

Objectivity about Colors

Denis Seron (Liège)

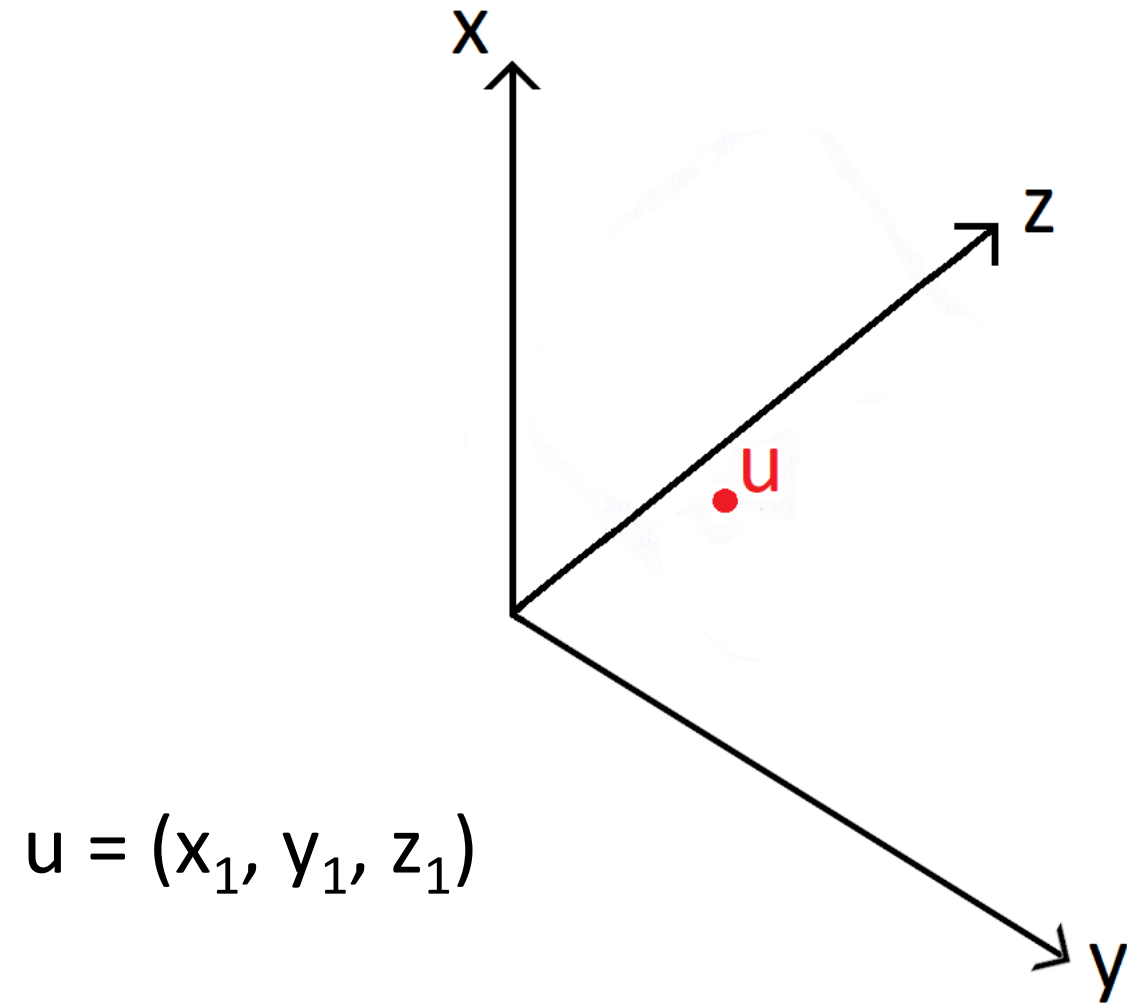
Leuven, February 23, 2024

Meinong, A. (1903). Bemerkungen über den Farbenkörper und das Mischungsgesetz. *Zeitschrift für Psychologie und Physiologie der Sinnesorgane*, 33.

[1] It is impossible for two different colors to be at the same place at the same time.

[2] Purple is between Red and Blue.

[3] There are infinitely many hues between Red and Blue.



