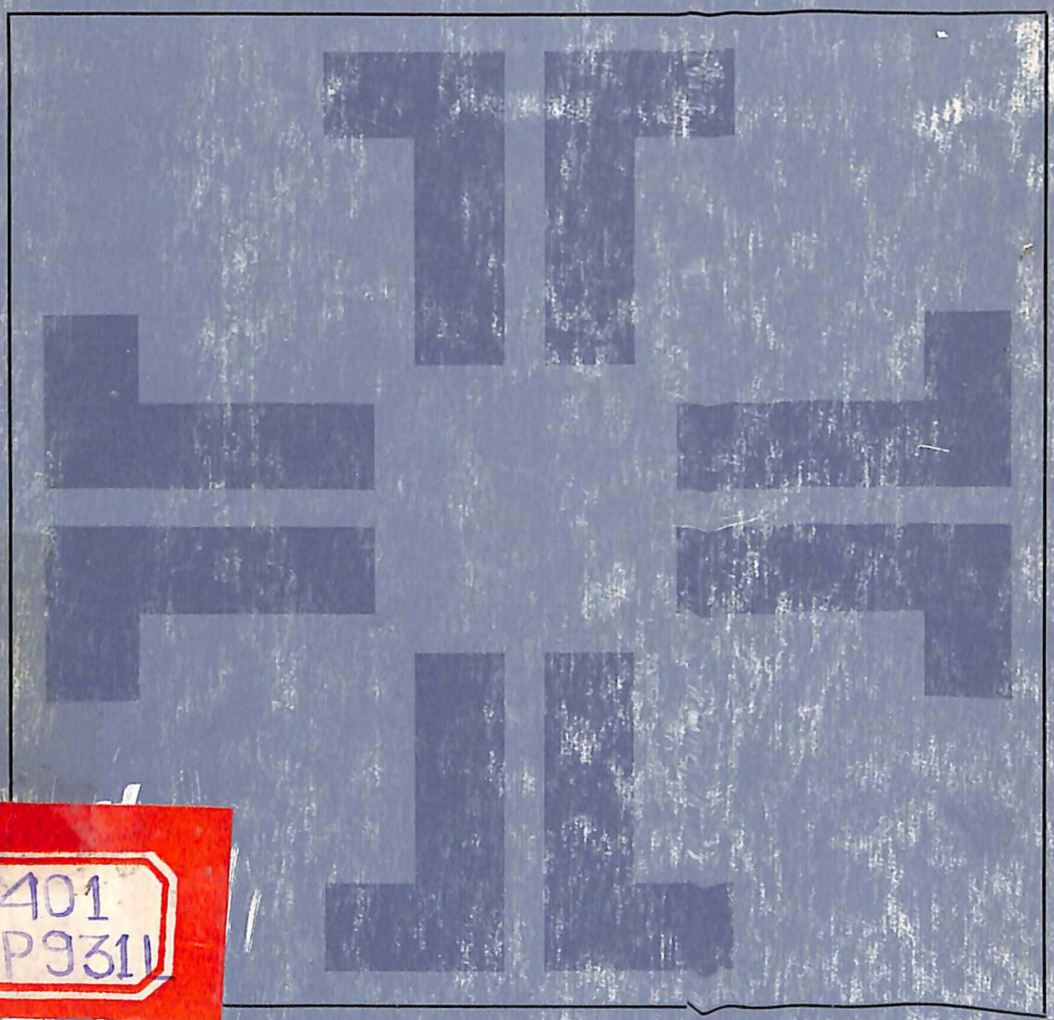
Jeffrey Thomas Price

Language and Being in Wittgenstein's 'Philosophical Investigations'



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LANGUAGE AND BEING IN WITTGENSTEIN'S *PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS*

by

JEFFREY THOMAS PRICE

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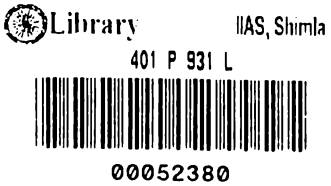

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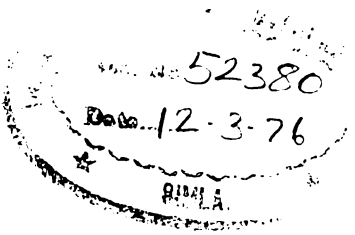

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To Connie

It is natural that many persons, more than can be mentioned explicitly, should contribute, in various ways, to the process that culminates in the production of a book. Eugene TeHennepe introduced me as an undergraduate to the *Philosophical Investigations*, and generously offered to direct my independent reading of Wittgenstein. More recently a colleague at Tuskegee Institute, Joseph P. DeMarco, has been a continuing source of encouragement and stimulation. My greatest debt is to my teachers at The Pennsylvania State University. Particular gratitude is due John M. Anderson, who directed the doctoral dissertation which was a recent predecessor of the present work, and whose thinking, I believe, was a major inspiration for my own.

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I

THE COMPLEXITY OF WITTGENSTEIN'S WRITING

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE *PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS*

Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* is a book about language. It immediately must be added that by his own admission it is not a "good book" (p. x),[1] if one takes an orderly treatise as his standard. Wittgenstein's preface (pp. ix-x) mentions that in the course of his investigations he was led to abandon such a standard for reasons arising from the subject matter itself. It was only after much effort, he explains, that he realized the impossibility of achieving his original goal. Wittgenstein's method, then, is to pursue one or another recognizable philosophical subject, such as the concept "of meaning, or understanding, or a proposition" (p. ix), and, when these subjects fail to form a whole, to present us instead with the "precipitate" (p. ix) of the unsuccessful efforts, i.e. with a collection of more or less disparate observations. It is important to note, however, that he does find an order in the apparent confusion. His next paragraph notes that the disparate remarks always clustered around "the same or almost the same points" (p. ix), which go unnamed. The aim of this book is to

[1] All references in the text will be to the *Philosophical Investigations*, Third Edition (New York, Macmillan, 1968). (The work was first published in 1953, two years after Wittgenstein's death.) The translations of G. E. M. Anscombe will be followed, except for occasional correction. Reference to Part I will be by section number (≠) only, to Part II and the preface by page number, and to Wittgenstein's inserted notes by page number followed by a lower case 'n'. In no case has the present writer added his own marks of emphasis, nor deleted those in the original.

retrace Wittgenstein's progress. In brief, it will review his investigation of traditional philosophical themes, assess the significance of his failure to bring these into a coherent whole, and, finally, will indicate the new sort of order that emerges.

The first sections of the *Philosophical Investigations* already exhibit the complexity of concerns which frustrates Wittgenstein's initial intention. Section One opens with a quotation from St. Augustine which proposes (in Wittgenstein's interpretation) that the meaning of a word is some object. Wittgenstein immediately questions whether this theory is applicable to anything other than a certain class of nouns. He develops this criticism not by a detailed consideration of Augustine's writings, but rather by the introduction of the first of the many curious examples which have come to be known as characteristic of his later work. Augustine had made unquestioning mention of "the proper places in various sentences" (#1) of words, and affirmed the correlation between these words and human desires. Rather than directly refute Augustine's contentions, Wittgenstein wants to question the unquestioned; we shall see, indeed, that he finds the relation of word and object to be an extraordinary matter. The odd style of the *Philosophical Investigations* is designed, in part, to prevent us from taking for granted the particular structures of language and experience.

In Wittgenstein's first example a merchant is handed a slip marked "five red apples" and responds by opening a drawer marked "apples", looking up "red" in a table of color samples, and saying the first five cardinal numbers as he removes the appropriately colored fruit. "It is in this and similar ways that one operates with words" (#1). One may well wish to question this account in much the same way that Wittgenstein has questioned Augustine, and, in fact, the author introduces an interlocutor who asks how it is that the merchant responded in just those ways to the words. Wittgenstein's answer seems impatient: "Well, I assume that he *acts* as I have described. Explanations come to an end somewhere" (#1). He then ends the section by dismissing objections to the lack of a definitive formulation of the meaning of the

word "five". He seems to want us to focus upon a meaningful use of language as somehow anterior to any theoretical explanation.

The reader may wonder why the *Philosophical Investigations* does not end at this point, if it is true that the philosopher cannot add anything to existing instances of speech. A moment's reflection, however, shows that there must be some sort of relation between a meaningful instance of speech and the situation of speaking men. Indeed, Wittgenstein's criticism of Augustine (#'s 1,3) is based upon an insistence that discourse about speech be directed toward showing something about the speaking situation as such, not just a part of it. Section #2 opens with a reference to the partiality of his own example, saying that its philosophical concept of meaning is at home "in a primitive idea of the way language functions. But one can also say that it is the idea of a language more primitive than ours" (#2). Calling the partiality of an example "primitive", a curious, undefined term made even less distinct by its double introduction, indicates that Wittgenstein finds the description of the whole of the speaking situation to be something of a special problem. There are many possible speculations about the relation of what is primitive to what is actual; the "primitive", for example, may be thought of as fundamental, or, on the other hand, it may be thought of as naive. Later in the work Wittgenstein has this to say about the language situations he contrives:

> Our clear and simple language-games are not preparatory studies for a future regularization of language.... The language games are rather set up as *objects of comparison* which are meant to throw light on the facts ["conditions" or "circumstances", and possibly "means" or "standards" might also translate "*Verhältnisse*" here] of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities. (#130)

The absence of a textual exposition of the term "primitive" indicates that the way Wittgenstein's primitive examples are similar to and dissimilar from our speech is still an open question, and it is just this issue that is revived by Wittgenstein's asking (#'s 2,6) that we imagine these examples as complete languages.

We should be immediately suspicious of a suggestion that the example in Section #2 might be a complete language. This second

situation describes an assistant who has learned to bring a block, pillar, slab, or beam as a builder calls the appropriate word in the order that he requires the material. The example is prefaced by calling it one "for which the description given by Augustine is right" (#2), and this description is explicitly accused of being partial (#'s 1,3). There is much that is puzzling about this tribe of builders: Do the women perform their work in silence? How did one man become the builder and the other the assistant? What is the origin and method of transmission of the presumably complex order of construction? We can imagine the four words to form a complete language, but only because of the tacit assumptions we make when we ordinarily think of the speech of builders, i.e. because we can think of builders' work in abstraction from its origins and preparations.

The next mention of the "primitive forms of language" (#5) compares them to what a child says while he learns to talk. These processes of simple naming and repetition are said only to resemble (#7) our actual language.[2] What could distinguish an expression said by a child (or the builder in the example) from the same expression when said by an adult? When an expression is said by someone who has mastered the language, there is always the tacit presence of the fact that any number of other things might have been said instead. The speakers in Wittgenstein's primitive examples, and children first being tutored by a teacher, have no choice of, or

[2] Here we may point out an instance of how the *Philosophical Investigations* develops. In these early sections the child's language is said to be "*primitiv*". Later in the work (#244), when Wittgenstein has prepared the ground for a positive introduction of origins, the language of the child is said to be tied to something "*ursprünglichen*". The English translation, incidentally, conceals this development by rendering both words as "primitive". Here we might offer a few general remarks about Anscombe's translation. It is one of the most widely and highly praised works of its kind, and, for the most part, deservedly so. The reader should note, however, that when she uses non-literal renderings of the German, there is often a matter of philosophical interpretation involved. For instance when she says that essence is expressed "by grammar" (#371), rather than the more literal "in the grammar", she obscures the possibility that grammar and essence *develop together* in an interacting process. The present writer has found more than a score of examples of this sort.

responsibility for, the content of their speech. With mastery comes reproach or praise for the particular form of one's language, indicating that this form is relevant to the achievement or possibilities of the speaker.

Thus Wittgenstein recognizes two requirements for the investigation of speaking man. The first is that we take as our subject matter cases of the functioning of language, that we not begin with some theory which can be shown to apply to only a part or aspect of language. The second requirement is that we come to understand language in regard to its origins and possibilities, which is to say that Wittgenstein believes the understanding of language to give the sort of insights which have been traditionally sought by philosophers.

Section Three indicates the difficulty of the task facing a philosopher who would begin with the particular actualities of man's accomplished speech. In this early position Wittgenstein introduces his celebrated analogy between language and games, to the effect that no definition can comprehend all the particular usages of a certain word. Because an orderly treatise would normally be thought to depend upon accurate and comprehensive definitions, we already may see the obstacles facing Wittgenstein's production of a "good book". Despite the lack of definitiveness, there obviously is something to the word "game" just as there "is something" to language, and, indeed, Wittgenstein's interest in the origins and possibilities of speaking man would seem to demand a comprehensive description of the actual appearances of language. These appearances, however, are soon (#6) to be compared with the superficiality of a brake lever, which can be operated quite simply, but which cannot be understood without reference to the ordinarily obscured "whole of the rest of the mechanism" (#6). Wittgenstein's investigation of the speaking situation may be read as attempting to unearth the "whole of the rest" which underlies particular instances of speech. This writer discerns four moments of that investigation, and for purposes of clarity separates them in a manner which exaggerates their distinctness in the text.

B. PREVIEW OF THE PRESENT WORK

The *Philosophical Investigations* begins in skepticism and throughout requires that one can doubt the possibility of a determinate standard of knowledge. Wittgenstein's method is to argue that any such standard would utilize a mode of expression that has a foundation in human custom, and which is thus characterized by a variety and instability such as to compromise its alleged singular primacy in our knowing. The objects of his skepticism include the structures of logic, the explanation of meaning in terms of the following of rules, pictorial representation as reflecting the basic content of thought, and the alleged insights one can gather from the study of "mental processes". By exposing the conventional aspect of expression, and thus questioning the possibility of singular and stable knowledge, Wittgenstein draws attention to the problem of the origins and possibilities of our experience.

The discussion of a hyperbolically private language is the most sustained attempt to present the coming-to-be of meaningful speech. By forcing one to try to comprehend a speech that no one else can understand, and to experience the consequent evaporation of meaning, Wittgenstein hopes to bring about the turning of thought needed to glimpse the active and positive role that human expression plays in the generation of what we know. Because Wittgenstein sees language as contributing an interpersonal aspect to experience, he can, while denying behaviorism, hold that sensations are public.

In his treatment of speaking man, Wittgenstein preserves reference to the original moments of language. There is no attempt to delineate a nature of man; investigation of the person instead concludes that his very appearance is in his imaginative expression. Language itself is then shown to be impossible to comprehend in an ordinary account; the distinction between the use and recognition of a word, for instance, points to an indefinable source which must somehow be included in any account of speaking man. What becomes increasingly apparent is the difficulty of isolating or holding apart this elusive source.

Wittgenstein's attempts to grasp and hold to an understanding of language are continually led back to human custom, which was the basis of his original skepticism of existing expressions of knowledge. The crisis reached takes the following form: The original nature of language can be expressed only indirectly, because the account itself must proceed in speech that has already been accomplished. Transcendence of this ordinary speech is mentioned as occurring in the act of negative expression.

As a result we can conclude that Wittgenstein's philosophy is, in a singular sense, without content. The moments when language has original significance are found to be as opaque as they are crucial to the understanding of speaking man. The opacity is reflected in Wittgenstein's general refusal to recognize any apparent basis, such as love, art, or politics, for speaking anew. Human life is flattened out into a succession of essentially equal, if various, usages, and may then plausibly be characterized as participation in a series of games. This conventionality emphasizes by contrast the compulsion upon Ludwig Wittgenstein as a writer of philosophy, and leads finally to the recognition, beyond the frustration of a descriptive whole, of a use of language he could call his alone.

II

WITTGENSTEIN'S SKEPTICISM

A. INTRODUCTION

An obvious feature of the *Philosophical Investigations* is its questioning of certain standards of knowledge. Indeed, a listing of these skeptical themes reads like a compilation of what have traditionally been taken to be the aspects of Wittgenstein's later philosophy: the rejection of the notion of a logical kernel of language; the investigation of, and disappointment with, rules of usage or other second-order speech to ground its given instances; a sustained criticism of the idea that a picture, mental or physical, could be the primary correlate of meaning; and a similar doubting that "mental processes" could offer a standard of knowledge. Taken together, these themes constitute a skepticism that a basis of speech is to be found either in nature or in the self.

Many of the specific doubts have been registered by writers before Wittgenstein, and certainly much of the existing secondary literature on the *Philosophical Investigations* develops, to various degrees, these same themes. Their review has a place in this work, we shall argue, because the very question of the origins and possibilities of speech is ordinarily obscured by the assumption that language has a constituted nature which can be formulated as a standard of correctness. Wittgenstein's strategy is to show that each alleged standard is inadequate to the multiplicity of significance of actual speech. The particular actual meanings have a basis or unity only in human custom, his argument continues, and thus raise questions of beginnings and possibilities for change.

