

If it's Conceivable it's Possible

There is a long tradition, in philosophy, of arguments that use a priori (or non experimental) methods to draw substantive conclusions about how the world is like.

Those kind of arguments usually have three steps:

- (i) Epistemic claim (about what can be known or conceived by a person)
- (ii) Modal claim (about what is possible or necessary)
- (iii) Metaphysical claim (about the nature of things in the world)

By conceivability, we consider a notion where an act of imagination plays a role. We say then that S (a statement like « pigs could fly ») is conceivable when one can modally imagine a situation where S is the case (a situation where pigs could fly). Modally imagining is a form of perceptual imagination: a subject has a perceptual mental image that represents S as being the case. This forming of a perceptual image of S is done by the subject in such a way that it is possible for him to fill in arbitrary details in the imagined situation. Here, this is nothing more than imagining a certain situation (or having a perceptual image) where pigs could fly, and imagining in such a way that it is possible to add details if necessary, for example if one is asked where the wings are positioned on the body of the pig. Then, if, with the filling in of those details, no contradiction reveals itself in the situation, then S is conceivable. A contradiction may occur, for example, if in a certain situation one imagines an impossible case, for example a logical impossibility. Therefore, we say that a statement S is conceivable when it is modally imaginable in the way just described.

This method of reasoning reveals the three steps mentioned at the beginning and the link, inside the reasoning, between a statement that is epistemic (having to do with knowledge) and a statement that is metaphysic (having to do with the nature of things in the world). This is so because conceivability, as a modal concept, is intimately linked to the rational domain, and therefore the purposes and goals that such arguments carry are closely tied to the rational and the psychological. In other words, metaphysical possibilities are determined by our cognitive apparatus and the tools of reasoning with their rational constraints.

If this is so, then the entailment from conceivability to possibility is grounded on a rational modal concept and epistemic and metaphysical domains are bridged by rationality. It is precisely around this bridging that If it's Conceivable it's Possible deploys itself. Focusing on the personal reception, the exhibition takes the viewer as the narrative node where a new process of construc-

tion takes place, where then what is at the center is the idea of a transformation, the idea of a shifting inside a unified narrative. Taking only the structure of the rational argument, this shifting does not obey to the rules and constraints of logical derivation, it operates in his own way, here by integration of two narratives corresponding to two moments at the core of the participation of an exhibition: anticipation (the projection of what a future experience will be like) and reception (the forming of a subject as a viewer linked to the experience of the seeing of an exhibition). Those two moments are not integrated into a linear reasoning as in the argument. Indeed, it is not the case here that anticipation comes before and is used as a premise, and it is not the case that reception is used as a conclusion: the form of reasoning does not suppose moving from the first to the second and fixing the gap in between. Instead, If it's conceivable it's possible takes each moment and displaces it. Taken from the past, the moment of anticipation (or forming of desires, visions, thoughts) becomes a possible narrative, where desires or expectations shape different possible situations. Taken from the future, the moment of reception (or presentation, exhibition, audience) becomes the projection of such possible situation in the form of an unveiling. Together, those two moments join in the narrative node that is the viewer.

Therefore, the bridging of those two narratives inside the WallRiss purports to show the cognitive gap, much like the one in the conceivability argument. However, although the structure is maintained, the linearity of the logical argument does not take place ; precisely because the two border moments are displaced and hence cannot operate as steps, the logical structure operates only as a landmark, not as a rational constraint. Here, memory comes from the future and anticipation comes from the past: it is then predictive memory that is staged in the art space. Taken as a hole, the exhibition makes such memory possible by the process of recollection, of putting the pieces of reasoning together, going against a linear form of experiencing a structure. Expectation and reception are not the central narratives but instead become part of a transitional process that is the core of If it's Conceivable it's Possible. Then, instead of the inference as a bridge like in the argument with which we began, it is here a transference that is taking place: a collapse of narratives.