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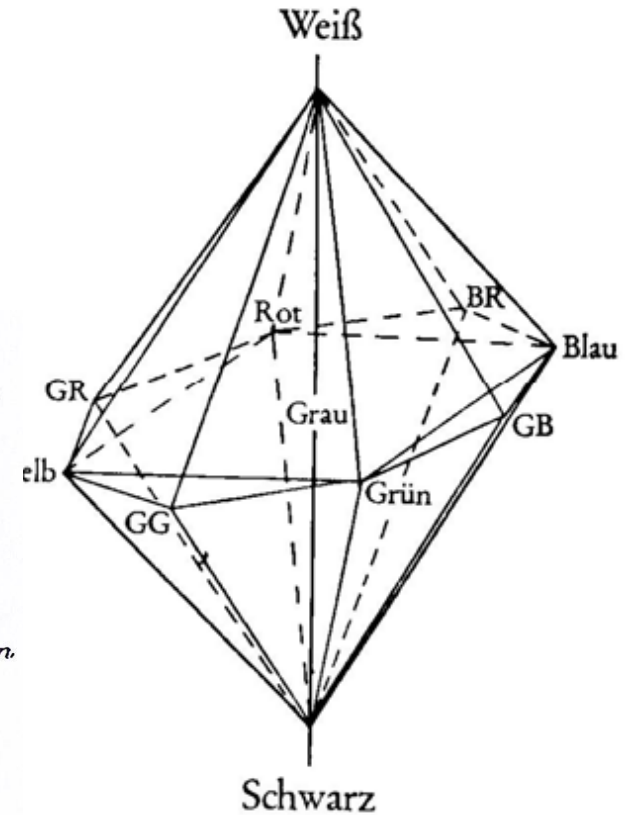
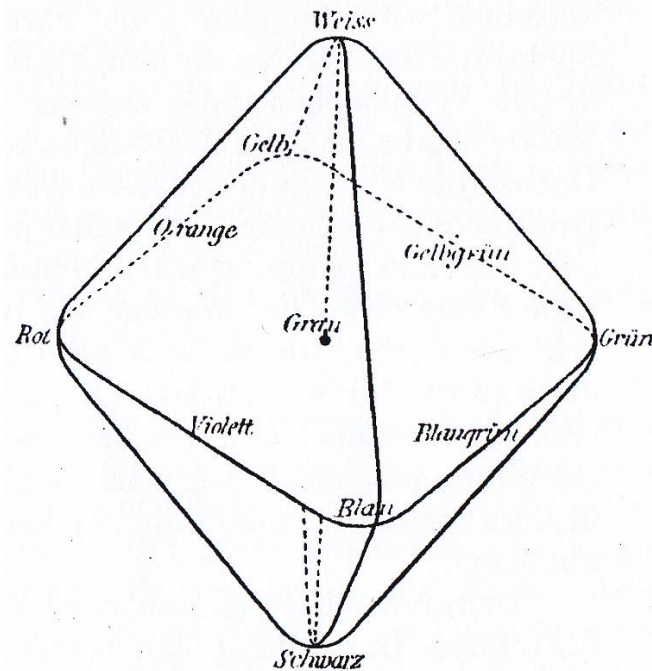
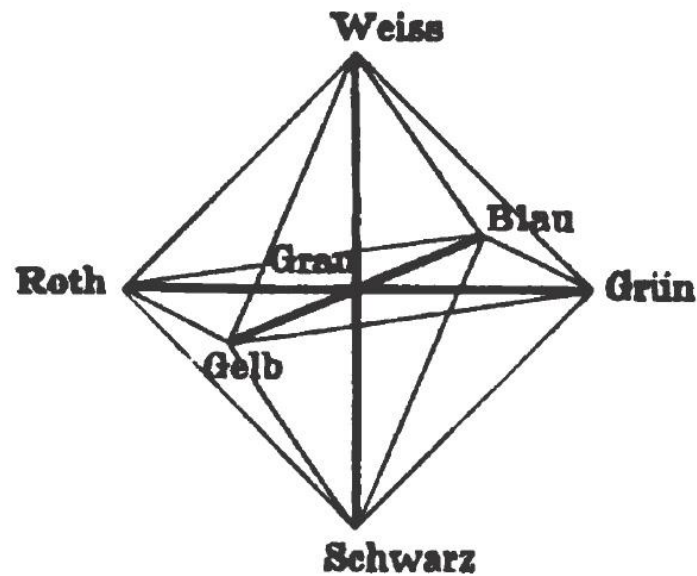
[2] Purple is between Red and Blue.