B. THE SKEPTICISM OF LOGIC

The appelation 'later philosophy of Wittgenstein' has been taken to refer to an important change from the doctrine of the *Tractatus*,[1] a doctrine that was in some essential way 'logical'. The fact that the early work makes appeals that are quite unusual from a traditional standpoint of logic does not alter the significance of the later change of thinking, and of course the most relevant announcement of this change comes from Wittgenstein himself (e.g. #'s 23, 114). Nevertheless, there is no compelling reason to explicate the thinking of the *Philosophical Investigations* in terms of its divergence from the *Tractatus*, and certainly to treat the two works as wholly or essentially opposed is open to serious enough question to disqualify it as a mode of procedure. The reflections in the *Philosophical Investigations* on the place of logical considerations in philosophy do remain, however, the most conspicuous aspect of his skepticism with the philosophical tradition. They have been the source of keen disappointment in some of his early admirers,[2] as well as the inspiration of a school of writers who have turned to an explicit commitment to what they take as the comparatively informal structures of ordinary language. Wittgenstein himself does not attempt to demonstrate the general worthlessness of logic; he introduces, rather, various considerations which would seem important to a logical standard of knowledge, and subjects each of them to a developing process of doubt.

If logic is to provide a determinate standard of knowledge or reasoning, it would seem to require a determinate relation between name and that which is named (cf. #37). Accordingly, learning a language would be a process of bestowing names upon objects (cf. #26), accomplished through ostensive definition, or, more precisely, ostensive teaching of words. The rigor of a logical standard would require both a uniformity in the way a term would

[1] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), translated by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness. The original German edition was published in 1921.

[2] See, for instance, Bertrand Russell, *My Philosophical Development* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1959), 214, 216-17.

refer to its object and the possible inclusion of all meaningful speech in this structure. In opposition, Wittgenstein would here have us " ... think of exclamations alone, with their completely different functions. Water! Away! Ow! Help! Fire! No!" (#27). Pursuing the matter, we find that the difficulty is more serious than that of a multiple status of terms; how, for instance, is the number "two" defined? By pointing to two nuts (cf. #28)? The 'exactness' of this act is open to question, for although there are exactly two nuts, the pupil may " ... suppose that 'two' is the name given to this group of nuts" (#28). Similarly, the name of a person may be taken as the name of a color, or of a race, and the facility with which Wittgenstein can produce such imaginative misinterpretations leads him to suggest that an ostensive definition can be variously interpreted in every case (#28). The definition may be clarified by such a stipulation as "This *number* is called two" (#29), but then one is faced with the problem of the definition of "number", a question that Wittgenstein refrains from pursuing immediately, in favor of mentioning that such verbal qualifications do in fact often help avert misunderstandings. He emphasizes the possibility of a completed accomplishment of meaning:

> Do not say: "There isn't a 'last' definition." That is just as if you chose to say: "There isn't a last house in this road; one can always build an additional one." (#29)

Wittgenstein then points out that whether or not the word "number" is necessary in the definition of "two" depends upon the circumstances under which, and the person to whom, the definition is given; what is still unclarified is the status of ostensive definition itself. More precisely, he has shown that ostensive definition has certain presuppositions, such as " ... the overall role of the word" (#30) in the language being already clear, and thus has questioned the primacy of this simple act in the account of things and words. To compound our awareness of this inadequacy, he asks us to try to differentiate the ostensive definition of a thing's color as opposed to its shape, or its number. To the suggestion that each is distinguished by a particular form of attention, he

would point out that there are a considerable variety of ways of attending to a color (#33). So far, then, two strains may be discerned in the criticisms of logic: (1) it seems difficult to find a primacy in the act (naming) which supposedly translates things into a logical form (e.g. " ... only someone who already knows how to do something with it [*der schon etwas mit ihr anzufangen weiss*] can significantly ask a name" [#31]), and (2) an alleged simplicity, when examined, tends to leak out into a multiplicity ending in concrete particulars (e.g. ostensive definition led to the complexity of the relation between shape, color, and number, which in turn led to considering various ways of attending to a color).

Wittgenstein then develops the notion that the simplicity one imagines in logic is found nowhere else.

> If I tell someone without any further explanation: "What I see before me now is composite," he will have the right to ask: "What do you mean by 'composite'?" (#47)

Wittgenstein finds "composite" (and presumably by a similar argument, "simple"), considered in itself, or absolutely, to refer to all possibilities.

> Multi-colouredness is one kind of complexity; another is, for example, that of a broken outline composed of straight bits. And a curve can be said to be composed of an ascending and a descending segment. (#47)

Whichever of these, or, of course, many others, is appropriate at the moment depends upon the particular speaking situation, so the argument for the relevance of simple structures remains saddled with the burden of demonstrating some sort of essential simplicity within the apparent variety of language usages. The very possibility of accomplishing such a demonstration has been questioned by showing that the standard of such an enterprise, our notion of simple and complex, itself contains a reference to the multiplicity of usages.

Furthermore, it seems manifestly difficult to improve upon such an ordinary variety of speech as "Bring me the broom" (#60). "Bring me the broomstick and the brush that is fitted onto it" would not be so likely to fetch you the broom as a puzzled request

for clarification (#60). It is a "seduction" to think that the composite or "analyzed" form is necessarily the more "fundamental" (#63), for such a belief appeals only to analysis itself, while the ordinary "Bring me a broom" has behind it the accomplishment of its order. Wittgenstein insists that one cannot appeal to a nonlinguistic standard in defense of the relevance to philosophical discourse of analysis into parts. In a culminating set of sections (#'s 65-67), he now admits that from the standpoint of this traditional task he has taken the easy way out by not searching for that which is "common to all that we call language" (#65). Here he revives the example of games to find "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and crisscrossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities in detail" (#66). The next section introduces his celebrated term "family resemblances" to characterize this nonlogical sort of unity, and succeeding sections amplify it through a more developed study of the heterogenous use of such words as "game" and "number".

Can we say that logic is an ideal language which we construct (#81), to which our language can only approximate? Is logic "something sublime?" (#89). Where in our experience is the exactness that logic wants to express? Is "Stand roughly here" (#88) exact or inexact? Certainly it can completely accomplish its purpose.

> And let us consider what we call an "exact" explanation in contrast with this one. Perhaps something like drawing a chalk line round an area? Here it strikes us at once that the line has breadth. So a colour-edge would be more exact. But has this exactness still got a function here: isn't the engine idling? And remember too that we have not yet defined what is to count as overstepping this exact boundary; how, with what instruments, it is to be established. And so on. (#88)

If one is reminded to come to dinner punctually at one o'clock, there really is a question of exactness involved, notwithstanding the comparatively more minute measurement of time in a laboratory or observatory (#88). "Inexact", Wittgenstein continues, is a reproach for something which "attains its goal less perfectly than what is more exact" (#88). So the exactness which is one way to

characterize the alleged sublimity, or that which is profound, in ordinary speaking situations, is itself a concept that explication forces back to the multiplicity of those particular goals. An attempt to explain what is exact in our language stops short at the varieties of our experience, making it seem as if logic had its "universal significance" only at a "peculiar depth" (#89). But this is a turn of thought that is generated by and not evidence for the notion that logic is in fact sublime. Wittgenstein would caution us (#91) that the ensuing search for the hidden essence of language might severely predetermine the sort of discovery possible. The purpose of the *Philosophical Investigations* is not so much to pursue such a search, or review such work of others to give a comparative criticism of the results, as it is to raise doubts about the very undertaking of such a procedure, to erode the plausibility of some of its presuppositions, and generally to try to hold the situation open for a new way of seeing, to remove the glasses through which we have so far seen everything (cf. #103).

The return from a logical ideal that is purportedly found in our linguistic experience, back into the multiplicity of those experiences, is illustrated by the logicians' search for a general form of sentences. "Such and such is the way things are" (#134) has been put forward as evoking what is common to all sentences to be considered according to a logical standard. Wittgenstein would first have us notice that this alleged schema for all sentences is itself a sentence in the language. This immediately moves him to consider "such and such is the case" or "such and such is the situation" or etc. (#134), which are slightly different but seemingly equally plausible schemata. The "general form" looked for is not literally a particular sequence of words or a particularly constituted sentence. Might one ask whether the "general form" is something unexpressible which "such and such is how things are" comes closest to expressing? But this is what is thrown into question by the plausibility of the various alternative formulations. For that matter, why does not the "p" of symbolic logic serve equally well to attempt to express this inexpressible standard? Wittgenstein is not objecting to taking a schema from ordinary language, but

rather to the failure to consider its status there. "He explained his position to me, said that such and such was how things were, and that therefore he needed an advance" (#134). Here is an example of a meaningful use of this "general form". Do we still want it as a standard of all sentences?

Wittgenstein's criticism of logic, then, rests on the impossibility of reducing the variety of ordinary speeches. Ostensive teaching of names, the act whereby our experience allegedly can be put into a form commensurate with logic, is inexplicable apart from a prior grasp of the overall functioning of language. Furthermore, the definition of the very qualities which seem to give logic its sublimity, such as simplicity and exactness, itself makes appeal to the variety of ordinary usage. The conclusion, to be amplified throughout the work, is that our mastery of a natural language contributes to our understanding of determinate structures in such a way as to preclude taking the latter as fundamental.

C. THE SKEPTICISM OF RULES OF USAGE

It is not only in his explicit criticism of a logically oriented philosophy that Wittgenstein finds it impossible to hold the determinate standard, which is supposed to serve as a basis of language, apart from the language itself. A recurring theme in the *Philosophical Investigations* is a questioning of certain methods of grounding speech in other speech. This skepticism is developed through an elaborate (and intermittent) investigation of what is involved in the attempt to formulate rules for the correct usage of language. Wittgenstein introduces (#'s 48,53) as a simple example of such a rule a table of color samples and their corresponding words in the language. He immediately claims that even such a simple table finds various applications by language users, e.g. such uses as teaching the language or mixing a particular shade (#53). What seems common, at least in this example, to the various sorts of rule-using is a fixed standard to which the language may be oriented. The next section (#54) begins with similar considera-

tions about a less clear and simple sort of rule following, i.e., the playing of games, where the rule can be, for instance, an aid in teaching or a "tool of the game", an expression that combines his two previous analogies to the complexity and internal heterogeneity of language. Certainly the rule is no longer the explicit standard to which appeal is made to guide particular actions; Wittgenstein points out (#54) that games are often learned by imitation and played without benefit of any formulated guide of conduct. An observer can nevertheless know that there are mistakes and correct play in the situation, by noticing "signs of it in the players' behavior", much as we can recognize someone correcting a slip of the tongue even without knowing his language (#54). Explicit rules are not necessarily present in a situation that shows some sort of order.

> I say "There is a chair." What if I go up to it, meaning to fetch it, and it suddenly disappears from sight? – "So it wasn't a chair, but some kind of illusion." – But in a few moments we see it again and are able to touch it and so on. – "So the chair was there after all and its disappearance was some kind of illusion." – But suppose that after a time it disappears again – or seems to disappear. (#80)

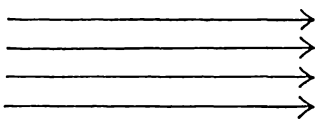
Wittgenstein remarks that no one has worked out the rules to govern the details of this sort of usage, and the word nevertheless has a meaning. Is it possible to produce a rule governing every conceivable use of an expression, including the borderline cases? If the answer is negative, then the importance of the rules for the meaning seems to diminish. Further, can one definitely decide whether the rule is

> The hypothesis that satisfactorily describes his use of words, which we observe; or the rule which he looks up when he uses signs; or the one which he gives us in reply if we ask him what his rule is? (#82)

In any case, when the speaker is unable to give the rule which he is following, or gives one but is prepared to withdraw it under questioning, is there any meaning left to the expression "the rule by which he proceeds?" (#82). Certainly we scarcely need a reminder that when normally speaking we are not consciously

orienting what we say to some rule of correctness. The question is rather, since we do not literally *follow* rules, what is their distinctive place in speech? Wittgenstein here (#83) renews the analogy to games, and proceeds to describe a certain aimless (to us) activity involving a group of people and a ball, an activity in which a foreign observer (he claims) could discern definite rules at every throw. What is the point? Wittgenstein would have us distinguish the order one may find in any particular sequence of actions from the order of a customary or habitual set of actions. Does this latter sort involve following rules? Instead of here pursuing the connection of word and custom, Wittgenstein immediately mentions the kind of game where we make up rules, or alter them, as we go along (#83). This would be a case where it is in order to foster disorder, and yet we can recognize it as a game.

Is some irreducible order present in any situation? He has us consider the language game of Section #2, with the four words connected each with its appropriate building material, played with the aid of a written table (#86). The builder shows the assistant a written word; the assistant, according to his training, passes his finger horizontally to a picture of a certain sort of building material. "So the table is a rule which he follows in executing orders" (#86). But now consider various ways of reading a table; in addition to:



there might be:

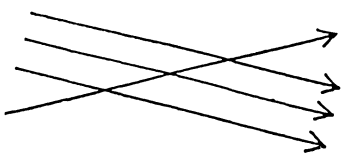


Fig. 1. Taken from Wittgenstein's Example in Section #86.

In the game described above, the first schema of arrows can be taken as the rule by which we follow the rule constituted by the table. But an endless sequence of such rules seems possible. How do we know that:

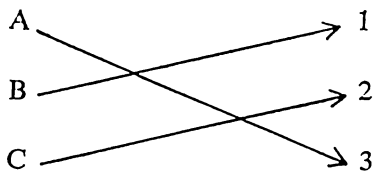


Fig. 2. An Elaboration of Wittgenstein's Example.

might not mean 'A is the correlate of 2, B of 3, and so on'?

Can we not now imagine further rules to explain *this* one? And, on the other hand, was that first table incomplete without the schema of arrows? And are other tables incomplete without their schemata? (#86)

If rules are supposed to explain the order of an action, they seem instead to lead to a regress of qualifications that elude our complete comprehension. Thus, the order present in Section Two depends upon the particular custom of reading tables, without which the rule could not be applied.

If rules are tied to human custom, and thus participate in its mutability, then their ultimacy as standards of knowledge is seriously undermined. In a culminating section Wittgenstein then gives this emphasis to the liability of rules to change:

The fundamental fact here is that we lay down rules, a technique, for a game, and that then when we follow the rules, things do not turn out as we had assumed. That we are therefore as it were entangled in our own rules. (#125)

Rules, as reflecting a certain order, form a beginning in speech, but they lead to confusion when taken to account for the accomplishments of speaking.

This entanglement in our rules is what we want to understand (i.e., get a clear view of).

It throws light on our concept of *meaning* something. For in those cases things turn out otherwise than we had meant, foreseen. (#125) ["Survey" or "comprehend" might have translated "*übersehen*" better than "get a clear view of".]

In both speech and games, then, rules may change; any attempt to define by means of rules is thus in danger of being led to contradiction. The comprehension of such a contradiction, or of speech beginning in order but coming to confuse that order, Wittgenstein calls "the philosophical problem" (#125).

Wittgenstein continues to question the ultimacy of rules by closely examining the performance of an orderly action. He introduces (at #143) an extended consideration of what occurs when a person learns a mathematical series. The mark of having mastered the series is, he insists, the ability to continue it, and prior to such mastery we may expect any of innumerable possible errors, either systematic or random. The teacher might reinforce the desired response with emphatic gestures or underlining, and then observe the pupil's reaction, upon which the further explanation depends (cf. #145). Wittgenstein now asks how far the pupil must correctly continue the series before we can say correctly that he has mastery. "Clearly you cannot state a limit here" (#145). The temptation is to express the pupil's understanding in terms of knowledge of the algebraic formula, considered as the rule by which he continues. The actual elaboration of the series would then be merely the application of the understanding, regarded as a state or condition from which comes the correct usage (#146). What follows is a prolonged attempt to demonstrate the difficulty of holding apart, on the one hand, a state of mind or disposition to knowledge, according to which correct answers are produced, and, on the other hand, the manifestations of that knowledge (#149). Furthermore, the formula or algebraic rule may or may not have occurred to the master of a series (#151), and it is also perfectly thinkable that the formula might occur to someone who still does not understand its application (#152). Because there remains a variety of ways to take a formula (e.g. a pupil might plausibly, after a certain point in a "plus two" series, begin ad-

vancing by four or another multiple of two – cf. #185), Wittgenstein suggests that a "new decision" (#186) is required at every step. The formula may stand in an essential relationship to the series considered as a constituted infinite, indeed we can give expression to the totality of the series only through a formula; in the learning to master a number series, however, there is no sure grasp short of the elaboration itself, and there is no precise amount of independent elaboration that we can set as the criterion for a pupil's having learned or failed to learn. So we see even in such a field as the simple relations among the cardinal numbers, the rule which expresses the definiteness of the relation is something else again from what is involved in coming to comprehend the manifestation of the related numbers.

