



# Working in the Frame of Functional Contextualism

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Hervey Bay Branch Meeting**

28<sup>th</sup> August 2018

A pragmatic truth:

The truth is the degree a piece of information helps us **predict and influence behaviour** in order to **achieve our practical goals**.

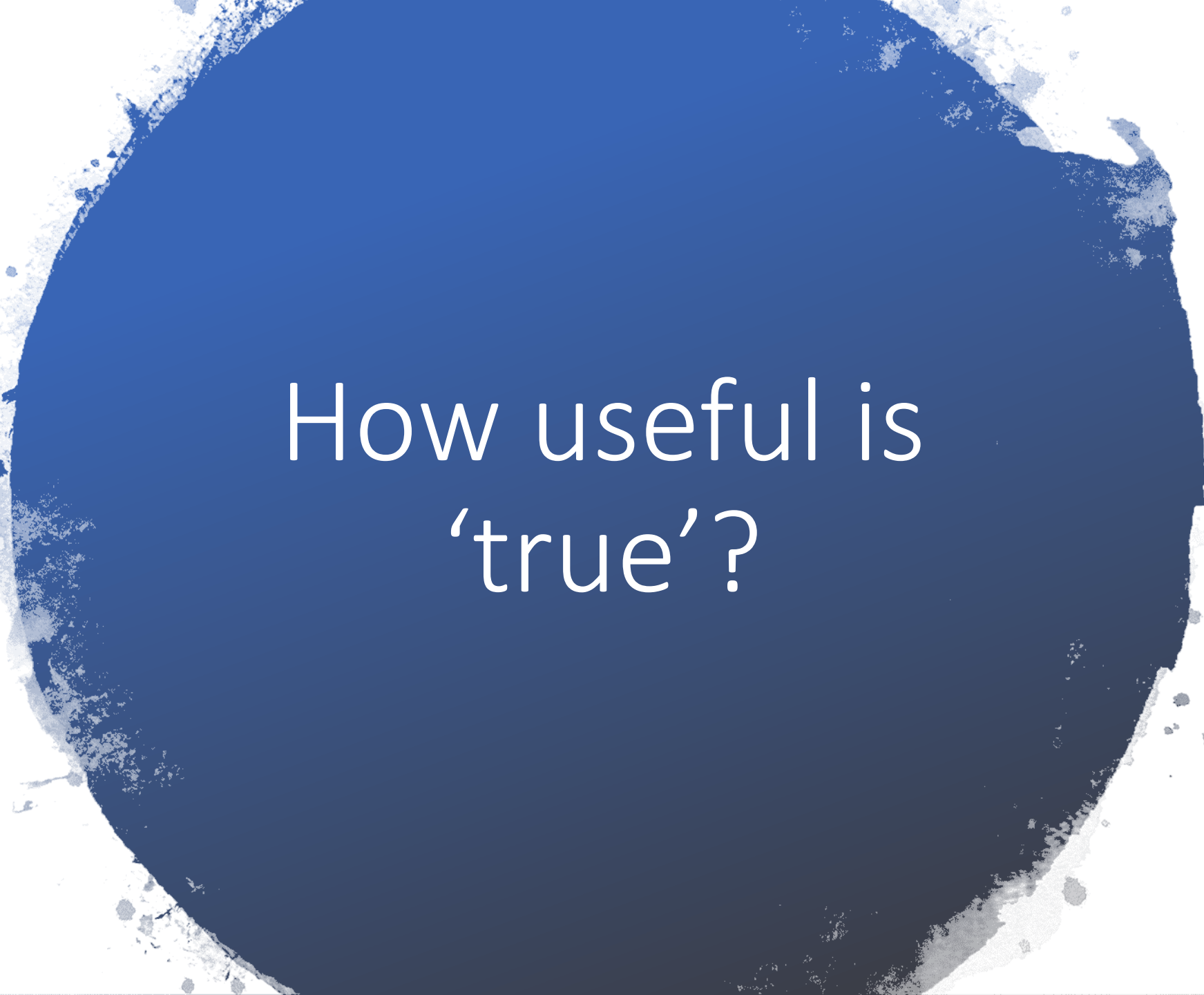




ADVENTURE



FUEL



How useful is  
'true'?