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[4] No color is bluer than pure Blue.

[5] No hue of Green is reddish.

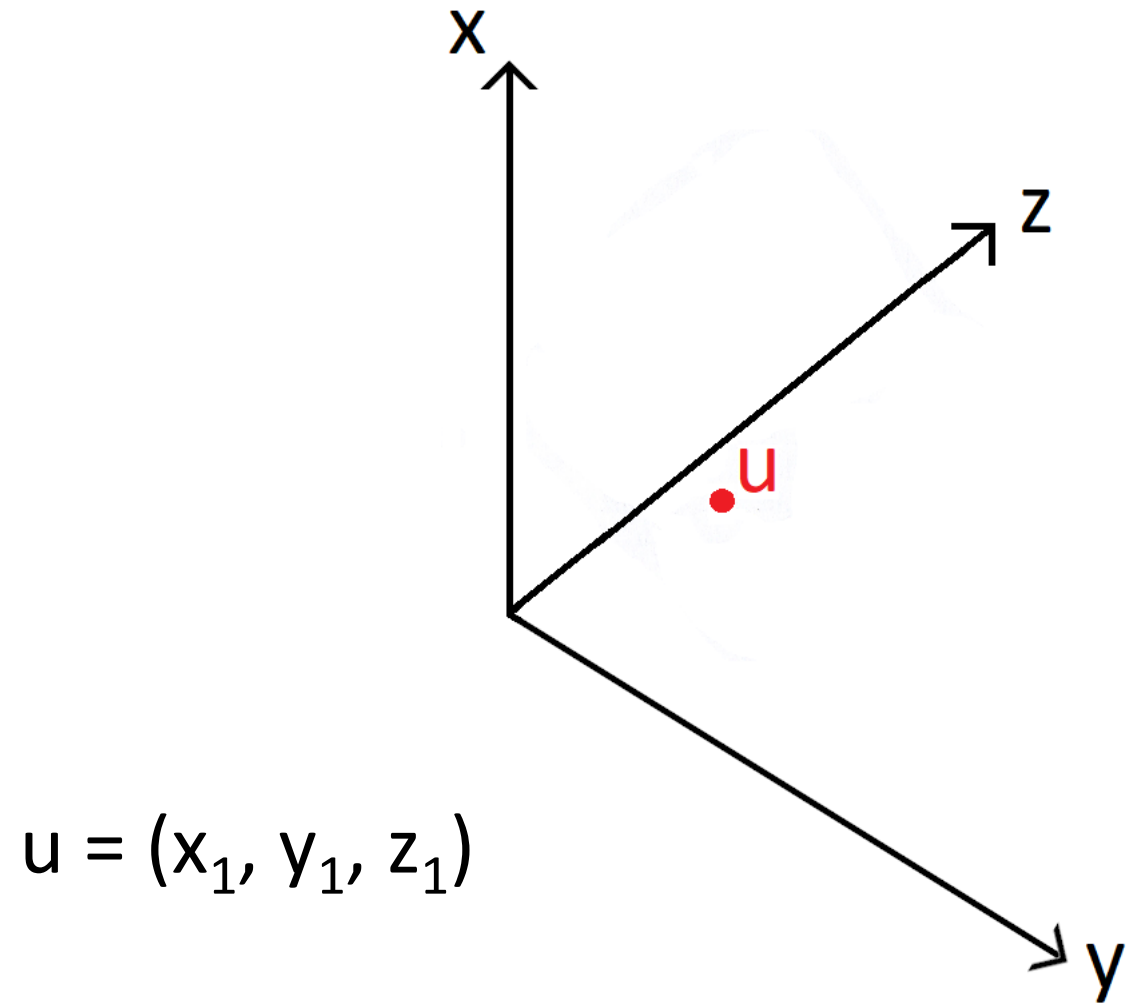
Höfler, Ebbinghaus, Wittgenstein (Farbenoktaeder)