Later mention of rules attempts to develop the analogy between language and games, and to turn more attention to the role played by rules insofar as they express a certain discernable order in the act of speaking. There does remain in these later sections an occasional objection to taking the rules as *the* meaning or essential aspect of speech, but the emphasis is now on their positive contribution. Wittgenstein has us consider the relation between the rules of chess and the game of chess I intend presently to play (#197). The example is raised in the development of the important theme (to be developed in Chapter 4 of this work) of the relation between what I "grasp in a flash" (#197) of a word and the indefinite number of meaningful uses of that word. Wittgenstein insists that surely the game I intend to play "is the game it is in virtue of all its rules (and so on)" (#197), but wonders about the status of these (usually unspoken) conditions. How are these elaborations of what help constitute chess present in the game yet to be played? "Well, in the list of rules of the game, in the teaching of it, in the day-to-day practice of playing" (#197). Wittgenstein tries to show that when we attend to the rules of an activity, with the aim of finding an explanation of what is important in that activity, our conception of the rules spreads out into all the manifestations of the game itself. Wittgenstein goes on to mention (#198) the importance of a regular use of customary sign-posts or rules. He finds

that any particular interpretation or elaboration of a rule "hangs in the air" (#198) with that which it interprets, and cannot alone give it any support because any number of other interpretations would theoretically be equally possible. The grounding of the activity is effected in this way: "I have been trained to react to this sign in a particular way" (#198). Wittgenstein, however, does not find this sort of explanation satisfying. We may note that the exposition began in trying to account for the rules or order of an activity, and has ended by appealing to custom, which is just that order itself. Wittgenstein complains that what has not yet been spoken of is "what this going-by-the-sign really consists in" (#198), or how one uses the determinate order to perform an activity that has characteristics rather different from that of the order itself.

The next few sections underline the importance of this order which is brought about by custom, and at the same time allude to the odd position in which it puts one who would try to understand language. Wittgenstein questions (#205) whether two people in a world where no games existed could begin to play a game of chess. Furthermore, although we in our present situation can invent any number of purely theoretical games, it is a matter of some doubt whether someone in a gameless world could invent a game that no one played (#204). If what Wittgenstein implies is true, then our understanding has been given an odd turn, for the claim is for the impossibility of an obvious empirical event. The position of someone who in principle could not invent a game no one happened to play is from our standpoint unthinkable. If this is to emphasize the importance of custom in what we can literally think, it raises anew the difficulty of orienting an investigation around the discernable order in a use of language, for our attention is eventually brought to the problem of the source or beginning of a particular order. If we cannot rightly think of two people beginning to play chess in a gameless world, it remains true, of course, that every game we know has begun. We may see in Wittgenstein's treatment of rules a movement typical of the *Philosophical Investigations*. What catches his eye is something that seems to

stand in a position of definite importance to language. Wittgenstein finds the very plausibility of its importance especial reason to question whether it enables us to understand language with any sort of finality, and the development of the theme proceeds through exposing it to a variety of doubts. Just at the point where we think he might deny all importance to the notion, however, he refocuses his attention upon what made it seem plausible in the first place, and begins to recognize its positive contribution. This exposition can develop only so far, however, before Wittgenstein finds it necessary to indicate that by itself it leads to an unthinkable or paradoxical situation.

Thus, consideration of rules leads Wittgenstein, along a variety of paths, to find a more basic orderliness in human custom, without which the rule "hangs in the air" (#198). This is an introduction to, rather than a solution of, the philosophical problem, because human participation in customary order causes it to be transformed (cf. #125). He will later mention that one understands rule-following not by noting the order in question, but rather as a "*Praxis*" (#202), an undefined term apparently included to make reference to the open possibilities of human activity. What is at question, of course, is not merely the change which is inexplicable in terms of the existing custom, but also the status of the order itself, as a basis for the transformations. His skepticism of rules can be seen to be preparatory to the approach to this problem, in that it determines the central point at issue to be linguistic. For instance, he finds the concept of rule following to be "interwoven" with the use of the word "same" (#225). Later chapters of the present work will attempt to demonstrate Wittgenstein's unique linguistic understanding of the problem of the origins and possibilities of our experience. For the present, we may wonder in what way a meaning in speech could possibly be fixed, and Wittgenstein has, interspersed throughout the *Philosophical Investigations*, proposed, questioned, and developed a separate notion of apparent access to that which allows a meaning to be grasped and held, the notion that meaning somehow corresponds to a picture.

D. THE SKEPTICISM OF PICTURES

In his first sentence Wittgenstein says that the Augustinian account gives us "a particular picture of the essence of human language" (#1). The claim that something can provide us with a picture, or be accurately represented by a picture, is that of a certain definiteness that can be captured and held. This grasp of what is pictured would be the foundation for cognitive comprehension. It is against this general notion that Wittgenstein mounts an elaborate questioning, and although he undeniably means this to be a revision of the picture theory of the *Tractatus*, it applies equally well to any definite, graspable standard of knowledge.

A note inserted early in the work has us think of a boxer in a particular stance.

> Now, this picture can be used to tell someone how he should stand, should hold himself; or how he should not hold himself; or how a particular man did stand in such-and-such a place; and so on. One might (using the language of chemistry) call this picture a proposition-radical. (p. 11n)

Corresponding to the seeming definiteness of the picture is no obvious manner in which the picture should be taken. What is fixed by the picture does not extend to the delineation of the relation of the picture to any particular thought or sentence.

The next mention of pictures occurs in a discussion of the relation of a name to the thing named, where it is pointed out that *one such* relation may be the name calling "before our mind the picture of what is named" (#37). Similarly plausible are the name moving the assistant to bring the builder the appropriate stone, or, "among other things, in the name's being written on the thing named or being pronounced when the thing is pointed at" (#37). When our speech makes reference to something it is not necessarily through a picture. The question then is whether a picture was possible, and whether that which made a picture possible, and is best cognized through the picture, is what gives significance to our speech.

Ten sections later, pictures are mentioned again, this time in the

investigation into simplicity. Wittgenstein asks if the visual picture of a tree is composite, and what its component parts are (#47). Can we examine a picture to discover something of it that holds "outside a particular language game?" (#47). Not in the case of "simplicity", Wittgenstein would object, for first we need an account of what sort of composition is meant in each particular instance. Wittgenstein then finds a picture open to a variety of ways of being taken, a variety similar to that which precluded finality in any attempt to name something's simple components.

If a picture of something does not itself reveal the simple elements, Wittgenstein would also say that the construing of reality as composed of simples is itself a "particular picture which we want to use" (#59). He then sketches some of the reasons (e.g. the possibility of destroying something whole without thus destroying its parts) for "constructing" that picture of reality. Thus, Wittgenstein's criticism is not merely that we attach a false importance to certain pictures we discover, but also that the source of the confusion lies in an inclination to pictorial thought about certain fundamental matters. Later (e.g. #'s 115, 144, 191) he will say that a picture can hold us captive, that pictures can erroneously cross themselves with each other, and that we must work to erode our fascination by them, and change our way of looking at things.

The next mention of pictures presents a more positive sense. The interlocutor asks how "game" could be a concept at all, given the impossibility of sharply defining it (#71). Wittgenstein replies by analogy, pointing out that it is perfectly possible to have an indistinct picture of a person, and indeed this is often "exactly what we need" (#71). But if Wittgenstein is here appealing to a picture to explain something about cognition, we must remember that he uses one which is *blurred*; i.e. whatever is definite in the situation must come from another source.

Two sections later, "picture" appears again, this time in its difficult relation to common nouns and adjectives. We may properly use a picture in conjunction with the sentence "This is called a 'leaf' " (#73), but what picture shows "what is common

to all shapes of leaf" or to "all shades of green?" (#74). "But might there not be such 'general' samples? Say a schematic leaf, or a sample of *pure* green!" (#73), asks the interlocutor. "Certainly" (#73), replies Wittgenstein, but this involves *taking it* as a sample of (e.g.) green, and not as that of (say) a rectangle. What mitigates against the primacy of a picture as pure sample, then, is its as yet unexplained relationship to particulars (for as sample it cannot be a picture of anything), and the necessity of specifying which aspect of the picture is to be taken as exemplary.

Returning to the analogy between the concept of such a word as "game" and an indistinct picture, Wittgenstein emphasizes that there is no *single* resolution of the indeterminacy, that "several sharply defined rectangles can be drawn to correspond to the indefinite one" (#77), and that there exist cases where the indeterminacy is so great as to admit anything – and thus nothing – as a correct determinate expression.

"What really comes before our mind when we *understand* a word? – Isn't it something like a picture? Can't it *be* a picture?" (#139 The original text adds a comma after "something"). This opens Wittgenstein's last lengthy attempt to establish (through the interlocutor) a picture in the essential position of the knowing process. The choice is the word "cube", the meaning of which seems to be clearly established by a picture, vis-à-vis that of, say, a triangular prism. But Wittgenstein here finds it easy to imagine a method of projection by which the latter is seen in fact to represent a cube (#139), and just as easily could the seeming cube picture be viewed as a projection of some other figure.

> What is essential is to see that the same thing can come before our minds when we hear the word and the application still be different. Has it the *same* meaning both times? I think we shall say not. (#140)

If there appears to be a "collision" (#141) between a picture and a particular way we apply it, it is because "in general people apply *this* picture like *this*" (#141). Wittgenstein has found that the investigation of a picture as meaning leads away from the picture and back to the linguistic custom of what have become normal cases. Wittgenstein underlines this with an inserted note calling

our attention to a picture of "an old man walking up a steep path leaning on a stick" (p. 54n). He asks if it would "not have looked just the same if he had been sliding downhill in that position" (p. 54n), although we certainly "do not describe it so" (p. 54n). That custom plays such an important part in what a picture can say is also shown by the ease with which we could imagine what might be shown by someone's painting of Beethoven writing the ninth symphony.

> But suppose someone wanted to represent what Goethe would have looked like writing the ninth symphony? Here I could imagine nothing that would not be embarrassing and ridiculous. (p. 185)

Having made these criticisms of the role of pictures in knowing, Wittgenstein begins to introduce more positive considerations. In discussing the relation between a machine and its action, he claims that the former, or a picture of a machine, symbolizes the latter, its particular action (#193). The machine thus considered is "the first of a series of pictures" (#193). A picture is like a rule in intimating which way I am to go, but as such it admits of possible misinterpretation and must be followed responsibly (#222). The "good sense" of a picture depends upon "ordinary circumstances" where we are familiar with its application (#349).

> But if we suppose a case in which this application is absent we become as it were conscious for the first time of the nakedness of the words and the picture. (#349)

Wittgenstein has found that there is something to grasp in a picture, but that this is inseparable from the application we make of it in various customary circumstances. What he would question is the alleged finality of pictures, which we have seen eludes us in a close examination. His critical development of this theme is explicitly linked up with his treatment of logic; he points out that the belief that there must be a picture to be grasped, if we are to know, is an appeal to the law of excluded middle (#352). To the interlocuter's "In the decimal expansion of *pi* either the group '7777' occurs, or it does not – there is no third possibility" (#352), Wittgenstein replies "That is to say: 'God sees – but we don't

know' " (#352). Pictorial thinking finally implies that which we want to know "one person [God] sees the whole of, and another not" (#352). Wittgenstein questions the value of such a picture because it fails "to determine what we have to do, what to look for, and how" (#352). He concludes that we have been fascinated by a picture without an application.

The discussion has developed to this point: pictures occur in knowing, but a picture must have an application to mean anything. The only pictures that carry an application within themselves are those which have been fixed with one by customary usage. But in that case (especially in view of the fact that a picture is open to various applications) the primary locus of meaning would seem to reside in the customary usage, or language game. Another way Wittgenstein characterizes the inadequacy of pictures is to point out that by themselves they cannot "give an account of what is *not* the case" (#520). When he begins to give a positive elaboration of the role of pictures in knowing, he at some point moves away from the term "picture" *("Bild")* to that of "image" (the translator's usual rendering of "*Vorstellung*"). This latter term will be treated at length in Chapter 4 of this work, but it may here be briefly contrasted with "picture" in that it implies something happening over a period of time with the active participation of the knowing subject. The two terms are related; for instance a certain sort of picture emerges when someone describes what he imagines (#367). As "image" replaces "picture" in Wittgenstein's discussion, however, the account of knowing leads away from what is fixed and definitively graspable.

A final treatment of pictures occurs in the lengthy discussion of such curious examples as that of the "duck-rabbit".

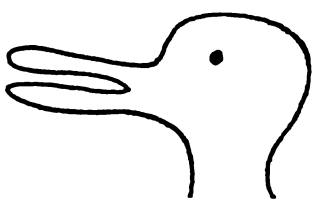


Fig. 3. The Duck-Rabbit (p. 194).

Wittgenstein would first have us "distinguish between the 'continuous seeing' of an aspect and the 'dawning' of an aspect" (p. 194). It is perfectly possible that someone could be uninitiated into the double nature of the drawing and say that he saw a picture rabbit. Indeed, in that case it would be improper for him to say "Now I am seeing it as a picture rabbit" (p. 195). He simply sees a rabbit. The possibility of the equally plausible duck, however, jolts our ordinary understanding. Wittgenstein now points out that the two animal heads are entirely dissimilar, "although they are congruent" (p. 195). What he has done is underline the highly problematic character of the relationship between each of the picture animals and the lines on the page. What is effected by the change of aspect? "Can I say? I *describe* the alteration like a perception; quite as if the object had altered before my eyes" (p. 195). But what is the status of the change which I see? Wittgenstein would insist that it is not something "of the same category" (p. 196) as a picture. Also,

> The concept of the "inner picture" is misleading, for this concept uses the "*outer* picture" as a model; and yet the uses of the words for these concepts are no more like one another than the uses of "numeral" and "number." (And if one chose to call numbers "ideal numerals," one might produce a similar confusion.) (p. 196)

Wittgenstein would consider the "organization" (p. 196) of a visual impression on a level different from that of colors and shapes. He has chosen a drawing which was deliberately contrived to admit to two (approximately) equal customary interpretations, each thus being seen as one of (at least) two equally possible aspects. We are made aware of seeing *as*, realizing that that which we see is in some way an interpretation. It is for this reason that the picture, which is the paradigm of something definite visually grasped, lacks a position of finality in our knowing. Wittgenstein would "almost like to say" (p. 197) that what enters into visual comprehension is "both seeing and thinking" (p. 197). He then immediately (p. 197) questions whether it should be expressed as such a combination; but the point here is the erosion of confidence in pictures as such. By forcing us to try to focus upon the

change of aspects, he brings us to realize that there is a coming to be of the picture that cannot itself be comprehended pictorially, and that the interest in including this source or originating in an account of knowing or meaning precludes ending the investigation in pictures, which are always already organized.

E. THE SKEPTICISM OF MENTAL PROCESSES

The difficulty of relating meaning to pictures stemmed from our taking them as things that hang on the wall; Wittgenstein sees their significance as being closer to that of blueprints for action (cf. #241, p. 204). The suggestion is that whatever is essential in securing meaning must be adequate to the particular movement of knowing; there is thus great plausibility for advancing one or another "mental process" as being that which is most intimately connected with this movement. Wittgenstein considers this possibility in a variety of examples.

Toward the end of the sections investigating the understanding of a number series, Wittgenstein mentions that the source of confusion lies in conceiving of the appropriate mastery as a "mental process" (#154). He makes a plea to consider instead the special circumstances under which the understanding was achieved (#155). The introduction of the "mental" had occurred a few sections earlier in the attempt to discover a ground for the pupil's continuing a series. The proposed account of a mental state or disposition to act was brought into doubt, chiefly by the impossibility of discovering any criterion for the alleged source or disposition that was distinct from the manifestations themselves (#149). One is tempted, nevertheless, to persist in a search for something "hidden behind those coarser and therefore more readily visible accompaniments" (#153), and to attempt to characterize the "mental process of understanding" (#153) which seems to lie at the heart of the matter.

The next section (#154) points out the difference between the pupil's description of his mastery as having come when he achieved

understanding of the formula, and our need to disregard the pupil's claim in order to observe the circumstances of his actually continuing the series. The subject of a flash of understanding must defer to others (or to public manifestations) for justification of his description of himself. It is not a matter of choosing between a subjective insight and an objective standard; Wittgenstein is suggesting, rather, that there are situations in which, despite temptation, description of one's feelings does not tell us so much as does the aspect of the activity which is obvious to anyone. The need to make more clear this relation of the subject and his activity leads now (#156) to another example, namely the word "reading".

Wittgenstein first remarks that the discussion of reading will abstract from consideration of understanding of what is read, and will deal only with the rendering of one form of language into another, such as oral expression of something written, or writing from dictation (#156). Immediately there is difficulty characterizing just what the reading is. Not only do we practice reading in a number of different situations, but in any one such situation (e.g. reading a newspaper) a variety of things may occur.