“I am a useless pet  
therapist”

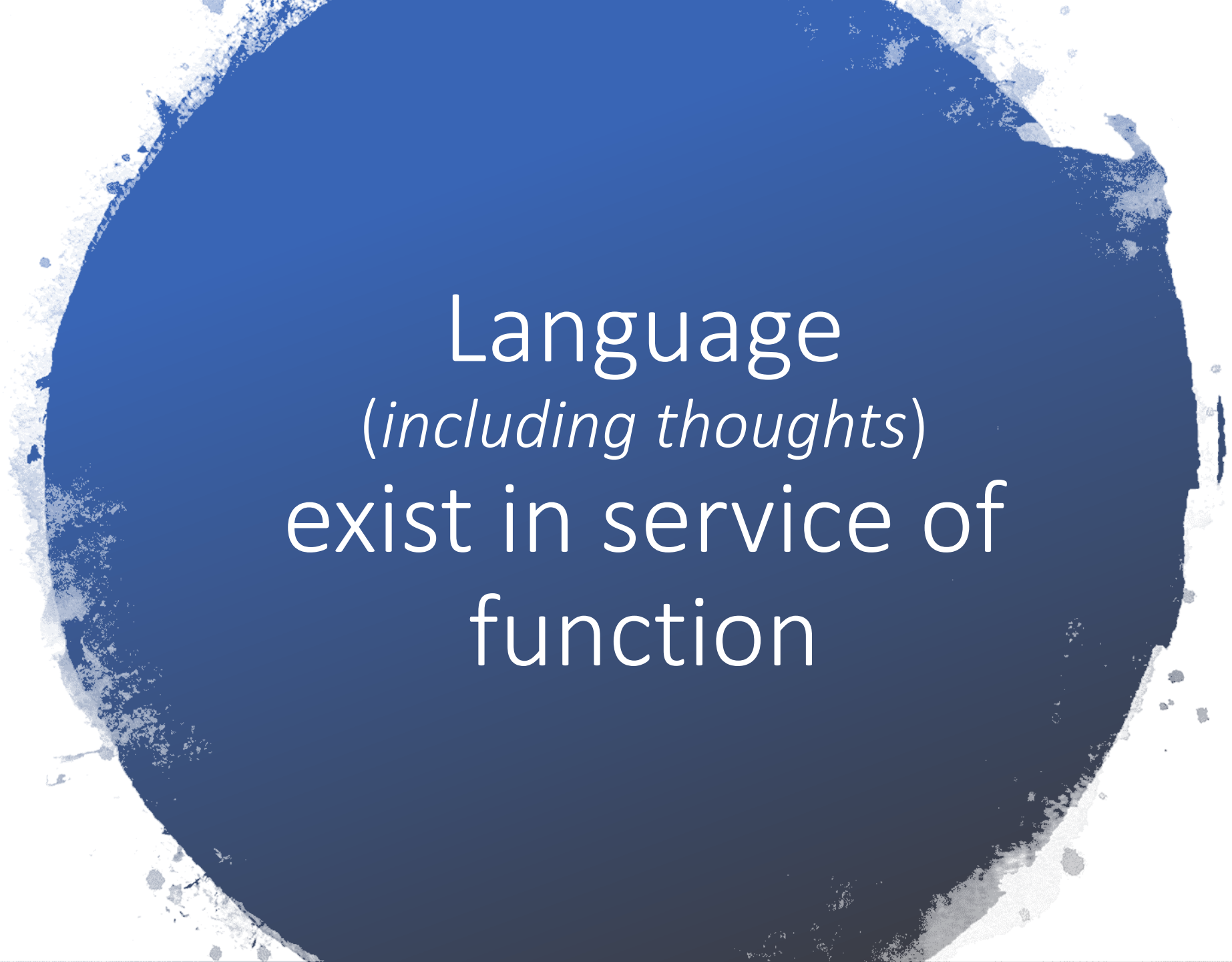


“You’re not a useless therapist.”

“What kind of therapist would you like to be?”

“And how is that thought working for you?”





Language  
*(including thoughts)*  
exist in service of  
function



What is the correct organization of books?





Sardinia  
Sardinia

HEAD OVER HEEL  
CHRIS HARRISON

BLUE GUIDE  
SOUTHERN ITALY

NEMESIS

EXT OF KIN  
BOBBI LONN

White Star  
James Thayer

ORDER  
ROBERT DROGO

SICILY  
PRAETHNESS LEWIS

NAPLES

Naples, Pompeii & the Amalfi Coast

BEAT BALENY

WAR  
SEBASTIAN JUNGER

WAR  
SEBASTIAN JUNGER

SICILY  
PRAETHNESS LEWIS

THE SOUTH WINTER

STREET FIGHTS  
PETER ROBBE

POMPEII  
FROM POMPEII

AND ENIGMAS

AND ENIGMAS

THE HONOURED SOCIETY  
My Journey to the Heart of the Mafia  
PETRA RESKI

BERGAMOIR

THE HONOURED SOCIETY  
My Journey to the Heart of the Mafia  
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THE HONOURED SOCIETY  
My Journey to the Heart of the Mafia  
PETRA RESKI

BORGAS

BORGAS

THE DAY OF BATTLE  
MATEO JORDAN

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THE DAY OF BATTLE  
MATEO JORDAN

“You’re not a useless therapist.”