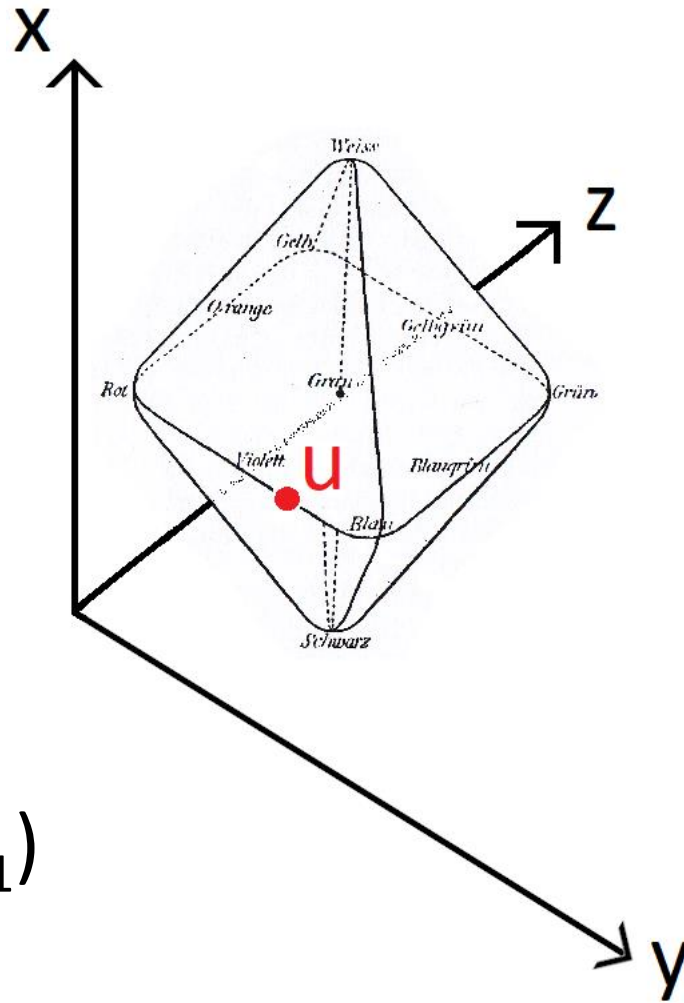


A. Höfler, *Psychologie*, Wien u. Prag, Tempsky, 1897, p. 113.

H. von Ebbinghaus, *Grundzüge der Psychologie*, 1. Bd., Leipzig, Veit & Comp., 1902, p. 184.

L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1975, p. 278.