> His eye passes – as we say – along the printed words, he says them out loud – or only to himself; in particular he reads certain words by taking in their printed shapes as wholes; others when his eye has taken in the first syllables; others again he reads syllable by syllable, and an occasional one perhaps letter by letter. – We should also say that he had read a sentence if he spoke neither aloud nor to himself during the reading but was afterwards able to repeat the sentence word for word or nearly so – He may attend to what he reads, or again – as we might put it – function as a mere reading machine. (#156)

So here again is a process that seems to have a single significance, that nevertheless we describe in a variety of divergent forms. What is evoked by the word which we can apply to all of them? Wittgenstein turns here to compare this reading to that of someone just learning to do so. It may seem as if the master's facility, as compared to the laboriousness of the beginner's efforts, indicates a particular "conscious activity of mind" (#156) central to the nature of

reading. Such a mental process then could in principle be grasped as the locus of significance in any meaningful reading situation, and use of "reading" in general would constitute a reference to the character of this process. Wittgenstein points out that since there is no regular consciousness of this accompanying mental process its existence is expressly hypothetical. The next section (#157) questions our being able to distinguish a point where one can be said to begin to read. Consider a pupil still in the rudimentary stage of training, who only occasionally hits upon an approximately correct sound for a word:

> A third person hears this pupil on such an occasion and says: "He is reading." But the teacher says: "No, he isn't reading; that was just an accident." – But let us suppose that this pupil continues to react correctly to further words that are put before him. After a while the teacher says: "Now he can read!" – But what of that first word? (#157)

Wittgenstein finds it "senseless" (#157) to ask which was the first word someone has read, unless for some particular purpose we want to stipulate it as " ' ... the first word of the first series of 150 words he reads correctly' (or something of the sort)" (#157). Although the pupil may say when he first began to experience the "transition from marks to spoken sounds" (#157), and can claim this as a "feeling" (#157) of reading, the actual accomplishment of that process is an alteration of behavior, and Wittgenstein finds "it makes no sense here to speak of 'a first word in his new state' " (#157). A feeling of confidence in mastery of the activity leads one to seek a similar inward process to stand as ground of the various manifestations of that activity. Wittgenstein has found, however, that the first notice of the feeling still requires the accomplished activity for justification, and in the activity itself there is no distinguishing a definite first instance of mastery; the result is that the pupil's feelings shrink to the importance of an accompaniment which may be noticed once mastery is achieved.

If the pupil must manifest an actual activity of reading before we can justifiably credit him with mastery, are we to say that the physical accompaniments are the central aspect of reading?

Wittgenstein raises the example of the person who can artfully pretend to read, while having "none of the sensations characteristic of reading, and will perhaps have a set of sensations characteristic of cheating" (#159). Is there an inconsistency in Wittgenstein's using in one context an outer (the performance) and in another an inner (the sensation) criterion of reading? Wittgenstein compounds the difficulty in his next example, that of someone (perhaps drugged) who when reading a text for the first time has the feeling of repeating something by heart (cf. #160). Or consider someone who reacts to a set of strange characters by uttering words as if he were reading, giving each mark a consistent pronunciation (cf. #160). The next section points out that there is a

> continuous series of transitional cases between that in which a person repeats from memory what he is supposed to be reading, and that in which he spells out every word without being helped at all by guessing from the context or knowing by heart. (#162)

The uncountable number of possible cases of reading, each with a different degree of involvement of a "mental process" (such as memory, or feeling a connection between print and sound), makes one wonder in what way anything specifically "mental" could be essential to the nature of reading. One learns to read through a training (essentially repetition) that is itself not yet reading. Once mastery is achieved, it enables the practice to be expanded into an indefinite number of particular modes, and may be accompanied by a feeling which, when we attempt to characterize it, can only be said to be a feeling that in fact reading mastery is achieved, and which can thus distinguish reading from different activities accompanied by their own characteristic feelings. That which one has said before (for example the training exercises of a pupil) can enter anywhere in "a continuous series of transitional cases" (#161) to contribute an element that is itself not reading.

> Try this experiment: say the numbers from 1 to 12. Now look at the dial of your watch and *read* them. – What was it that you called "reading" in the latter case? (#161)

In the activity of this example, the contribution of original reading

is necessarily slight, and we may imagine instances at the opposite extreme, where the unfamiliarity of the subject matter brings one close to faltering. What is pointed out in all this is Wittgenstein's insistence upon the originality of the process of reading, and any other process, mental or otherwise, which seems essentially to characterize it can be shown to be at most one of the contributors to it.

The following sections offer various attempts to describe the process of reading. Is it a case of "deriving" the spoken from the written (cf. #'s 162-64), or do the words just "come" (#'s 165-66) when I read? Is the connection that of a "cause", or a "ground" or "reason", or do I just "feel the influence?" (#169). Perhaps the written word "intimates" (#171) the sound to me, or there is an "alloy" between letter and sound (#171). Is it a case of "being guided" by the text? (#174). Wittgenstein's method is to show that each of these reveals its own family of meanings, thus leading away from the aspect of reading it first seemed to illuminate. This diversity of factors which have an apparent connection to some aspect of reading serves in the end to indicate the originality and richness of possibility of the reading process itself.

Wittgenstein now calls a sudden feeling of mastery a "signal" (#180 The discussion here is of the related case of mastery of a number series). Notice that a signal has reference away from itself to whatever it is that is signified, so it cannot stand alone as an explanation. The result, then, of trying to apply this concept to a feeling is to reveal that feeling as being generated by and finding its definiteness in some more originally substantial process. Wittgenstein thus finds this feeling, as well as all other nameable aspects, to be tangential in its contribution to reading.

The argument against the ultimacy of mental processes finds its sharpest focus in the questioning of the role of thinking. What is at stake is the claim that in thought we find a process that reflects what is essential to knowing, and that the proper understanding of thinking gives us the most direct possible access to what is common, and of importance, to the various expressions of knowledge. The most sustained development of this theme is preceded

by investigation of specific forms of supposed mental activity, such as memory and (as we have seen) reading, as well as by examples bearing in one way or another upon the place of thought in various sorts of knowing. One such example is the mention (#236) of calculating prodigies "who get the right answer but cannot say how". If we can say that such a person has followed the rules of arithmetic, we must yet concede that he does not consciously align the calculating with any process of thinking. We might be tempted to say there is at work some sort of momentum from his previous calculating experience. Whatever the correct explanation of the prodigy, however, it remains true that the calculating occurred without elaboration through a process of thinking. Can we even call this 'calculating'? Wittgenstein answers that there are a "family of cases" here (#236), suggesting that in various instances the conscious mental activity enters into the process to a greater or less degree. The conclusion concerning thinking is that in calculating it has the aspect of being one of a number of contributors to a process that it cannot itself guarantee.

Wittgenstein cites the distinction of speech with thought from speech without thinking as making plausible the notion that meaningfulness resides in the mental process of thought. Thinking would then seem to be "an accompaniment of speech. A process which may accompany something else, or can go on by itself" (#330). An attempt to isolate or define meaning, however, leads not to a thought that occurred, but rather to the character of the particular situation. Wittgenstein has us try to say " 'Yes, this pen is blunt. Oh well, it'll do.' First, thinking it; then without thought; then just think the thought without the words" (#330). How could such distinctions be maintained? "Well, while doing some writing I might test the point of my pen, make a face – and then go on with a gesture of resignation" (#330). This little situation does not acquire its meaning through some process accessible only in the thought of the performer. More generally, if thoughts could serve as standards of knowledge, then they should be transparently clear:

> Can't you observe yourself and see what is going on?... You do not have to wait for it as for astronomical event and then perhaps make your observation in a hurry. (#327)

Trying to focus upon the mental process shows it to be more strange than that which it was to elucidate, as evidenced by the difficulty in imagining a mistake in one's supposing that he had on some occasion been thinking.

There are still some situations, however, which suggest that thought, in spite of its strange generality, is a process that can be isolated to reveal what is essential in expression. He mentions the examples of insisting to someone " 'So you really wanted to say...' " (#334) or the groping for the correct expression of one's own thoughts (#335). These cases would seem to show that there is in thought some sort of standard, at times obscured, to which we attempt to orient our speaking. Wittgenstein would rather limit the description of "So you really wanted to say..." to its employment for leading "someone from one form of expression to another" (#334). But what tempts us to say that "what he really 'wanted to say' " was "already *present somewhere* in his mind?" (#334). Wittgenstein opposes this temptation with an example designed to erode our inclination to believe that searching thought must be aiming toward an already constituted standard. Consider:

> The concept "trisection of the angle with ruler and compass," when people are trying to do it, and on the other hand, when it has been proved that there is no such thing. (#334)

Because in this case there is (presumably) no possibility of completion, the activity of searching cannot indicate the existence of its object. Furthermore, the alleged "thought", or whatever could end the search for a word, might appear in any of a number of different ways:

> I surrender to a mood and the expression *comes*. Or a picture occurs to me and I try to describe it. Or an English expression occurs to me and I try to hit on the corresponding German one. Or I make a gesture, and ask myself: What words correspond to this gesture? And so on. (#335)

This variety of occurrences also exposes the futility of believing that the standard of accomplishment is in the process itself. The following is perhaps the supreme example of the misapprehension that mental activity of some sort serves as the determinate guide to meaningful speech: "someone imagines that one could not think a sentence with the remarkable word order of German or Latin just as it stands" (#336). Mental processes evidently give way to changes in language.

Still there is temptation to see speech originating in a thought process in which we can discover the correct organization of the utterance. The interlocuter asks:

> But didn't I already intend the whole construction of the sentence (for example) at its beginning? So surely it already existed in my mind before I said it out loud! (#337)

Wittgenstein finds this "a misleading picture of 'intending'" (#337), for he would rather have this word refer to a person's undertaking to renew an activity that he has already mastered:

> If the technique of the game of chess did not exist, I could not intend to play a game of chess. In so far as I do intend the construction of a sentence in advance, that is made possible by the fact that I can speak the language in question. (#337)

We might add that nowhere in the intention to play would one presume to find the particular game of chess which followed. Especially when we consider the variety of forms that speech can take, and realize that once such a form is spoken all intending gives way to accomplishment, the confident intention to speak can be seen as different from the organization of the speech itself.

The next section (#338) continues to emphasize the distance between an intention and its fulfillment. Wittgenstein wonders why we wish to call that which is present in addition to the accomplished speech (the "thought") an "incorporeal process which lends life and sense to speaking" (#339). It is misleading to think that we are "acquainted with incorporeal processes" (#339) and can then judge whether thinking is one of them. But Wittgenstein does find plausibility in characterizing thinking as an incorporeal

process if we were trying to distinguish it from, say, eating (cf. #339). His only reservation is that this "makes the difference between the meanings look *too slight*. (It is like saying: numerals are actual, and numbers are non-actual objects.)" (#339). The "thinking" present in the speaking situation refers to the possibility of a variety of determinate meanings; it is wrong to consider this possibility to be another (but non-actual) accomplished expression.

The search to isolate the meaningfulness found in a variety of language usages led Wittgenstein to investigate inner processes, expressed most generally as thinking. Such processes seemed to be more plausible standards of correct speech than were logic or pictures, because they seemed closer to the movement of speaking than did a fixed determination. Our awareness of something in addition to, or beyond, our actual statements (in such moments as when we grope for a correct word), further suggested a pre-existing mental standard. Wittgenstein finds, however, that great difficulties arise when we try to isolate the meaning in this thinking. When we turn to investigate our thought in retrospect it seems "queer" (#428), as if the speaking had been "too quick" (#435) for us to grasp the thought in it, and yet the meaning was clear; there was "nothing hidden" (#435) in what was said. Wittgenstein finds persistence in the belief that there must somewhere be a hidden process in which the meaning resides to be a return to allegiance to a picture (cf. p. 223) which enjoys no demonstrable application. He does find that meaningful speech happens as a process, in which something occurs to or strikes someone, and there is an effort to take up and articulate this occurrence as speech. Because there is no way of knowing usages of speech in advance, because meaningful speech comes from a situation in which speech is not the only element, Wittgenstein finds it plausible to speak of meaning arising in a process. What he objects to is the attempt to then identify the meaning with the process, and locate this elusive occurrence in some obscure inner realm. "For no *process* could have the consequences of meaning" (p. 218). Meanings occur as determinate and graspable; processes are

occurrences of which we can isolate aspects, but which no single determinate characterization can comprehend. When we say that an essential constituent of a speaking being is thought or mental process, we are alluding to our awareness that no single speech or collection of speeches ever exhausts what can be said; there is no ground, however, for turning to this strange possibility of speech for elucidation of particular speeches already uttered.

F. CONCLUSION

The treatment of thinking as a possible determinate standard of meaning is a culmination of Wittgenstein's skepticism in that it reveals the temptation to explore beyond particular meanings for some sort of ground, and then shows that when pursued this alleged ground retreats into a vague and elusive realm where determinate relevance to the original particulars is lost. Such plausible standards as logic, rules of usage, or pictures were rejected because their relation to the variety of particular meaningful situations required explanation that was never self-evidently complete. The formal structures of logic have relevance to only the propositional aspect of speech, and, like pictures and rules, always require an interpretation. Because interpretation and explanation are activities which ordinarily find their significance upon some sort of completion, Wittgenstein finds intolerable and self-negating the unlimited regress that occurs when one undertakes to interpret or explain any particular as a determinate standard of all meanings. Arising with this insight is the realization that the genuine variety of particulars, which can never be known in advance, come to be in a process that includes more than the particular meanings themselves. Here there is temptation to isolate what is unique in this process, and to wrongly believe that that which such things as parrots and Gramophones (cf. #344) lack is "mental processes" rather than the complex behavior of speaking men. Wittgenstein reveals this temptation as a wish for yet another determination, and calls this effort to determine the indeterminate

aspect a chasing after the "yet uncomprehended process in the yet unexplored medium" (#308). Wittgenstein therefore would reject any determinate general standard of meaning, either pictorial or verbal, either found, or contrived, or glimpsed within the self, not only because it fails to improve upon the existing clarity of the original meanings, but also because its insistence upon a certain sort of explanation precludes insight into the matter of the origin and possibilities of the actually given. Wittgenstein's skepticism, then, is not a rejection of pictures or any other determination; indeed, it is in the "change of aspects" of the pictures of the duck and the rabbit in the curious line drawing that we get an inkling of what lies behind something we can grasp as particular. Wittgenstein's doubting of the general significance of any particular standard leads to a more positive approach which takes the determinations in such a way as to reveal something other than what is determinate.

III

PRIVATE LANGUAGE

A. THE SKEPTICAL BACKGROUND

The central example of the *Philosophical Investigations* is the sustained consideration of the possibility of a purely private language. Beginning close to the literal middle of the book (at #243), it follows the introduction of all the major skeptical themes. The "private language problem", as it has come to be known, has been the focus of much of the recent discussion of Wittgenstein. We shall see that this extraordinary topic provides a transition from the largely negative doubting of fixed, general standards to a more direct awareness of his central philosophical insight.

The sections immediately preceding the first mention of private language recapitulate the problem to be addressed. A lengthy investigation, ending with Section #238, tried in vain to discover a determinate relation between rules and their consequences. It is fairly obvious that the inconclusiveness, or, indeed, failure of this effort is typical of the skeptical themes which dominate the first half of the book. Not only rules, but also pictures and the structures of logic, are there shown to be inadequate to serve as standards of meaningful speech. Wittgenstein's argument in each case depends, finally, upon an appeal to what he takes as the self-evident *variety* of actual examples of speech, a variety that requires that each rule (or other standard) be accompanied by a specific interpretation each time its relation to an actual usage of speech is alleged. Because the number of necessary interpretations is countless,

Wittgenstein believes that the procedure of beginning with a determinate standard leads, in the end, to no conclusion.

Wittgenstein ends the discussion of the inadequacy of rules as standards of speech by transferring the problem to the theme of sensation words and their objects. A rule is said to be able to explain all of its consequences only when these consequences are "*selbstverständlich*" (#238). But "*selbstverständlich*" is elucidated only by mentioning the relation of a color word to the color it names, and this mention is admitted to be insufficient to explain just what it is to indicate something through a word.

Wittgenstein then gives brief clues to his belief in the active and self-establishing nature of language. He says the rule-following belongs to the framework or scaffolding *from which* our language works (cf. #240). It is not the rules, but a strange agreement in "form of life" (#241) that then is said to provide the basic orderliness of the speaking situation. Instead of explaining this "agreement", Wittgenstein abruptly raises a point about what we call "measuring". This is the last item before the sections on privacy.

