that
we sometimes seem to as if it was
disappearing. Thanks for showing that
it is not.

I have forwarded the FACS FACTS Issue
to Kai S{\o}rlander.

Yours

Dines

5 Bjørner's Comments, I

Dines Bjorner <bjorner@gmail.com>

Tue 5 Aug, 19:43

to Tim, Brian, Jonathan, bcc: kai

Dear Brian and Tim

Thanks for Your review.

I like it very much.

I am sure Kai Sørlander will also appreciate it.

I have had a first reading.

I caught Your mention of Benjamin Whorf.

As for that I think the following: Whorf's Linguistics Relativism seems to not be really that relevant, but I will study that more. But off the top of my head, the reasoning that Sørlander conducts, is "language free", that is, is independent of language. Time, space, Newton's laws exist whether we have language to express them.

So, I think, "that which must necessarily hold, in any universe" holds whether we have language to perceive it or not.

That is my current understanding, but I shall now, spurred on by Your reference, reconsider it.

Fondly yours.

Dines

PS: -- and thus it explains the absence of Wittgenstein literature references !
-- Yes, wrt. index, but how many philosophy books have indexes ?

6 Kai Sørlander

6.1 First Comments, Wed 6 Aug, 21:08

kai sørlander

Wed 6 Aug, 21:08

to me

Kære Dines,

Here are some arguments against Whorf's linguistic relativism: the theory that there are (may be) languages that have a completely different conceptual logical basic structure.

1) The very basic counter-argument is that this theory itself must be formulated in a language, and this language must either be able to express something that is universally valid (valid for all languages), or the theory cannot be formulated linguistically at all (and therefore is self-defeating).

2) Secondly and less fundamentally: When Whorf himself gives examples of languages that, according to him, have a completely different logic than ours, he still manages to formulate the meaning of the statements in the other language. And then it can't be fundamentally correct that it has a fundamentally different logic? Then it must have "the same logic" at the most basic level.

But on the whole I agree with you that it is a reliable presentation of my book. And since such a presentation necessarily contains something that goes completely against what are today perceived as philosophical truisms, it can hopefully arouse the curiosity of a potential reader: Can such a thing really be true - and even necessarily true?

Yours faithfully

Kai

1

6.2 Second Comments, 14 Aug 2025, 21:13

kai srlander

14 Aug 2025, 21:13

to me

Kre Dines,

Det glder mig, at vor overstttelse bliver rost. Da jeg ikke fler mig helt hjemme i det engelske sprog, var jeg bange for, at overstttelsen mske ville synes lidt for "stiv" for den hjemmевante. Sprgsmlet, om der burde vre et indeks, anser jeg for mindre betydningsfuldt. Det drejer sig om "det udvendige". Det vsentlige er, om argumentationen holder; og indholdsfortegnelsen giver en god oversigt over strukturen

¹The Danish text is:

Her kommer lige nogle argumenter imod Whorfs lingvistiske relativisme: teorien om, at der er (kan være) sprog, som har en helt forskellig begrebslogisk grundstruktur.

1) Det helt grundlæggende modargument er, at denne teori selv m formuleres i et sprog, og dette sprog m enten kunne udtrykke noget, som er universelt gyldigt (gyldigt for alle sprog), eller ogs kan teorien slet ikke formuleres sprogligt (og ergo er den selvundergravende).

2) For det andet og mindre fundamentalt: Nr Whorf selv giver eksempler p sprog, som ifølge ham har en helt anden logik end vort, s lykkes det ham alligevel at formulere meningen med udsagnene i det andet sprog. Og s kan det vel dybest set ikke være korrekt, at det har en principielt anden logik? S m det p det helt basale plan have "samme logik".

Men i det store og hele er jeg enig med dig i, at det er en plidelig præsentation af min bog. Og da en sdan præsentation nødvendigvis indeholder noget, der gr helt p tværs af, hvad der i dag opfattes som filosofiske truismer, s kan den forhventlig vække en mulig læsers nysgerrighed: Kan noget sdant virkelig være sandt - og tilmed nødvendigt sandt?

Din hengivne

Kai

i min argumentation. Nu m vi hbe, at der ogs snart kommer en diskussion, som forholder sig serist til sprgsmlet, om min argumentation er holdbar - og som forstr, at selve min tilgang reprsenterer noget afgrende nyt i forhold til den herskende (og den traditionelle) filosofi.