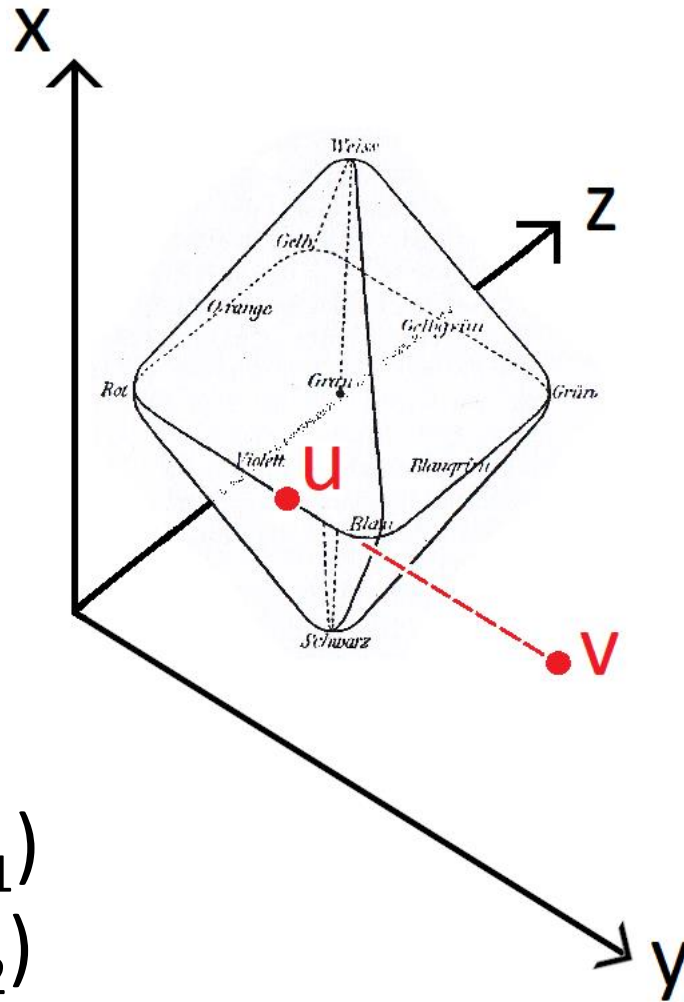




$$u = (x_1, y_1, z_1)$$

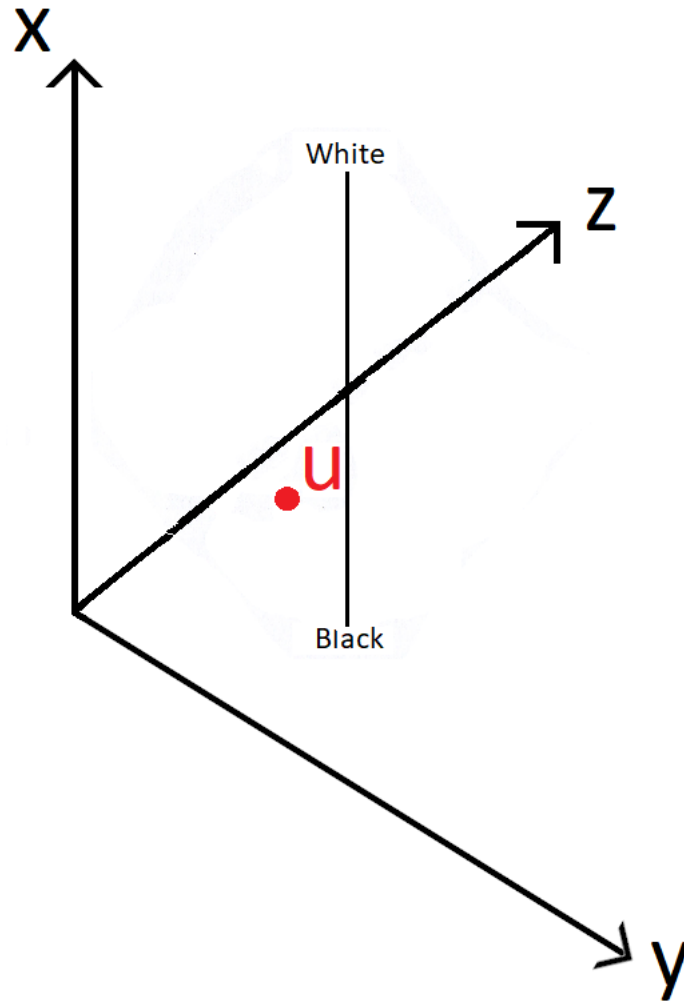
- [1] It is impossible for two different colors to be at the same place at the same time.
- [2] Purple is between Red and Blue.
- [3] There are infinitely many hues between Red and Blue.
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- [5] No hue of Green is reddish.
- [6] Red looks darker than yellow.
- [7] Red looks warmer than blue.

“For example, the simultaneous presence of two colours at the same place in the visual field is impossible, in fact logically impossible, since it is ruled out by the logical structure of colour. Let us think how this contradiction appears in physics : more or less as follows a particle cannot have two velocities at the same time; that is to say, it cannot be in two places at the same time; that is to say, particles that are in different places at the same time cannot be identical. (It is clear that the logical product of two elementary propositions can neither be a tautology nor a contradiction. The statement that a point in the visual field has two different colours at the same time is a contradiction.)”
(Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 6.3751; trans. Pears-McGuinness)



$$u = (x_1, y_1, z_1)$$

$$v = (x_2, y_2, z_2)$$



“Here we have a sort of mathematics of colour. [...] Where do we draw the line here between logic and experience?” (Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Colour*)

Alexander Bryan Johnson (1786-1867)

An Address to the Utica Lyceum (1825).

The Philosophy of Human Knowledge (1828).

Treatise on Language (1836).

The Meaning of Words (1862).

The Physiology of the Senses (1866).