*Intended function: alleviate distress.*

“What kind of therapist would you like to be?”

*Intended function: obtain values.*

“And how is that thought working for you?”

*Intended function: draw attention to function of thought.*



A pragmatic truth:

The truth is the degree a piece of information helps us **predict and influence behaviour** in order to **achieve our practical goals**.

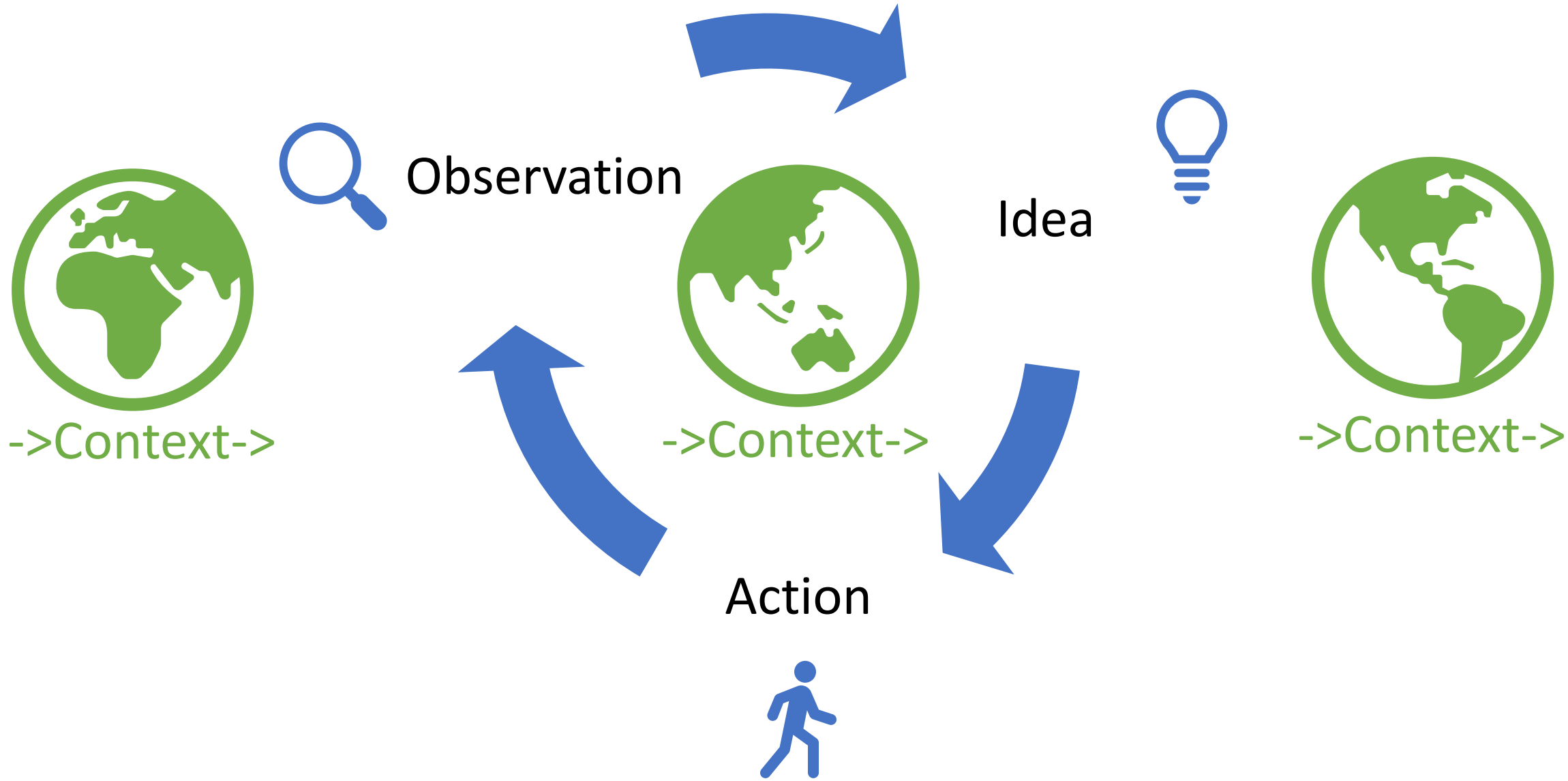


“I’m a useless pet therapist”

“No you’re not a useless therapist”

*Intended function:  
alleviate distress.*







I don't like seeing Ben sad so I want to make him happy.