The meaning of "measuring", Wittgenstein decides, "...is partly determined by a certain constancy in results of measurement" (#242). But as the expression itself reveals, there must have already been some disciplined observations and comparisons (i.e. measurements) for the constancy to have been made visible. Which came first, the activity or the goal? Consider a very young child being struck, in a vague way, by similarities in things. This sharpens his attention to relative sizes, so he comes to notice more, and finer, regularities. The mutually supporting process continues, guided in part by his growing interest in particular sorts of comparisons (e.g. between two portions of food). At some point he will learn (probably from adults) that one size can be taken as a standard by which others may be counted. This understanding of counting the units in something's size (or weight, etc.) comes with a realization of what we call "measuring" and for the first time makes it possible to view an object's particular "size" in such a way that it can be authoritatively compared with other sizes not present. Now, as adults, we tend to forget the original

process and think that "measuring" came about because we needed a name for the natural procedure of counting units of size. Actually there were no "units of size" visible until we went through an elaborate stage-setting which culminated in the meaningful use of the word "measure".

In these pre-privacy sections, certain themes emerge from the apparent confusion: (1) there is a "working" or active character of language, (2) language is tied to a human "agreement" which is more fundamental then usually suspected, and (3) beneath (or prior to) our present awareness there occurred a process, usually long forgotten, which Wittgenstein believes should be uncovered if the deep aspect of meaning is to be revealed. He has here suggested that language plays an active role in the formation of what we understand, but that, once achieved, this understanding loses sight of its origins. One mistake which results is the attempt to discover an independent criterion or standard for the meaning of language. At this point Wittgenstein introduces the notion of a private language.

B. HYPERBOLIC PRIVACY AND SENSATIONS

The first thing to consider is the odd status of the privacy example. Wittgenstein asks not whether a private language does or could exist, but whether it would be even thinkable *("Wäre aber auch eine Sprache denkbar,...")* (#243). Furthermore:

> "The individual words of this language are to refer to what can only be known to the person speaking; to his immediate private sensations. So another person cannot understand the language." (#243)

This private language is a hyperbolic notion introduced to make a particular point, but owing to the question of whether it is itself even thinkable, it cannot be taken as a literal example for direct consideration. How does one "take" such a hyperbole, if he cannot presume to be able to think it? The answer can be found in the next few sections.

Wittgenstein returns to the discussion of actual language, asking

how words refer to sensations. He finds the problem to lie not in the fact that such connections do exist, which is undisputed, but rather in how the connection between the name and that which is named is originally established. According to Wittgenstein: "This question is the same as: how does a human being learn the meaning of the names of sensations?" (#244). Because of the frequency in the *Philosophical Investigations* of the word "similar" *("ähnliche")* it is of especial interest that he uses the stronger word "same" *("gleiche")* in this important context. Thus, Wittgenstein hopes to penetrate an opaque surface of language by turning his attention to the process of its coming to be:

> "Words are connected with the primitive, the natural, expressions of the sensation and used in their place. A child has hurt himself and he cries; and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child a new pain-behaviour." (#244)

To the interlocutor's "So you are saying that the word 'pain' really means crying?" (#244), Wittgenstein replies, "On the contrary: the verbal expression of pain replaces crying and does not describe it" (#244). These remarks suggest that Wittgenstein opposes the view that one may take the natural relationship between pre-verbal crying and its cause as the model for the relationship between "pain" and pain. Otherwise, it would be as if learning to speak changed nothing in the situation of pain-behavior, except to give us words for its natural components. Wittgenstein criticizes the conception of language as a neutral bridge between such components: "For how can I go so far as to try to use language to get between pain and its expression?" (#245). Earlier he had questioned the "...tendency to assume a pure intermediary between propositional *signs* and the facts" (#94).

Section #244 can now elucidate Wittgenstein's notion of the "impure" relationship of language and fact. A pre-verbal infant may already acquire some power to suppress or conceal his pain, exaggerate his crying, or otherwise begin to control his pain-expression. As his powers of expression increase, more differentiations can occur in what was once an unbroken natural conjunction of crying and certain conditions of the body. Once he has mastered

speech, he can incorporate pain into a very large number of situations; e.g. he can use it by suppressing it in order to be thought brave, or he can virtually ignore it in favor of another concern. Precisely speaking, the pre-verbal process is replaced (cf. the "*ersetzt*" of #244) by one in which mastery of expression is achieved. In what way can the prior, undifferentiated process be said to be the ground of speech about pain, for the latter now seems to be a distinction which arose only in speaking? Failure to perceive such a ground leads to the remarkable suggestion that pain, as distinct from crying, is something that arises from a process of which expression is a necessary part, and accounts for the difficulty in trying to state the place of language "between" pain and expression. The implication of these sections is that what we know as pain, i.e. something we can attend to, speak about, or otherwise take a distance from, was generated when we learned to express ourselves. That is, through language we have the power to "gather up" a bodily disturbance into a locality and treat it as something that is distinct, that can be counted; whereas in pre-verbal experience the disturbance immediately disappears into motion of the limbs, tears, etc. The gestures and squeals of a growing infant can then be seen to be intermediate steps in the process of mastering the disturbances. Each expressive refinement does more to localize, delimit, clarify, and, indeed, characterize them, until the process culminates in the actual identification of a "hurt" or "pain".

Because this generation cannot be accounted for by the pre-verbal, non-differentiated situation which it replaces, and because the object of expression and the expression arose in the same movement, there results an odd relation between the word "pain" and the sensation of pain. To an adult, word and object appear separate, or only contingently related, because their original togetherness has become obscured. Indeed, the hidden "deep aspect" is the absolutely central original event, the event in which there was a *necessary* connection between language and its object. This odd necessity persists; for instance, it is evidenced by our ability to identify a sensation by means of a word. However, due

to the almost inevitable forgetting of these original moments, the understanding encounters stubborn difficulties when it reflects upon the question of meaning. One such difficulty, the problems attending the belief that sensations are essentially private, is investigated in the sections immediately following.

Wittgenstein's remarks here are typical of what has become known as the therapeutic aspect of his work; and, in fact, the claim that the philosopher "treats" a question (#255), rather than answering it, is found in this discussion. What (pathological?) notions could lead to the belief that sensations are private, he asks, for "other people very often know when I am in pain" (#246). The interlocuter points out that other people cannot know with my certainty. Wittgenstein replies that there seems to be no difference between saying that I know I have pain, and that I have pain. Is "knowledge" a concept that is inapplicable to one's relation to his own pain? But if one does not know his own pain and does not feel the pain of others, what is the basis of people's ability to understand, and speak about, their own and each other's experiences? Bringing the problem to this acute form is a way of showing the importance of the *origins* of sensations, as implied in section #244.

These origins become prominent if we consider the reason why the immediate relation a person has to his own pains is precisely the basis for understanding the pains of others. That is to say that something of having pain is to be included in knowing another's pain, in order to know it as pain. This requires that something in his pain and my pain be the same. But what? Here we return to section #244, where what we call pain was seen to be generated in a process that required, in addition to a certain condition of the body, the mastery of the use of language. Because this language is public or impersonal, to the extent that it participates in the generation of our awareness of pain, to the extent that the bodily disturbance is gathered up and given form in the process of learning to speak that word, a basis is provided for our understanding the pains of others. It is "pain" that is common to your pain and my pain. Because sensation is actually characterized by

expression, those sharing the means of expression can know the character of the pain of others as they know their own. And because the condition of the body is also a factor in a pain-situation, the awareness of others' pain can never be identical to the awareness of one's own.

The theme of the multiple origins of sensation is developed in the next few sections. Wittgenstein finds the contribution of the body to the generation of pain to be so obvious, and the usually obscured contribution of language to be so important, that he is quite impatient with solemn pronouncements to the effect that sensations are private (cf. #248). There follows a brief reference to the complex differentiation that the ability to speak can introduce into our experience, in this case the ability to simulate sensation or emotion (cf. #'s 249-250). The next section opposes the contention that "I can't imagine the opposite" (#251) supports the thesis that pains are private. Wittgenstein replies that under examination it very often turns out that one also cannot imagine the thing itself (e.g. "every rod has a length") (#251). Because there are at least two sources in the generation of sensation, it is impossible to univocally characterize it as either external or internal, although we "can't imagine" it not being private or not being the meaningful object of a public language.

Wittgenstein goes on to explicate more fully the notion of the "sameness" of various pains. We have seen that the impersonal, linguistic contribution to the origin of sensations accounts for the degree to which likeness holds true. "In so far as it makes *sense* to say that my pain is the same as his, it is also possible for us both to have the same pain" (#253). The next sentence parenthetically reminds us that pain also has a bodily origin. The following section (#254) then speaks more generally about the confusion arising from the multiple origin of sensations. Although their source in a common language allows us to speak of two pains as the same, the substitution of "identical" in this place is unwarranted, because of the bodily contribution. Talk of "identical" implies that in the end there is some single source of sensation, the exact expression of which being the object of the philosopher's

search. Wittgenstein finds this adherence to the clarity of a single aspect of a phenomenon to be typical of the sort of misunderstanding the philosopher must work to undo. He does not deny the existence of these aspects, which appear as facts; indeed he calls them the "raw material" (#254) of philosophy. They stand in need of a special treatment, however, to be seen anew each as a contributor to something of which it does not comprise the whole.

Following the aphoristic section (#255) relating philosophy to therapy, Wittgenstein renews explicit consideration of privacy. He insists that the sensation-words in a private language would necessarily stand for things quite different from the objects of such words in our actual language, for these latter are "...tied up with my natural expressions of sensations" (#256), and therefore not private. Because all sensations that we do know are *not* purely private, since they arose in a process that included the contribution of expression, our private language will have to name sensations that occur with no natural expression, to which I "simply associate" (#256) names. But what would it mean to employ a name that nobody else could understand?

What is at stake here is Wittgenstein's ability to make visible the original moment when actual language and its object came into being, and, by this interpretation, the connection between word and meaning established. Failing such an insight, one would continue to regard sensations (and everything else) as "natural" objects, to which language gives neutral names and descriptions. Here is where a *hyperbolic* privacy reenters the argument, to force the reader to an unaccustomed vantage point from which he may glimpse the connection of words and objects. The next section (#258) thus revives the private language, in the form of a "certain sensation" and its private name "E". Wittgenstein "first of all" (#258) would remark that a definition of this "E" admits of no expression. He goes on to argue that the complete privacy of the sensation entails the impossibility of distinguishing between a case of it seeming that "E" has occurred and it actually occurring. He says that "...we can't talk about 'right'" (#258) in the identi-

fication of "E" because there is no conceivable way it could prove wrong. Further, this same absence of a criterion prevents us from meaningfully incorporating "E" into another context, such as being entered on a calendar (cf. #260) or correlated with manometer indications of blood pressure (cf. #270). What is the basis of Wittgenstein's belief that in the face of such a thing as "E" we must suspend our ordinary credibility? Why must our ability to remember something, or knowledgeably recognize it, be connected with our being able to speak of it in some way? Let us first get clear about the precise character of the "E" example that seems to lead to these unusual conclusions. But as we try to approach it, it slips away; it cannot so much as admit of the determinacy to be called a "sensation", or even that I "have something" (#261), for this already is public articulation. As we strive to find within ourselves a pure example of the hyperbolic "E" we are forced to a more and more vanishing occurrence; suddenly it is obvious that there is nothing inside us with such an arbitrary relation to language; finally there occurs a turning in thought to see the active contribution of expression in the constitution of beings. Indeed, in the case of a real sensation, one cannot speak of bestowing a name in the manner of the "E" example; strangely enough, one has only to attend to the feeling of pain for the name to emerge (cf. #263). Wittgenstein can suggest in the strongest terms that whatever admits of no articulation is indistinguishable from nothing (cf. #260), and that any alleged incorporation of something purely private into a recognizable situation is like the giving of money by the right hand to the left (cf. #268): it only seems as if something is happening.

Wittgenstein next extends the point made about sensation to other areas of experience. Color perception, too, has at least this double origin: (1) a condition of the body, as evidenced in the impossibility of verifying whether all members of mankind see the same color red (cf. #272), and (2) the articulation of a language to which every member of the community has access. This multiplicity of origins results in seemingly opposed definitions: something known to everyone and something known only to me

(cf. #273). Nor is it satisfactory to say that "red" *means* the former (the external) but *refers* to the latter (the private) (cf. #274); certainly when I speak of red I mean the color I know. It is obviously not the case that every possible color has received extensive articulation, or that every articulated color has been incorporated into a familiar speaking situation. When an exceptional color, or an "impressive colour-scheme" (#277), appears, the unspoken origin of color perception becomes prominent, and the viewer is tempted to regard the impression as one that belongs to him alone. But there are ways that others can (to an extent) be brought to share an exceptional experience (think of descriptions of the blue of the sky); our relationship to colors is something as external to ourselves as our relation to language.

To think that private impressions are sufficient to establish the existence of a color is like imagining that one can accomplish the measurement of his height by "laying his hand on top of his head" (#279). Knowledge of something emerges from a process in which the incorporation of something public (whether verbal language, a system of units of measurement, an established pattern of gestures, or whatever) is tied up with the thing itself. Thus, Wittgenstein's next section (#280) opposes the notion that the painter of a picture knows what he depicts in a manner that is essentially different from that of an onlooker. This is to say that the painter's image (no matter in what form it first appeared to him) is developed in the process of expression. Perhaps this is hardly a remarkable insight on Wittgenstein's part, but it provokes the old misunderstanding that it seems to slight the painter's original idea and recognize only the public or behavioral aspect of accomplished entities (cf. #281). Wittgenstein then asks us to consider what is unique to

> a living human being and what resembles (behaves like) a living human being...: it has sensations; it sees; is blind; hears; is deaf; is conscious or unconscious. (#281)

There is ample evidence in behavior itself to refer beyond the purely behavioral. The interlocutor objects, "But in a fairy tale

the pot too can see and hear!" (#282), and is rebuffed by "Certainly; but it *can* also talk" (#282). Instead of directly correcting the error of behaviorism, as he could easily have done by making another reference to the private source of pain behavior (which is responsible for our being able sometimes to doubt another's statement of pain), Wittgenstein has sought to expose the source of this doctrine. By reminding us why we would never expect a real pot to see or hear, he calls our attention to the power of the contribution of expression in the constitution of what we are.

Wittgenstein goes on to emphasize, in such examples as that of a wriggling fly (cf. #284) and of facial expressions (#285), that more than verbal entities are included in this process of articulation. Is there a limit on the power and scope of our expression? Wittgenstein clearly sees something spontaneous and self-establishing about speech; the well known aphorism now (#289) reminds us that correct usages outrun the processes of their justification. The next section begins with an explicit statement of the contribution of public speech to sensation, amounting to the claim that the word is a source of identity among experiences: "What I do is not, of course, to identify my sensation by criteria: but to repeat an expression." (#290 A more literal translation of the last phrase is "use the same expression".) This time the point is immediately broadened into a questioning of the possibility of finding the beginning or the given in a set of facts open to unambiguous description (#'s 290-292). This questioning culminates in the introduction of the following, final, example of hyperbolic privacy:

> Suppose everyone had a box with something in it: we call it a "beetle." No one can look into anyone else's box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at *his* beetle. (#293)

Here is an (alleged) external physical object that has no place in articulation, and it undergoes much the same fate of the private sensation. Wittgenstein points out that everyone could have something different, that it would make no difference if the object were constantly changing, that, indeed, because to even characterize it as "something" is contrary to the stipulation of silence,

"the box might even be empty" (#293). Wittgenstein has found that anything, physical or mental, internal or external, that does not admit of articulation is indistinguishable from nothing.

We may surmise that Wittgenstein first mentioned his hyberbolic privacy in conjunction with a possible sensation because it is more plausible to imagine that there are within oneself occurrences of which no one has spoken. Only after this resulted in nothing did Wittgenstein have us strive for the same sort of discovery in the realm of objects. As a pedagogic, or therapeutic, device, however, this latter example is less effective, because of the complete familiarity with which such objects are found in our awareness already articulated as things. Wittgenstein has found it necessary to turn our whole understanding around; to see correctly alleged "facts" we must comprehend their hitherto obscured origins. He would ridicule such a view as: " 'Either it is raining, or it isn't – how I know, how the information has reached me, is another matter' " (#356). The beetle and box example is followed by a return to the discussion of sensation, where the linguistic is the only criterion of stability:

> It we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of "object and designation" the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant. (#293)

The next sections renew the effort to reveal the original relationship between pain and its expression.