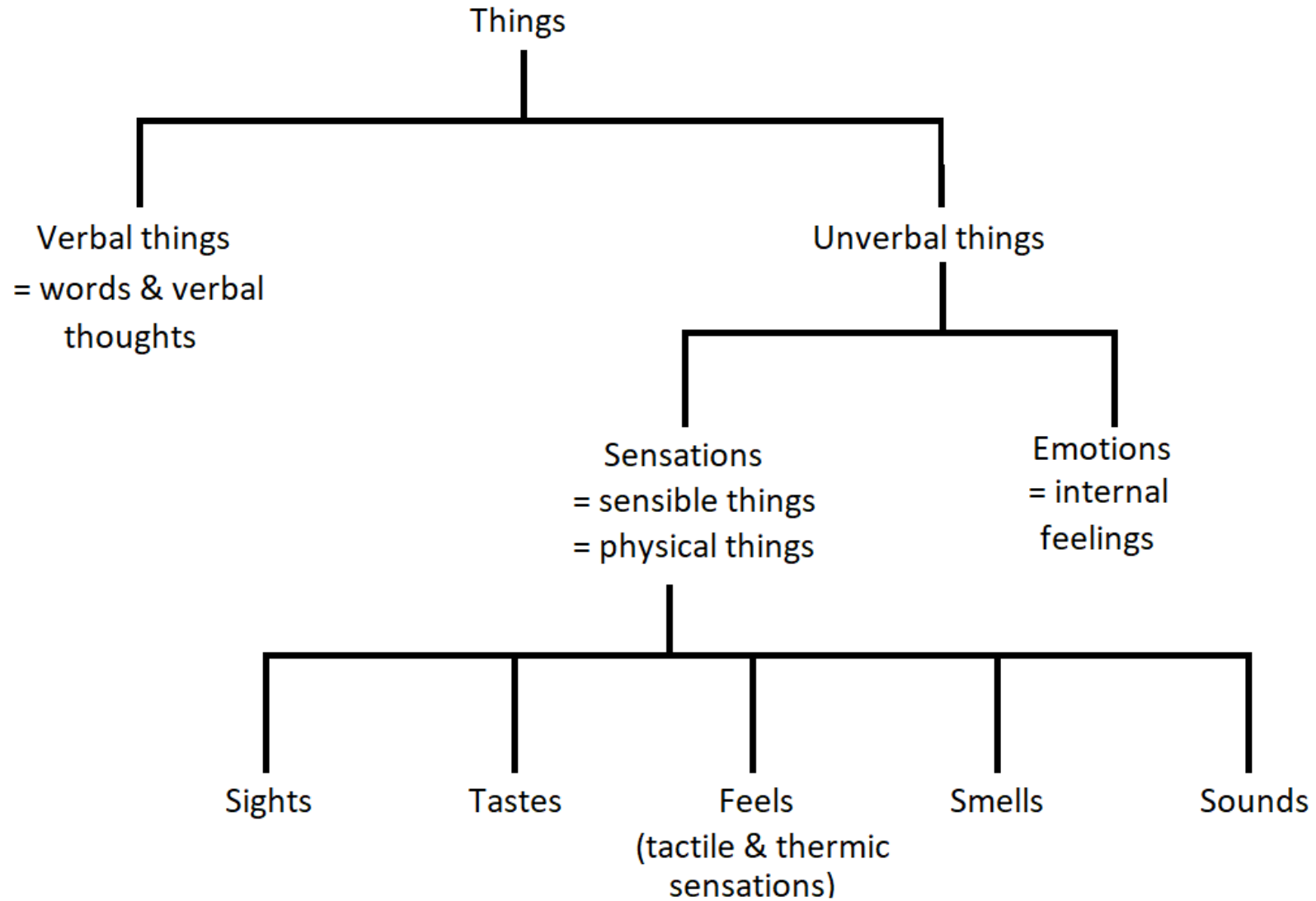
A. B. Johnson

Todd, C.L., and Blackwood, R.T., Eds. (1969). *Language and Value*. New York London: Greenwood.

Todd, C.L., and Sonkin, R., Eds. (1977). *Alexander Bryan Johnson. Philosophical Banker*. Syracuse New York: Syracuse University Press.

Gustafsson, L. (1980). *Sprache und Lüge. Drei sprachphilosophische Extremisten: Friedrich Nietzsche, Alexander Bryan Johnson, Fritz Mauthner*. München : Hanser.

Treatise on Language (1836)



The unverbale meaning thesis

“I shall deem words as signs of only unverbale things” (*The Meaning of Words*, 19).

“Words are unmeaning, except as they refer to some thing that is unverbale” (*The Meaning of Words*, 220).

