

Loss

Loss is the condition of having lost something. Maybe I lost my dog. He ran away and I can't find him. He is nowhere on our street. What then is this 'condition of having lost something?' Is loss not a thing but a condition? What is the difference between my dog, the actual furry thing, and the condition of having lost my dog?

I am calling this whole book *Conditions*. At the same time it strikes me the whole book is about States of Affairs, or Ways Things Fall into Shape in life, or How we find ourselves at this or that moment. The title choice of this book, *Conditions*, is tightly connected to our understanding of our human condition and how we understand it. It's about the condition we find ourselves in at this or that time, in this or that state of affairs.

How about the condition of having gained something? Is that the something that was gained, the seventy five crisp dollar bills that somebody put in my account this afternoon when I was out walking? Or is gain the condition of having gained, as loss was the condition of having lost? Is my gain simply a modification of my state of affairs as a money holder?

Our stress on 'conditions,' 'states of affairs,' perhaps on 'the way things are,' took off from our initial definition of loss, our topic for this entry. We defined loss as 'the condition of having lost something.' The use of language, there, seemed fluent and normal. We then tried out the same language experiment with 'gain.' It seemed quite feasible to say of gain that it represented a change in state of affairs. We were, perhaps, on our way to discovering a new set of formulas, for talking about conditions in which humans find themselves—in this book we characterize one hundred plus states of human affairs, or 'conditions.'

The query into how to define loss has driven us backward into the issue of conditions or states of affairs. We have taken only some limited strides backward into this largely uncharted territory of taking language as a catalogue of conditions. To the extent we have opened a perspective we should feel freshly able to analyze the wide variety of languages we use to describe our position in the world.