"You're not a useless therapist."



Now Ben is telling me all the reasons he is useless. He's not happy.



That didn't work. Maybe I should try some evidence based CBT.



"Can we just take one of those reasons and have a good look at it?"



When Ben starts to talk about a situation in detail, he recognises what he's doing. He says with some relief, "maybe I am being a bit too hard on myself."



I think I'd like to do more with my life...



I spend some time working hard...



I'm working so hard I don't have time for other things...



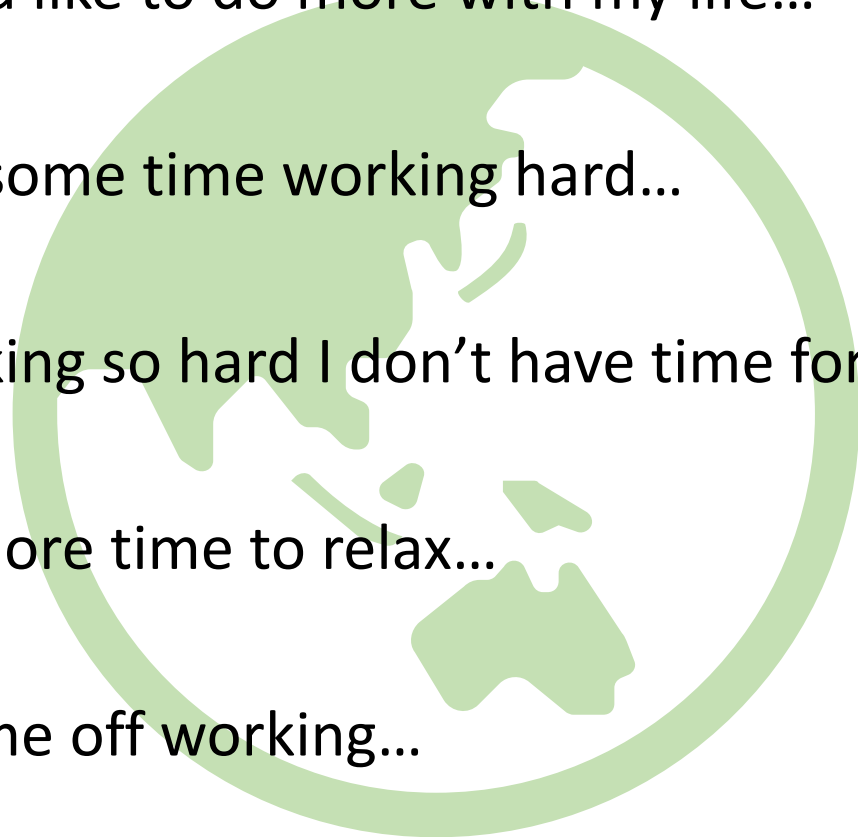
I want more time to relax...



I take time off working...



Spending so much time away makes me bored and unmotivated...





What are words  
doing?



Language  $\neq$  Reference  
to experience

Language = Experience



“I am a useless pet  
therapist”





# Take home messages

In other words:

- There's no 'right' or 'wrong' thoughts; thoughts are tools, not a mirror of reality. (a cup of saliva)
- Behaviours have a function. If we don't know the function, or we don't evaluate, we can't gauge success. (achieve practical goals)
- The same processes that make therapy flow also make life flow. (idea, action, observation)
- Being able to describe phenomenon makes them manipulable variables (hot/cold)

# Resources and Follow up:

- Theory resources:
  - Functional Contextualism: [https://contextualscience.org/functional\\_contextualism\\_0](https://contextualscience.org/functional_contextualism_0)
  - De Houwer, J. (2013). *Advances in relational frame theory: Research and application*. New Harbinger Publications.
  - McHugh, L., & Stewart, I. (2012). *The self and perspective taking: Contributions and applications from modern behavioral science*. New Harbinger Publications.
- Therapy resources:
  - Villatte, M., Villatte, J. L., & Hayes, S. C. (2015). *Mastering the clinical conversation: Language as intervention*. Guilford Publications.
  - Wilson, K. G. (2009). *Mindfulness for two: An acceptance and commitment therapy approach to mindfulness in psychotherapy*. New Harbinger Publications.
- That colour article:
  - Roberson, D., Davidoff, J., Davies, I. R., & Shapiro, L. R. (2006). Colour categories and category acquisition in Himba and English. *Progress in colour studies*, 2, 159-172.