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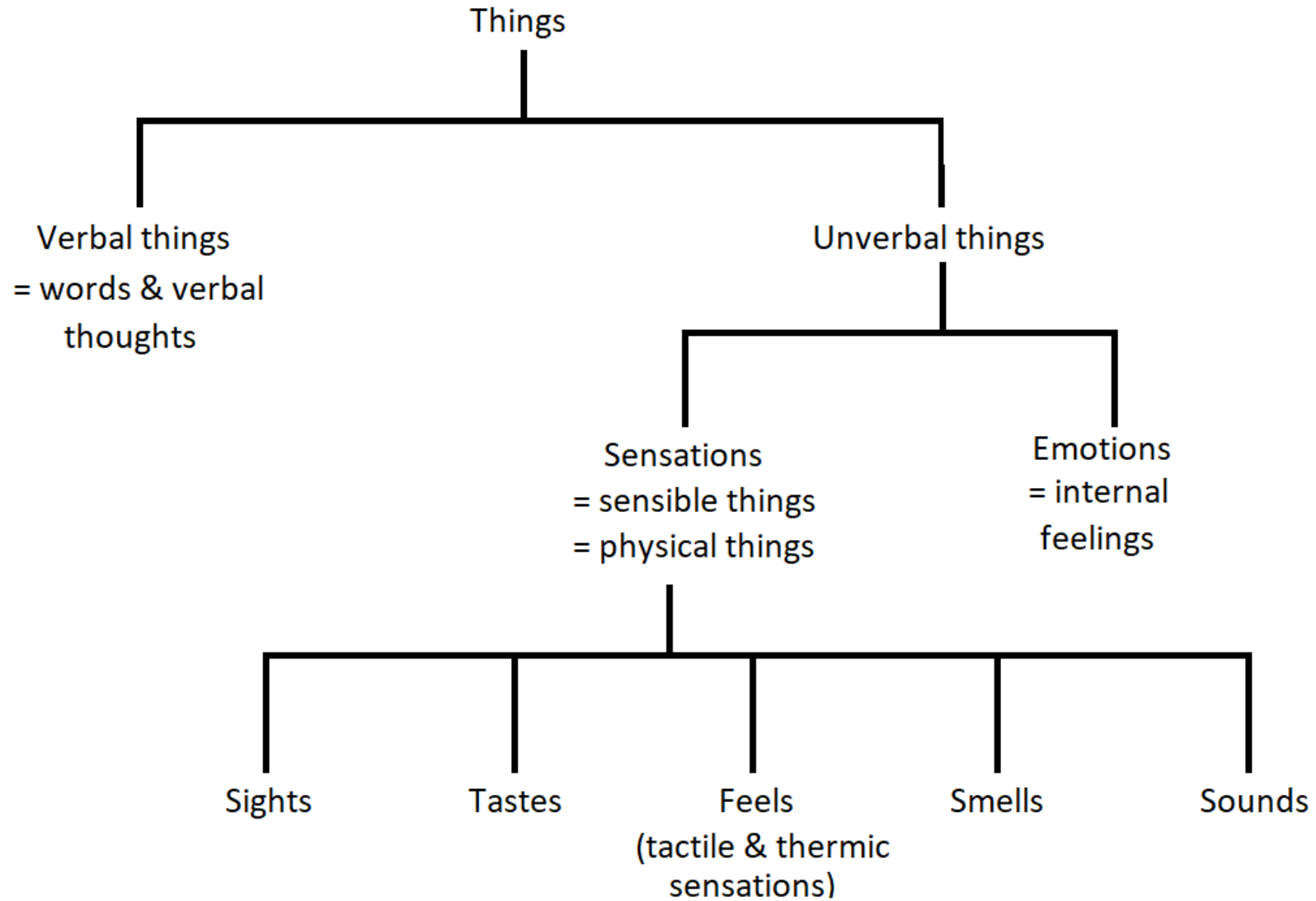
The untransmutability thesis

“The unverbale things of any one class are untransmutable into the unverbale things of any other class” (*The Meaning of Words*, 30).