Din hengivne

Kai

7 Tim Denvir's Comments, I, Mon 11 Aug, 14:17

Tim Denvir

Mon 11 Aug, 14:17

to me, Brian, Jonathan

Dear Dines,

Thank you for your several emails. First of all, I would like to congratulate you on producing such an elegant English translation of Kai Srlanders book. In terms of English style, it reads very well.

Your remark on books on philosophy not having indexes prompted me to look at the 20 or so I have in my bookcase (Descartes, Lakatos, Karl Popper, Paul Feyerabend, Wittgenstein, Peter Singer and others). All have an index except for two: Wittgensteins Philosophical Investigations and a book about Popper by Bryan Magee. Another 8 or so are debatably borderline between philosophy and psychology: Daniel Dennet, Douglas Hofstadter, Matt Ridley, which also all have indexes. Rather naturally, many of these books are translations from the original language into English, and it may be the English translations which have been furnished with indexes. I suppose my selection tends towards the philosophy of science, not too surprisingly. (It includes a book called The Sciences of the Artificial by Herbert Simon, recommended to me by the late and great Robin Milner.)

I can perhaps see how Srlanders stance leads him not to reference others too much (re. your remark "and thus it explains the absence of Wittgenstein literature references !", but I think it is always more convincing if one shows that one has familiarity with different and/or opposing views.

My understanding of Benjamin Whorf's ideas are largely culled from the

(copious) wikipedia page
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Lee_Whorf . My understanding is that his main thesis is that our language restricts the ideas and distinctions between ideas which we can grasp, not that the ideas and truths about the world are themselves "relativistic". But I have not read Whorf's original work itself. And I note that another philosopher, Peter Singer, for whom I have considerable regard, is critical of Whorf's hypothesis. See Singer's *The Language Instinct*, which presents an opposing view.

Many thanks for your interest and enthusiasm about our review article. I think that Brian might be responding separately.

All good wishes,

Tim

8 Brian Monahan;s Comments, I, Thu 14 Aug, 09:00

Brian Monahan

Thu 14 Aug, 09:00

to me, Jonathan, Tim

Dear Dines,

Thank you again for your earlier responses and remarks on the review. As Tim indicated I might, I thought I would get in touch again concerning your remark about Kai Srlander viewing concepts in a "language-free" manner. This is a rather striking and singular position to take - a deeply Platonistic view admittedly, but also one I do have sympathy for. I would certainly agree that concepts themselves exist independently of human language - but then the question is - exist as what? As far as I understand it, modern philosophy and psychology has tried to wrestle with this profound issue for quite a while - and is still wrestling with it to this day.

From my own personal, simplistic perspective, I would say that ideas and concepts exist literally in knowledge representation terms within human brains and can potentially exist in many brains once externally expressed by writing them down or speaking them i.e. language is essential for communication of ideas between people. This putative "language-independence" is therefore related to this inter-translatability from one form into another. In this sense, I would suggest that ideas and concepts do exist independently of how

they are expressed in human language - in the sense it does not matter if those ideas are expressed in Danish or in English - they can be inter-translated, at least in principle. In a way, Turing's idea of computability itself has many of the same characteristics.

For me, this question about the language independence of ideas and concepts resonates with a central debate in the Philosophy of Mathematics itself - is maths invented purely by the human mind - or is it discovered? My own personal view is that it is neither solely invented nor discovered - it is necessarily a bit of both. In this way, the question poses something of a false dichotomy.

It is clearly true that maths can be formulated axiomatically, so that in some sense "all that matters" is simply writing down an arbitrary set of random axioms. But then no mathematician of any standing would give serious consideration to a randomly chosen, arbitrary set of axioms on their own! People only ever study very particular areas of maths because that maths speaks not only to them personally, but also to (many) others - it has to mean something. What makes maths interesting is its relevance to other areas of consideration, typically by providing workable abstractions and insightful ways of representing some (domain) situation. Different areas of maths are linked via logic and a sense of common meaning which underlies all of that. And so on ...

Anyway, I hope you found the above of interest - I was just genuinely trying to express my own thoughts on the topic, as prompted by your remark.

With many thanks,

Brian Monahan

Mob: 07763 856870

Home email: brianQmonahan@googlemail.com

9 Jonathan Bowen, Fri 15 Aug, 18:04

Jonathan Bowen

Fri 15 Aug, 18:04

to Tim, Brian, me

Dear Brian, Dines, Tim,

Perhaps a follow-up discussion article with material by the three of you would be good for the January 2026 issue of FACS FACTS. It could be based on edited material from your emails, if any of you would like to take this on. Just an idea!

Best wishes,

Jonathan