We may see, however, that a proper understanding of the foregoing examples of hyperbolic privacy already points to the answer of the philosophical questions that have here been at issue. Such problems as the impossibility of discovering a determinate standard of knowledge; the questioning of our ability to take knowledge of the color red as a beginning or given; the insistence that a real language must agree in judgments as well as definitions; and the recognition that speaking is characterized by the self-generating nature of an activity; all these are open to solution by the central insight of the discussion of privacy. By having us try to conceive of something that admits of no articulation, with the subsequent

failure to distinguish such a thing, whether external or internal, from nothing, Wittgenstein brings us to the realization of the active contribution of expression in knowing. If, as Wittgenstein suggests, that which we know came to be through a process contributed to by expression, and this expression is a source of a criterion of identity, then we need no longer be surprised by either the absence of a separate determinate standard by which speaking ought to be guided or the presence of a fundamental agreement, that underlies disputes over particulars, between speech and that which it speaks about.

So far we have only begun to broach this very difficult and complex subject. The next chapters of this work will show that central to a positive discussion of Wittgenstein's insight is an account of how human expression, as the origin of identities, appears as a contributor to something essentially active and open-ended. That is, Wittgenstein sees the philosophical problems of identity and change, of origin and actuality, of stability and creation, to be issues that are best approached through an investigation of the role of human expression in experience.

C. SOME OTHER ACCOUNTS OF WITTGENSTEIN ON SENSATION

Wittgenstein repeatedly urges us to consider a phenomenon in relation to its beginnings, or in its peculiarly active nature, which may be obscured by our momentary attachment.

> It shews a fundamental misunderstanding, if I am inclined to study the headache I have now in order to get clear about the philosophical problem of sensation. (#314)

I shall argue that much of the secondary literature on the *Philosophical Investigations* misses Wittgenstein's concern for origins, and thus ends with insurmountable difficulties of interpretation.

P. F. Strawson contributed an early (1954) and influential review[1] of the *Philosophical Investigations.* He introduces his

[1] P. F. Strawson, "Review of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*". This and the other two articles to be discussed in this chapter are collected

dissatisfaction with Wittgenstein's discussion of privacy by claiming that he finds there an oscillation "between a stronger and a weaker thesis, of which the first is false and the second true".[2] Strawson characterizes these theses as follows:

(a) "No words name sensations (or 'private experiences')"[3]
and
(b) "certain conditions must be satisfied for the existence of a common language in which sensations are ascribed to those who have them".[4]

The reason that the (allegedly true) second thesis becomes "muddled with"[5] the (allegedly false) first one is that Wittgenstein is also said to believe that "all there is to be said about the descriptive meaning of a word is said when it is indicated what *criteria* people can use for employing it".[6] It is this formulation of the problem, in which sensations are seen to be essentially private and language usage to follow from already determinate public criteria, that has led Strawson and many others to find it important to decide whether Wittgenstein is a behaviorist. Strawson decides that he is; that in spite of many interesting and some valid observations, Wittgenstein had an "obsession"[7] with the notion that "*without* criteria for ascribing pains to persons, we could have no common language of pain";[8] this led him to identify behavioral criteria with meaning. Strawson would correct Wittgenstein's behaviorism with the assertion "that pain is a sensation (or, that sensations have the special status they have) is a *fact of nature* which dictates the logic of 'pain' ".[9] He concludes with a call for

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in G. Pitcher (ed.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosophical Investigations* (Garden City, New York, Doubleday and Company, 1966). All footnote references in this chapter will be to this edition.

2 P. 42.
3 P. 42.
4 P. 42.
5 P. 45.
6 P. 42.
7 P. 46.
8 P. 47. These are Strawson's words, not Wittgenstein's.
9 P. 49.

"extensive and detailed *comparisons* between the different types of sensible experience we have".[10]

We should note how such comparisons would diverge from Wittgenstein's project. Although Strawson obviously has reacted sympathetically to many of the particular passages of the *Philosophical Investigations*, he has found a "mistake"[11] in Wittgenstein's treatment of the absolutely central issue of the relation between language and that which language speaks about. He has characterized Wittgenstein's position on this issue to be a denial that "sensations can be recognized and bear names",[12] and an assertion that "the only possible common pain-language is the language in which pain is ascribed to those who talk the language, the criteria for its ascription being (mainly) pain-behavior".[13] Thus, although Strawson here does not explicitly use the label 'behaviorist', it is difficult to see how his characterization of Wittgenstein differs in any important way from the position against which the *Philosophical Investigations* directs such a strong attack. Wittgenstein considers behaviorism to be the result of a "conjuring trick" (#308) which leaves our understanding confused from the outset. I propose that the assumption that pain is private, and that Wittgenstein's search for the basis of a common language must therefore turn to some fact of nature other than pain, is evidence that Strawson suffers from the cast of mind that Wittgenstein believed gives rise to such doctrines as behaviorism. Contrary to Strawson, Wittgenstein believed that anything purely private is unspeakable, and that what I call my pain has a public aspect that corresponds to our ability to speak meaningfully of it. The first part of this chapter tries to explain why Wittgenstein urges that we look not at our present headache but rather at the coming to be of pains, to see how the public process of articulation is a necessary contributor to the genesis of such alleged facts of nature as pain. Furthermore, Strawson separates what goes on

10 P. 49.
11 P. 46.
12 P. 46.
13 P. 48. The "mainly" is not explained.

when we "identify the taste" of something, from the "associated substance by allusion to which we name it".[14] I concur with Norman Malcolm's judgment[15] that this is the kind of thinking, in which a word can mean one thing while referring to something else, ridiculed by Wittgenstein's Section #273.

Strawson cannot account for my being able to (publicly) mean precisely my (private) pain. We may indeed expect this to be a problem for anyone not recognizing the positive and necessary role played by language in our coming to awareness. When Malcolm is moved to address the dilemma which he believes traps Strawson, he offers only the exasperated, question-begging:

> If my use of a sensation-word satisfies the normal outward criteria and if I truthfully declare that I have that sensation, then I *have* it – there is not a further problem of my applying the word right or wrong within myself.[16]

In fact, Malcolm does not explain how we could know whether this declaration is or is not truthful; he dismisses the issue with the following remark:

> If my use of the word "pain" fits those usual criteria there is not an added problem of whether I accurately pick out the objects to which the word applies.[17]

He concludes that a person's "sensation-behavior" is the "primary and independent criterion of his sensations",[18] so if we abstract the language game of sensations from human behavior, then certain aspects of those games would necessarily change. What Malcolm fails to do is explain in what way "a man's identification of his sensation" and "verbal reports" are "*dependent*" upon the "independent" criterion of behavior.[19] To say that if human

[14] P. 46. Strawson considers taste to be another example of something private.
[15] Norman Malcolm, "Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*", in: Pitcher, *Wittgenstein*, 98. Like Strawson's review, it first appeared shortly after the publication of the *Philosophical Investigations*.
[16] P. 100.
[17] P. 100.
[18] P. 103.
[19] P. 103.

beings had no characteristic sensation behavior, then sensations would be different from how they presently appear, does not explain what sensations in fact are for actual persons, does not establish that these persons identify their sensations primarily through behavior, and thus does not explain how Wittgenstein could deny behaviorism and still claim that sensations are public.

The thinking that leads to such difficulties is given very explicit statement in a more recent article by Alan Donagan, in which the following are considered the alternatives in describing the status of sensation:

(a) "Cartesianism", or that sensations have an existence clearly present to the subject (and only to the subject), and that the subject bestows a name upon each of them
and
(b) "Behaviorism", or that the only things that can form the basis for the generality and intersubjectivity of common nouns of sensations are publicly observable patterns of behavior, and thus "pain" really means (especially if we force someone to defend his usage) no more than the contortions, exclamations, etc. that any man would be expected to probably produce in a similar situation.[20]

One objection to this characterization is that while most writers suspect that Wittgenstein may not be a behaviorist, they are rather certain he is not a Cartesian. In the concluding section of this article Donagan flirts with a behaviorist interpretation:

He [Wittgenstein] maintained only that the meaning of a sensation word like "pain" is such that if you claim to be in pain then you are claiming to have something that you *in fact* naturally express in certain ways.[21]

and

Whether the internal character of what is expressed in these ways is the same for you as for me is irrelevant to the meaning of the word "toothache".[22]

[20] These two descriptions are paraphrased from Donagan's "Wittgenstein on Sensation", in: Pitcher, *Wittgenstein*, 324-351.
[21] P. 349.
[22] P. 348.

Donagan quickly cites[23] Section #308, however, to the effect that Cartesianism (this word, incidentally, does not occur in the *Philosophical Investigations*) and behaviorism are both results of conjuring tricks of some grammatical misunderstanding. At the very end of his article he is now moved to address the problem of the nature of these entities which have been found to be inadequately characterized by either of the terms of his discussion. Like Malcolm, Donagan offers only a brief and essentially negative reference to the odd unity of sensation and expression. "Sundered from their external circumstances", he says, "such private accompaniments cannot even be named in a common language."[24] Wittgenstein held, of course, that actual sensations are anything but sundered from their mode of expression, and in the *Philosophical Investigations* there is a sustained effort to make evident the active and positive relation between fact and expression. Because Donagan's article devotes to this theme only one brief argument, from a condition contrary to fact, we may conclude that it is inadequate to the investigation undertaken by Wittgenstein.

It is not my purpose to offer an exhaustive critique of the secondary literature on Wittgenstein. Moreover, that which is discussed here is somewhat one-sided, for not every writer on this topic conceives his problem to be to decide whether or not Wittgenstein is a behaviorist, and indeed many evidently recognize that Wittgenstein believed sensations to be public and a private language an impossibility. I shall maintain, however, that the defect so clearly present in Strawson, Malcolm, and Donagan holds in an equally serious, if less obvious, manner against any writer on Wittgenstein who fails to attempt to show how such alleged "facts of nature" as sensations come to be, how expression plays an active and necessary role in this process, how, once accomplished, the nature of this process becomes obscured, and how the philosopher must begin with this accomplished, and thus obscuring, system of expression (grammar), and speak with and through it in an

[23] P. 349.
[24] P. 350.

effort to show in what respect it speaks falsely. Only this sort of treatment could be adequate to Wittgenstein's skepticism of accomplished determinate standards of knowledge, to Wittgenstein's evident and often repeated belief that only the undoing of a strange and all-pervasive misunderstanding can reveal our awareness of things for what it really is.

IV

THE APPEARANCE OF THE EXTRAORDINARY

A. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter called attention to Wittgenstein's remarkable insight into the nature of language and the world. Forcing us to comprehend the hyperbolic privacy of a language no one could understand, and the impossibility of distinguishing what it speaks about from nothing, Wittgenstein leads one up to the turning of thought which he believed necessary for the comprehension of philosophically important issues. He transports us just to the point where words lose meaning and things become nothing, and leaves us to realize the active and positive role that language plays in the coming to be of what we know. Wittgenstein evidently believes that this original relationship between language and its object is invisible to our ordinary thinking; any explanation or description would appeal to just that sort of obscured understanding and appear to be claiming something strange and unconvincing. Wittgenstein's work, then, is an exercise, for a sympathetic reader must not so much believe a doctrine as try to comprehend examples of various degrees of oddness, and hope that the effort is sufficient to carry him beyond the examples (cf. #208) to an insight into the situation from which things like examples and descriptions can come to be. The notion of hyperbolic privacy is the central such example of the *Philosophical Investigations.*

Wittgenstein was notoriously pessimistic about the ability of his generation, living in a dark time (cf. his Preface, p. x), to follow his remarks. Certainly there is no portion of the *Philosophical*

Investigations, or the other of his later writings that have been published posthumously, which reflects the assumption that the glasses of illusion (cf. #103) have been removed from the reader. Wittgenstein never wrote an orderly, complete treatise for the enjoyment of someone already enlightened; his work instead returns repeatedly to a preoccupation with some peculiar detail or to a truncated bit of dialogue. His therapy consists of presenting the bitter pill of a work that seems to have important meaning without clarity. The very presence of this significance, however, suggests that it was not mere pessimism about the ability of his readers which prevented Wittgenstein from completing a positive account. Indeed, he has set his audience to the task of preparing themselves to join him. At this point it should not surprise us that the moments of original attachment of word and object, to which the private language discussion directs us, cannot be fitted together "in a natural order without breaks" (p. ix).

What is now of first interest is how Wittgenstein finds the extraordinary moments to be relevant to the remainder of our experience. There are in the *Philosophical Investigations* many of the terms which ordinarily appear in a discussion of speaking men. Let us examine what happens when Wittgenstein brings into this realm his insistence upon the originality of speech, how this insistence leads him away from certain traditional philosophical concepts, such as that of the person, and, finally, how language itself preserves an oblique but unmistakable reference to its beginnings.

B. DESCRIPTION OF SPEECH IN TERMS OF PERSONS

The skeptical themes elaborated in Chapter II of this work were based upon a demonstration that the variety of human language is too rich to be comprehended by a determinate standard of knowledge. Wittgenstein's method of exposing this richness is to bring out the place of human custom in meaningful speech. Because the qualities of custom are variety and change, one who would

comprehend language is moved to penetrate beneath the unstable surface to find its origins or basis. It is important to see why Wittgenstein rejects the inclination to base such an understanding of language upon a description of the person who speaks.

Perhaps the most obvious reason that there is in the *Philosophical Investigations* no sustained theory of the person is that such a concept fails to mark Wittgenstein's important distinction between what is superficial and what is deep in the human situation. Any general theory of the person might well be frustrated by the same limitation that moves Wittgenstein to discount what people are "tempted" or "inclined" to say or think (cf. #'s 182, 254, 299, 374, 386, 594). Such statements must be treated by the philosopher as "raw material" (#254) to be subjected to the special therapy (cf. # 255) of the *Philosophical Investigations*. In fact, inclinations are often so untrustworthy as to lead philosophers to attempt an internal ostensive definition, or to otherwise go astray; Wittgenstein insists that the result of such temptation is anything but "an immediate perception or knowledge of a state of affairs" (#299). Let us review the insight of the private language discussion to see how Wittgenstein would penetrate a superficial immediacy.

When expression is seen as a process originating in a situation where the differentiations are not held separate, then a primacy is returned to the subject, but not a primacy by which one could deduce the speech from the nature of the speaker. In the case of pain, the subject undergoes the sensation through a process that can be identified as pain expression (whether in actions or in words), and in this way a condition of the body comes to be for him as pain. As this is the original appearance of pain, there is no question of "justification" (#289), or even of "knowledge" (#408), which latter term Wittgenstein would reserve for our learning the condition of another. Thus Wittgenstein would insist upon an active source of personal awareness through expression, which gives one contact with things and grounds instances of distinctive knowledge. It is in this process that one's image makes contact with a color in a manner which puts it before all argument; in saying with sincerity that "This is red", one passes with no difficulty from image to

reality (cf. #386). "My own relation to my words is wholly different from other people's" (p. 192). This uniqueness is manifested in an unseparateness of a certain content from its expression, such that sentences like those beginning with "I seem to believe..." cannot be meaningfully uttered (cf. p. 192).

The consequence of taking the speaker as primarily a source of meaningful action is the impossibility of giving a relevant description of his nature. Wittgenstein notes a "great variety of criteria for personal 'identity'" (#404), amounting to any feature of the person which at the moment seems appropriate. "Now which of them determines my saying that 'I' am in pain? None." (#404). To the objection that the purpose of a complaint is to draw attention to "a particular person", Wittgenstein replies: "No, I want to draw their attention to *myself*" (#405). Further,

> ... even if I do "want to distinguish" between myself and other people – do I want to distinguish between the person L.W. and the person N.N? (#406)

Wittgenstein can make the distinction between his use of "Ludwig Wittgenstein" and his use of "myself" because the first person pronouns come into play to incorporate the speaker in some social situation where further delineation of personality is not relevant. Precisely because he does believe speech to have original significance, a completeness that obviates further justification, can he take the subject of "I am in pain" as *being a complainer*, requiring aid, pity, contempt, or the like, and *not* as such and such a kind of person, with this particular name, mannerisms, etc. The very purpose of the complaint is to establish the exigency of forgetting everything else in order to deal with the suffering. Although investigation of speech leads Wittgenstein back to the beginning of speech, he cannot describe the source in terms of the nature of the speaker, for this speaker originally appears in his expression. Wittgenstein holds that we discover our inner selves in the reactions we make to others, rather than in self-observation (cf. #659). What makes these reactions distinctive is their manifesting a power of individuality, a power he evokes with the term "imagination".

Thus, Wittgenstein's interest in persons moves away from their nature or personality, and concentrates upon their being a source of expression.