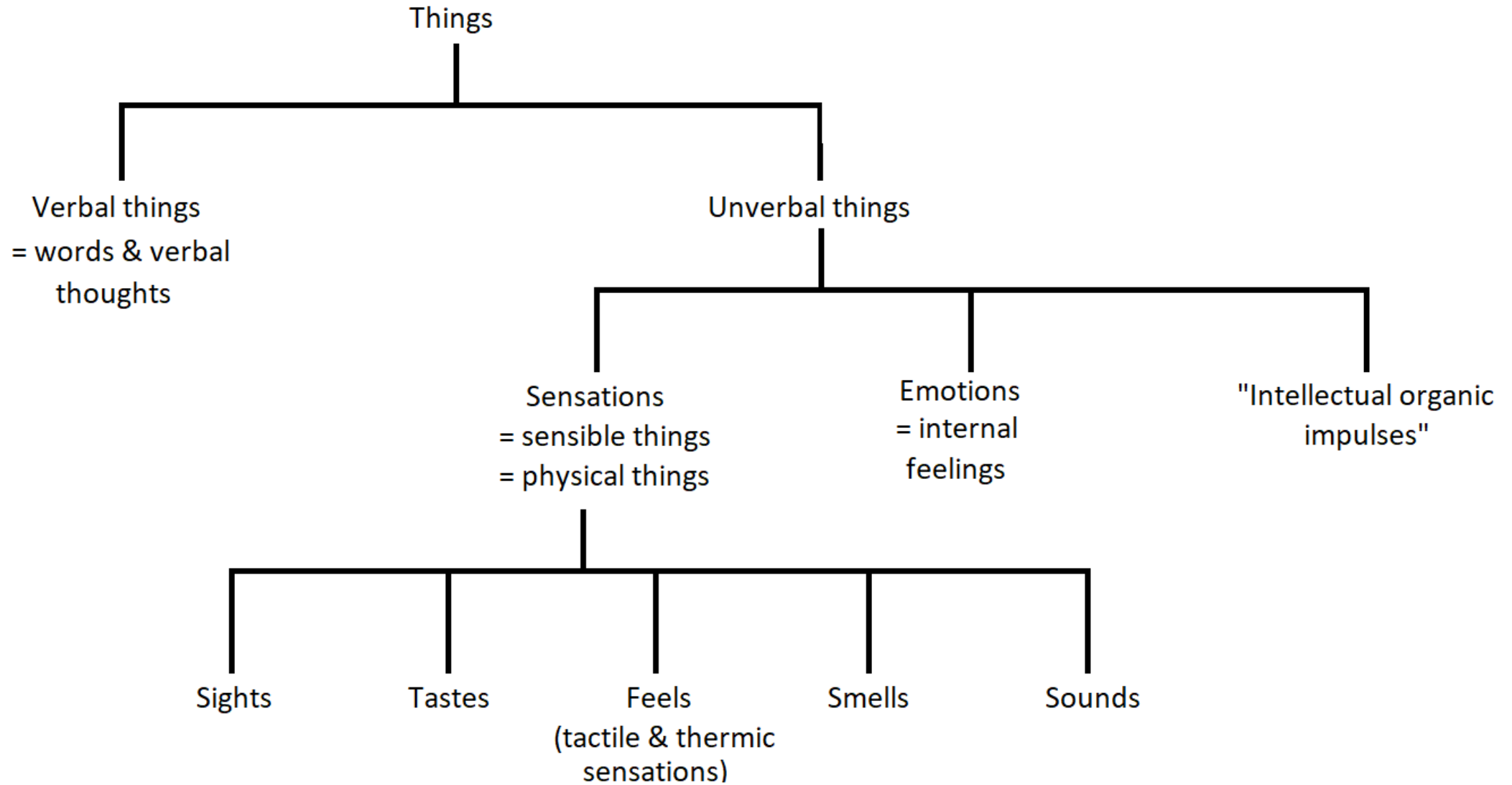
“Unverbale things cannot be transmuted into words, or vice versa” (*The Meaning of Words*, 192).

“The indiscrimination between what is sensible and what is intellectual constitutes the radical defect of all metaphysics and all logic” (*The Meaning of Words*, 46)

Treatise on Language (1836)



The Meaning of Words (1862)



“Suppose therefore a person to have enjoy’d his sight for thirty years, and to have become **perfectly well acquainted with colours of all kinds, excepting one particular shade of blue, for instance, which it never has been his fortune to meet with.** Let all the different shades of that colour, except that single one, be plac’d before him, descending gradually from the deepest to the lightest; ’tis plain, that he will perceive a blank, where that shade is wanting, and will be sensible, that there is a greater distance in that place betwixt the contiguous colours, than in any other. **Now I ask, whether ’tis possible for him, from his own imagination, to supply this deficiency, and raise up to himself the idea of that particular shade, tho’ it had never been convey’d to him by his senses?”** (Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, OUP, 10; quoted (erroneously) by Johnson, *Treatise*, 128; *Meaning*, 33-34)

Thank you for your attendance!