C. THE ROLE OF IMAGINATION

Maintaining a reference to the moments of originality while discussing the person leads one away from a description of human nature to a consideration of the functioning of the imagination. The term "*vorstellen*" (usually translated "imagine"), along with its variants, has an obvious importance in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Its most frequent, and least technical, role is to introduce a hypothetical situation. Wittgenstein has us "imagine", for instance, that an arbitrary doodle achieves, through regular usage, the status of a letter in our alphabet, e.g. to represent the sound of "sh" (cf. #166). He is interested in how this custom would change the appearance or status of the new letter. We may notice that Wittgenstein is calling upon our imagination to relive a period of transition, when a connection is made between something arbitrary and something customary. It here draws upon its acquaintance with the coming to be of habits long ago acquired and no longer noticed. To comprehend and perform Wittgenstein's example, we do not merely see the mark in the place of a letter, but must try to see it *as* a letter, i.e. no longer take particular notice of its shape, no longer ask "What sort of letter is that?" (#166), etc. To see this mark as something it is not, and at the same time to realize that our own alphabet has a similarly transformed status, is an ability Wittgenstein calls forth by addressing our imagination.

Another appearance of "imagination" occurs near the beginning of the consideration of the alleged privacy of sensations. Wittgenstein argues against accepting a proposition merely because "I can't imagine the opposite" (#251); his method of opposing the principle of excluded middle in such matters is to question the imaginability of what was originally asserted. He considers the sentence "Every rod has a length" (#251). Although one can

obviously speak significantly of the length of a rod, attempts to imagine "every rod having a length" (#251) lead to "Well, I simply imagine a rod" (#251). Wittgenstein finds this latter to be a "picture" which is a mode of representation more suitable for such a sentence as "This table has the same length as the one over there" (#251), because "here I understand what it means to have a picture of the opposite (nor need it be a mental picture)" (#251 here "mental" translates "*Vorstellungs-*"). That is to say, Wittgenstein finds certain expressions inadequate because attempts to imagine them lead to a picture, and because one cannot oppose this picture to a constrasting one or otherwise give it an application. The nakedness of the single picture of a rod reflects the realization that if "Every rod has a length" had a meaning, it would only be because every rod is like this rod, which, as pictured, requires some particular application to be significant. The poverty of "Every rod has a length" is precisely that of a picture that has not achieved human usage, just as the arbitrary doodle is a mark that we peer at, rather than a letter we use.

Wittgenstein then joins for purposes of criticism the notions that images are private and that only I can know if I am experiencing pain (#251). This suggestion that images somehow are not private is later amplified by explicitly linking imaginability with the meaning of speech. Wittgenstein says that not only the picture of behavior, "but also the picture of the pain", belong to the language game "he is in pain" (#300), an assertion which reflects his antipathy against separating the notion of sensation from its expression. He then replaces the word "picture" in this statement with "paradigm" (*"Paradigma"*), which has neither an obvious meaning nor a major role in the *Philosophical Investigations*, but which suggests something singular, in opposition to the many uses of the word "pain". Instead of exploring this new term however, Wittgenstein immediately notes that, instead of the picture, it is now the "image" of pain which "enters into the language-game" (#300). It is (in part) the possibility of this image that makes "pain" a meaningful word. This image need not be present in definite form, as it might be in the form of a picture which corresponds to it (cf. #301),

but it must nevertheless enter into the situation. What it seems to do is carry the momentum of previous experience with the word, in a form in which the particularity of any single use or expression is not necessarily present. But if this is to be considered the explanation of "*vorstellen*", one can immediately object that Wittgenstein never undertakes to describe it as such. Perhaps the reason no description is offered is that the imagination comes into play in the role of a source of determinate expression, and then disappears in favor of the picture, sentence, etc. which emerges. Wittgenstein's use of imagination in giving an account of speech makes a reference to the role of the person who speaks from a history of past usages, at the same time as it emphasizes that as this person is present, it is always in terms of some articulation of expression, be it verbal, pictorial, behavioristic, etc. Wittgenstein ridicules the emptiness of the unqualified "I am here" of the philosopher (cf. #514). By thus linking the self to his expression, or what is personal to what is public, with a concept that partakes of both, Wittgenstein makes it possible to understand how sensations can be known in addition to being felt.

Later sections develop the idea that the imagination is related to expression as a source, which disappears into the finished accomplishment. Wittgenstein investigates the notion that one can use the imagination for a private exhibition, and finds that attempting such an exhibition of pain results in anything but an unprejudiced example. He remarks that you know "what you are to give yourself an exhibition of before you do it" (#311). By considering private exhibition to be an "illusion" (#311), Wittgenstein emphasizes his belief that what the imagination does is produce an expression. Thus, imaginary pain amounts to rehearsing for oneself some example of pain expression, which could just as well be done publicly.

The indefiniteness of the imagination, as opposed to the expression which emerges, is also emphasized by Wittgenstein's criticism of the notion that speech is used only to communicate things, including mental things (cf. #363). The implication of his remarks here is that the speech brings what was imagined into a definite

being for the speaker at the same time (if the speech is aloud) as for the listener. The indefiniteness of the past as it is drawn upon by the speaker makes it possible for him to avoid repetition, and contributes to the possibility of an uncountable number of meaningful speeches. What is true of the verbal also holds for the pictorial. "What is the content of the experience of imagining? The answer is a picture, or a description" (p. 175). But this content is not in the image *per se*; Wittgenstein in another context has opposed the idea that "the image of the sign was a representation of the sign itself" (#366). When this last remark is immediately followed by: "The mental picture is the picture which is described when someone describes what he imagines" (#367) (here "mental" translates "*Vorstellungs-*"), we can see Wittgenstein's intention to show the content of the imagination to emerge from the process of expressing what one imagines; otherwise there would be no point in distinguishing an imagination-*picture*.

The inclusion in the *Philosophical Investigations* of something that disappears into accomplished expression indicates that there is an aspect of the speaking situation which must be uncovered or exposed. If nothing important were obscured in speech, then philosophical understanding could rest upon a survey of accomplished expressions. Instead, Wittgenstein's remarks about the imagination are designed to point to a remarkable condition where the separation of speech from its object has not yet occurred. He opposes speaking of "This image" (#382), or accepting the notion that one has "got something" (#398) in the imagination prior to expression, and he questions the seemingly strange facility by which he can pass from image to reality (cf. #386). What happens when one recognizes a color he has been imagining? Are the image and the real thing "so alike that one might mix them up?" (#386). Because such confusion would be absurd, we must recognize a connection that is unlike the similarity of two pictures. Indeed, this latter similarity would still require someone to make the recognition, while the matter of image and reality deals with the recognition itself.

What is the criterion for the sameness of two images? – What is the criterion for the redness of an image? For me, when it is someone else's image: what he says and does. For myself, when it is my image: nothing. (#377)

Only because significance arises in a personal condition in which expression begins, where word and concept are not separate, could Wittgenstein justify his identification of the color red with the statement "I have learnt English" (#381). The deep aspect of the speaking situation is that the act of speaking performs a separation that replaces a condition where the differentiation did not exist. Recalling our discussion in Chapter III, we may now say that each speech reenacts (with an important difference) the process of learning to speak, during which the differentiations were similarly instituted. The difference is that once mastery is achieved we are able to flee the indefinite state with such facility that it is no longer noticed. Customary usage institutes differentiations that one can appropriate without hesitation; only in extraordinary moments does one break the routine. In ordinary speaking one enters a variety of situations, without falling into literal repetition, and without noticing anything unusual. Someone with a method like that of Wittgenstein is required to penetrate the surface and indicate the depth of the situation from which speech comes.

The consideration of the imagination is typical of Wittgenstein's indirect approach to philosophical themes. Refusal to attempt a description of the nature of the man who speaks, in favor of taking seriously the variety of his expressions, points up the importance of the frequent use of "imagination". It almost seems as if instead of man himself we can have a delineation of the faculty by which he originally appears. When pressed, however, the concept of the imagination evaporates, disappearing into the accomplished expressions, to which it stands as a source. Wittgenstein's dwelling upon this vanishing source emphasizes how ordinary speech makes tacit reference to the obscured or deep aspect of language, where word and meaning are not separate. In addition to suggesting an indefinable, pre-expressive moment by evoking a personal condition which just precedes speech, Wittgenstein is also interested in how

this deep aspect is visible in the accomplished expression. If the expression performs a separation upon the condition alluded to by the discussion of the imagination, then it would seem that only a double reference, including each of the moments discerned in the process of speaking, could comprehend language. In fact, this duality is present in Wittgenstein's distinction of the recognition from the usage of a word; it is thus that he indicates a reference to origins present in accomplished speech.

D. RECOGNITION AND USE

The doctrine most frequently attributed to the *Philosophical Investigations* is that the meaning of a word or expression is its use. One way of putting this doctrine is to deny that any word has an "essence" or fixed meaning that occurs in all of its various manifestations. Presented so simply, this doctrine gives rise to many questions, such as those concerning the possible limits of usage or the place of bad or incorrect usage. This doubting of the equation of meaning with usage may be focused into a single objection: Granted that a word can enter into an uncountable or indefinable number of uses, there still remains an uncountable number of cases where to use the word would be unmistakably incorrect. The recognition of a word, which usually ensures that one will avoid using it incorrectly, is what Wittgenstein makes reference to (often through his interlocutor) when he raises such a point as our seeming to grasp in a flash the meaning of a word. Thus the problem would lie in the difficulty of isolating a single origin or ultimate expression of meaning; on the one hand there are human beings living together, each with his history, present situation, desires, intentions, etc., who can take up and use words, in an unspecifiable number of ways, in the activities of life; on the other hand there is something about the words which prevent their being used in a number, also unspecifiable, of activities in which their presence would clearly be impossible. Any action that employs verbal expression is carried out in (at least tacit) recognition of this dual

character of language. The resulting complexity is one of the chief reasons for the interlocutionary form of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Let us examine Wittgenstein's development of this situation.

Throughout his later work Wittgenstein urges that we turn to actually observe how a particular term, such as "game", "tool", "consciousness", "true", or "false" is used. He insists that one must "*look at* its use" to learn the meaning of a word, that there is no way to guess it in advance (cf. #340). The implication here, as elsewhere in his later writings, is that there is something original about speaking, that it issues in determinations not knowable in advance. Wittgenstein's insistence upon observing the actual usage of words is clearly a correction to the frequent temptation to isolate important terms of an account in order to fix their definition, and hope that the collection and relation of these definitions can be seen to hold a primary place in our knowledge. Much of the *Philosophical Investigations* is devoted to showing how attempts to formulate such definitions lead back away from singular expression to the multiplicity itself. Many portions of Wittgenstein's work, however, have an importance beyond this largely negative point, in that they consider together the use and the recognition of a word.

The first sustained consideration of this dual nature occurs just as investigation of the importance of logic led to the realization of the difficulty of expressing a general form of propositions. Although one has a concept of what a proposition is, any explanation of this concept involves an appeal to various examples of propositions (cf. #135). Wittgenstein would oppose such a definition as "A proposition is what is true of false" because he finds truth not to stand independent of propositions; such a definition is like defining the king in chess as the piece one can check, without further explaining the game (cf. #136). What is defined would "belong to our concept" (#136) of a word, but fail to explain the ways the word can be used. Thus, the concept I have of a word which I recognize is not necessarily a simple concept, but it still falls short of comprehending the usage of the word.

Is there nevertheless not something definite about the meaning of a word?

But can't the meaning of a word that I understand fit the sense of a sentence that I understand? Or the meaning of one word fit the meaning of another? (≠138)

Wittgenstein's reply, "Of course, if the meaning is the *use* we make of the word, it makes no sense to speak of such 'fitting'" (≠138), points out that if we are to take seriously the original significance of language usage, then a word has no single characterization which could enter into determinate relationships. His next sentence begins to develop the distinction between recognition and usage:

But we *understand* the meaning of a word when we hear or say it; we grasp it in a flash, and what we grasp in this way is surely something different from the "use" which is extended in time! (≠138)

A footnote inserted here (p. 53n), and the next section (≠139), mention that what comes in a flash may sometimes turn out to have no meaningful use. "I thought I knew what 'relative' and 'absolute' motion meant, but I see that I don't know" (p. 53n). This possibility further emphasizes the difference between recognition and usage, and contributes to the strangeness of the status of that which we recognize. Wittgenstein continues through his interlocutor: "What really comes before our mind when we *understand* a word? – Isn't it something like a picture? Can't it *be* a picture?" (≠139). The discussion now leads off into a questioning of pictorial standards and to the discovery that a picture requires an interpretation to achieve meaning. Thus, this first treatment of recognition versus usage established their difference in kind, finding only the latter to be "extended in time" (≠138), and concluded by suggesting the status of the fomer to be like that of a picture, which itself requires an application to reach the level of meaning.

The question of meaning reappears in explicit form toward the end of the discussion of the relation between a mathematical formula and the actual elaboration of a series. Wittgenstein maintains that no sort of insight into the formula can take the place of the performance of the elaboration itself. The similarity of this case to that of the grasping in a flash and subsequent use of a word is

obvious, and, indeed, discussion of the former leads Wittgenstein to consider the latter, more general, problem. Wittgenstein finds it odd to suppose that the momentary recognition of a formula contains in itself the future elaboration, as if the "mind as it were flew ahead and took all the steps before you physically arrived at this or that one" (#188). The future reality in such a case would be "in some *unique* way predetermined, anticipated" (#188). This strange relation of present to future is an aspect of the recognition-usage problem. The next section (#189) mentions the importance of training or education in the way we react to something present. Here the implication is that our relation to the future can be understood in terms of the past, as an application, or repetition, of our training. The following section (#190), however, offers the example of encountering a new sign, and how its interpretation may proceed in terms of one or another already known signs. To choose which interpretation is intended, we must observe the actual application of a sign; the future, thus, cannot be explained as simple repetition of training, for we must wait upon the elaboration to see which training is intended. The discussion proceeds immediately (#191) from the case of a mathematical formula to that of the meaning of a word, where it would seem that many more past acquisitions might enter into the possibilities of usage. Momentary recognition has been seen to have a reference to past training, but when this recognition proves to be supplemented or superseded by actual elaboration, we have evidence of the original significance of speech. In the moment of recognition or confidence when we begin to speak, we as it were see our speech coming; Wittgenstein finds it important to emphasize that what we can later hold to in the completed expression is not the same as what signaled our beginning. Wittgenstein considers it both remarkable ("*merkwürdiger*") and "natural" to suppose that our moments of understanding recognition reach beyond all examples (cf. #209). He would oppose only the notion that the object of this understanding is some "essential thing" (#210) that would constitute another example of usage, but one which comprehended all of the other instances.

When Wittgenstein says that usage and what we grasp in a flash are pictures that tend to cross themselves (cf. #191). he rejoins his general distrust of representational thought. It will be remembered that Wittgenstein's criticism of the primacy of pictures rested upon the necessity of always having to add to them a particular application or usage. Pictorial thinking forgets that meaning emerges from a process that includes both something given and a particular human activity; in the case of verbal meaning the word as such, or as given to recognition, is mistaken for an accomplished usage of the word, and as these two conceptions cross themselves it is forgotten that one is related to the other as a source. Indeed, if language is to be considered pictorially, we must remind ourselves of the duck-rabbit drawing, where each particular picture, duck or rabbit, corresponds to a particular usage of a word, while the lines on the page are analogous to the object of our recognition, i.e. to an inexplicable given which gives rise to accomplishments which are described as "entirely dissimilar" (cf. #10, p. 195). Wittgenstein calls our attention to the elusive lines as they are *before* one or another of the pictures appears, just as his discussion of the meaning of words is designed to expose a difference in kind between the moments of beginning and of accomplishing expression, indicating a process that a single descriptive account cannot comprehend.

E. ATTEMPTS TO NAME THE WHOLE OF THE SPEAKING SITUATION

We have seen that the comprehension of language as such, which would be central to an insight into the whole of what the philosopher strives to know, is for Wittgenstein an essentially elusive and transitory event. Trying to conceive instances of language, as exemplified in the attempts to give a determinate and comprehensive definition of a word, leads to paradox and confusion, ending finally in an appeal to the multiplicity of the various usages themselves. Descriptions of the meanings of particular speeches,

which must be explained in terms of themselves, as having a unique clarity, are not, when taken alone, adequate philosophical discourse. One must include the extraordinary moments, such as that of the dawning of an aspect, when a new particular, distinct from that which it follows, comes into being, and we perceive an "internal relation" (p. 212) between it and other particulars. The recognition of a word is such an extraordinary moment, but here, too, Wittgenstein doubts that one can "keep hold" (p. 176) of it. What stays after the flash of recognition is an ability to "use the word in such-and-such a way" (p. 176). One way to hold the extraordinary moments is to propose such phrases as "the *Praxis* of language mastery", which evoke a continuum of particular contexts. This phrase, to which may be added such others as "forms of life" and "family resemblances", fails, however, to reflect the actual originality of the various particulars it seems to comprehend. The terms stand as a reminder of extraordinary continuity; they function almost as surds, to indicate incorporation into the exposition of something not itself capable of direct exposure. One cannot completely specify what members of a family (as such) have in common, or give a precise definition of "*Praxis*" or "*Lebensform*". Wittgenstein never indicates that these, or any other, terms could be taken alone as the key to philosophical insight; certainly he never gives any of them a detailed development. Their very strangeness and variety indicate the difficulty and confusion facing someone who would describe the process that they were intended to evoke.

Why choose these terms at all? Why would any oddity not serve to indicate the presence of the indefinable? Why explain games in terms of families and not vice-versa? Wittgenstein's focusing upon such aspects of human life as the familial continuity of sexual generation, mastery of an activity participated in by every member of a people, or forms of life in many cases common to more cultures than one, indicates that the extraordinary moments of our awareness, when an original aspect dawns and we simultaneously glimpse the internal relations among things, are of as substantial an importance as anything present to man. The aspect

which makes the continuity remarkable, however, is the radical variety of what we can give ourselves over to; Wittgenstein finds the term "game" evocative of a contingency to which one must surrender himself in order to participate, best suited to characterize each of the manifold appearances of meaning. Wittgenstein arrives at the terms of continuity, such as "*Praxis*" or "*Lebensform*", from his insistence upon a vision of the whole, and they thus stand as important evidence of his philosophical concern. Their accomplishment is incomplete, however, when put forward in abstraction from what consitutes most of the actual corpus of Wittgenstein's later writing, i.e. the examination of certain examples of language. The recognition and the use of a word is a duality which Wittgenstein finds to be close to that of the stability and creativity of human life, and his writings turn away from attempts to name the odd wholeness of speech to a genuine wonder concerning, for instance, how the word "is" can be both the copula and the sign of equality.

F. CONCLUSION

The question of dissimilar uses of the same word is concluded, not by a summation at the end of the work, but rather by an increasing number of examples of philosophically important terms. Wittgenstein would have us notice, for instance, that "understanding" itself reflects the duality of continuity and original actuality:

> We speak of understanding a sentence in the sense in which it can be replaced by another which says the same; but also in the sense in which it cannot be replaced by any other. (Any more than one musical theme can be replaced by another.) In the one case the thought in the sentence is something common to different sentences; in the other, something that is expressed only by these words in these positions. (Understanding a poem.) (#531)

Both uses go to "make up my *concept* of understanding" (#532). The latter sort of understanding is explained only indirectly, the way one could "lead" another "to comprehension of a poem or of a theme" (#533). Wittgenstein takes the very existence of this

single word as evidence that the two sorts of comprehension are not essentially disunited, in spite of the divergent ways in which they are explained.

A later example examines this sort of unity more closely. Because grammatical rules, and formal logic, clearly distinguish the "is" used as copula and the "is" used as a sign of equality, the status of their "union under one head" (*"Personalunion"*) (#561) becomes something of a problem. Why not call the union an obvious accident? Wittgenstein questions whether the two uses of "is" can be differentiated according to previously established functions. Here he repeats his insistence upon the original significance of actual uses of language: "The function must come out in operating with the word" (#559). Using the word in two different ways is thus seen to create the functions. It is for this reason that Wittgenstein can adduce that because "we do in fact use the same word" (#565), there is evidence of an identity in the origin of the different usages, implying that their unity in one word is not accidental.

As this discussion ends, Wittgenstein reiterates his analogy of meaning to a physiognomy (cf. #568) as a reminder of how various past encounters shape what is present to us, at the same time as what is present can be taken up and developed through interaction. The next section (#569) puts forward the notion of language as an instrument that itself affects the outcome of that for which it is used. Thus, an examination of the various uses of a word led Wittgenstein to a consideration of the source of those uses, where the aspect of identity (in the fact of being the same word) among the uses was apparent to him. This led to his metaphor (of physiognomy) to remind us that in meaning we find, often in a complex or partly concealed manner, an identity through change.

This case is paradigmatic of Wittgenstein's recurrent treatment of language in terms of both the various original uses of words, and a unity among the variety, a unity that can be recognized but not described. Thus he leads us to a point where we seem forced to accept one or another of his non-literal appeals, such as his metaphors, or to cognize the moment before, or as, language as we know it (e.g. with two distinct uses of "is") came into being.

This procedure, based upon distinguishing the recognition and the use of a word, is effective in indicating the peculiar complexity of the speaking situation. It succeeds in the suggestion, although not the description, of a continuity among the particular accomplishments of man, at the same time as something very strange, an inexplicable given, is present as a ground of language. Wittgenstein can indicate that there is something extraordinary in the speaking situation, but he cannot complete his exposition in a usual manner. Original expression becomes customary before it can be firmly grasped, which is to say that the beginnings, as considered in this chapter, ordinarily become obscured. The following chapter will consider Wittgenstein's discussion of custom, or the totality of ordinary speeches, and the place of the individual in relation to it.

V

CUSTOM AND NEGATION

A. INTRODUCTION

Wittgenstein's philosophical reflection is centered around a concern for language. His discovery of a genuine variety of meaningful instances of speaking formed the basis of a skepticism of ever successfully expressing a determinate standard of knowledge. Wittgenstein finds that one who seeks to know is led to investigate the very possibility of accomplishing a philosophical expression of knowledge. The persistent laboriousness of his later writings is a reflection of the difficulty of giving an account of the profundity he discovered in the coming to an ability to speak. The ordinary manifestations of this ability, in their clarity, actually obscure the indefinite origins. "What is most difficult here is to put this indefiniteness, correctly and unfalsified, into words" (p. 227 – here "bring ... to expression" would be a more literal translation than "put ... into words"). By directing our attention to actual occurrences of meaning, and insisting upon keeping such occurrences distinct, Wittgenstein begins to reveal the depth and complexity of the speaking situation; words as such are seen to have a status quite different from words in use. He brings out this depth with the distinction between the moment when we recognize a word and the moment of its actual employment. In Wittgenstein's account, however, this distinction takes the appearance of a separation, much as descriptions of the different uses of a word seem to leave those usages "absolutely unlike" (#10). Wittgenstein resorts to metaphor, or to an appeal to a pre-verbal moment, to indicate a

continuity which he cannot literally delineate. Nor does he believe that this sort of expedient is a failure on his part:

> In the actual use of expressions we make detours, we go by side roads. We see the straight highway before us, but of course we cannot use it, because it is permanently closed. (#426)

Nevertheless, Wittgenstein is not content with the procedure which is described in the previous chapter of this work. To begin with, the recognition usage distinction achieves its clarity by abstracting from the awareness of the ordinary language user, who is not called upon to understand the possibilities of his speech. A consideration of custom or convention is the most obvious reference to a unity that is abstracted from by the explicit discussion of recognition and usage.

B. CUSTOM

To exhibit the remarkable depth of language, Wittgenstein distinguishes for us the moment of recognizing a word. This extraordinary act signals the possibility of speech that is both new and coherent; prolonging this remarkable moment by speaking can issue in an original particular speech which has a special continuity, evoked by such a term as "family resemblance", with what has preceded. We have seen that Wittgenstein holds such extraordinary occurrences to be crucial in the coming to be and comprehension of language. From this consideration the following problem emerges: The description of the recognition and the use of a word seems to separate the possibility and the actuality of speech. In actual usages, however, there does exist a unity which Wittgenstein calls into account through his discussion of custom or convention. His first mention of this concept is illuminating. In the course of presenting one of his primitive language-games, Wittgenstein asks us to "suppose that the tool with name 'N' is broken" (#41). Because the sign 'N' had been used solely to instruct the assistant to hand over a particular tool, the breakage disrupts the situation to the extent that the word loses its meaning. We must

remember, however, that Wittgenstein regarded these primitive situations as abstractions against which actual speaking is to be contrasted (cf. #131). He next takes a step closer to what we might recognize as an actual situation, by suggesting that we think of a convention ("*Abmachung*" [#41]) whereby in case of breakage the assistant would reply by shaking his head. Because it appears in a primitive game, this convention differs from the actual custom Wittgenstein later discusses; the *Abmachung* is something to which the language users explicitly agree, just as these primitive situations in general differ from actual language in that all their possible determinations are delineated. The breaking of the tool is a consideration that enters from outside, and as such destroys the game as first described or makes us replace it with a new primitive game. The convention of head shaking allows the game to continue in the face of more than one given condition. The implication is that in actual situations, where no matter what happened to their project some sort of speech would presumably continue between a builder and assistant, there must be a countless number of such conventions. Obviously, no actual builder could give these conventions an explicit rehearsal. Thus, Wittgenstein leads us through the abstraction and clarity of a particular discussion to an insight into the nature of actual custom, which is far from clear. Custom is what allows a speaking situation to continue in the face of a great variety of actual occurrences and function without explicit preparation for each eventuality. Thus, the practice of building has been articulated into a small number of definite possibilities: either the construction proceeds according to a written plan, or follows the previous similar task; or a breakage in tools or shortage of supply demands certain sorts of alterations, both in the composition of the structure and the division of the labor; or a more severe breakage or shortage leads to an interruption or abandoning of the particular project; or the workers become suspicious or angry and halt. Inessential oddities can be incorporated into the situation as a form of amusement (cf. #42). The fact that a person can plan, finance, and accomplish building projects, or can as a worker keep a steady employment from a succession of projects, demonstrates that in normal cases the entire variety of eventualities can be dealt with in

a manner that does not disrupt the basic functioning of the enterprise. There is a uniform procedure with which to react to all sorts of broken tools, a procedure for all sorts of employee dissatisfaction. The extraordinary moment when one of the participants discovers a hint of something new, or when he calls upon his mastery of language in order to speak anew, usually passes without special notice because, in normal cases, he is content to continue in terms of one of the few definite procedures he has learned. The possibility that someone may come up with an original building design, or a new organization of labor and management, is reflected by Wittgenstein in his occasional use of such words as "*Praxis*" to indicate a power to act beyond previous determinations. He would insist, however, that we recognize the normal cases, the "characteristic expression of pain, of fear, of joy" (#142), for example, if we are to comprehend the situation from which language works.

Wittgenstein's first mention of actual custom (*"Gepflogenheit"*) occurs in a discussion of the use of rules or sign-posts: "a person goes by a sign-post only in so far as there exists a regular use, a custom" (#198). The explanation of one's ability to participate in the regularities of life is approximately this one: "I have been trained to react to this sign in a particular way, and now I do so react to it" (#198). Wittgenstein then extends the discussion of custom to include all the regularities of life: "To obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are *customs* (uses, institutions)" (#199). He resists the demand to explicate what the operation of custom "really consists in" (#198). He has us depend, apparently, upon his discussion of training given earlier in reference to one's learning a language, in which a series of movements, most obviously repetitions, was seen to generate linguistic mastery. The contention has already been made that this replacement by linguistic distinctions, of a situation where none existed before, testifies to the originality and irreducibility of language. Wittgenstein now maintains a similar status for the situations in which signs are employed and regularity is exhibited. He will go on to say that such things as the scope of our intentions (cf. #'s 205, 337) and the criteria of identity among sensations

(#288) are sustained by the functioning of normal cases of expression. It is by passing immediately from the remarkable moment of recognizing a word, or summoning the mastery of language to begin speaking, into a customary situation or mode of expression that the extraordinary nature of the activity becomes obscured. Thus, it becomes of some interest to examine the relative status and originality of language and the customary situations into which it flees.

Wittgenstein considers a hypothetical people with whom "there is no regular connection between what they say, the sounds they make, and their actions" (#207), and concludes that we thus cannot say that they have a language. In the midst of this section he speaks of "orders, reports, and the rest" as almost synonymous with "language" (#207). In this example Wittgenstein can make a point that would be difficult to express directly; he can insist that outside the context of situations of use there is nothing that we can correctly call the regularity of language, not even an apparently regular series of sounds. The language of a people gains its coherence in the functioning of that people's customs; the exigencies of living reflect a finite determination of the modes in which such participation is carried out; it is this finitude that allows Wittgenstein to speak of a "common behavior of mankind" (#206).

As we recognize that more than the purely verbal enters into a language-game, we begin to suspect a new way to conceive of the whole of language games. If meaningful usages of language must be understood as occurring within one or another extra-verbal context, then perhaps we can glimpse the unity of contexts in this extra-verbal realm. Wittgenstein would question whether the understanding that reaches beyond all examples would have as its object a sort of super example. "Is it like the case where I interpret what is not limited as a length that reaches beyond every length?" (#209). Wittgenstein suggests in this example that an infinite stands in a special relation to the manifestations that we can grasp. Is there something such as "life" which unites or comprehends the "forms" which human activities assume? But when we realize how the contexts are genuinely various, we see that it is impossible to give

"life", or the context of contexts, a definite content. When we then try to grasp something that is true of all contexts, or in some way unites these contexts, we find that only language or expression can carry over differentiations from one context to the next. Thus, we return to the point of the previous chapter of this work, to the most obvious feature of Wittgenstein's treatment of meaning: there is a distinction between a word in use and a word recognized as such, and the latter, in its odd and not literally definable status, is an essential contributor to the remarkable continuity of life.

We have seen that Wittgenstein's isolation of the original aspect of language is an abstraction; in ordinary or customary speech there is no notice of separation between the moment of recognition or confidence and the actual usage. Wittgenstein discusses this continuity in terms of human custom. The hypothetical people in Section #207 demonstrate Wittgenstein's insistence that this ordinary coherence must be understood with a reference to something that is not itself verbal. There is something like "what is not limited" (cf. #209) from which the particular expressions of unity are abstracted. If Wittgenstein were satisfied to have his work end with an attempt to present the "what is not limited" as such, the most obvious course would have been to give a display of the ability to indefinitely continue ordinary speech. Perhaps it would be of interest to determine whether this is in fact what many of his followers have done. In the *Philosophical Investigations*, however, it is very clear that the momentum of customary expression is only the beginning of important linguistic activity. The distinction from usage of what we grasp in a flash of a word demonstrates the sort of insights we may achieve; the forgetting of such extraordinary moments of speech may seem to result in a more orderly work, but in fact this procedure leads to paradox.

C. THE PARADOXES

An obvious correlate of Wittgenstein's sort of skepticism is a hesitancy to begin a philosophical account with a discussion of

reality. The insistence upon a genuine variety of meaningful uses of an expression, uses which are seen to arise from the same process which differentiates that about which we speak, seems to preclude the possibility of isolating something to which correct speaking must be aligned. Thus Wittgenstein manifests his concern to give a place in philosophy to man, the agent of this power of expression. This concern leads him to emphasize such moments as that of one's coming to an ability of expression. Other important moments, however, include those which display man's capability of deception, of playfulness, or of being mistaken. In these latter cases we often contrast the content of a particular expression with the "reality" from which it deviates. The temptation arises to generalize what in these cases is seen as real, in order to have a criterion for all expressions. Much of the present work has been devoted to making clear Wittgenstein's resistance to such a move. Because "reality" implies a complete and independent sort of structure, which implication cannot be sustained in Wittgenstein's skeptical analyses, the inclusion in the *Philosophical Investigations* of something distinct from a particular language is often presented as a paradox.

The first mention of such a paradox occurs in a culmination of the early investigation of the alleged sublimity of logic. Wittgenstein rebukes the interlocutor for the way in which he finds sentences remarkable, for his "tendency to assume a pure intermediary between the propositional *signs* and the facts" (#94). Wittgenstein would instead insist that in speech, we, along with our meaning, "do not stop anywhere short of the fact" (#95). Wittgenstein illustrates this point by slowly repeating, with emphasis, a certain sentence: "*das und das – so und so – ist*" (#95). He immediately continues: "But this paradox (which has the form of a truism) can also be expressed in this way: *Thought* can be of what is *not* the case" (#95). Wittgenstein can find paradoxical the phenomenon of negative or false thinking precisely because he views speech as originally arising from the same movement as what it differentiates, as originally being fundamentally true. Or, rather, since he holds truth to be a correlate of certain propositional sentences (cf. #136),

perhaps one should say that he holds original or extraordinary speech to be somehow at one with that of which it speaks.

The next mention of philosophical paradox explicitly states the requirements for its resolution; the use of words in linguistic intercourse must be seen as "more involved" ("more engaged", "more complicated", or "more implicated" might also have translated "*verwickelter*") or "other... than we are tempted to think" (#182). We have already seen (in Chapter Three) how the paradox that a sensation is neither a "something" nor a "nothing" (cf. #304) was investigated in terms of the deep involvement of language and its object. Wittgenstein also finds a paradox in our ability to interpret any course of action to be either in accord, or in conflict, with a particular rule (cf. #201). This last is paradoxical because "in what we call 'obeying a rule' and 'going against it' in actual cases" (#201) no such ambiguity exists. The regularity expressed in certain actions is something quite different from "the substitution of one expression of the rule for another" (#201). In these cases a propositional description of a certain state of affairs leads to results that are both true and false; reliance upon this descriptive use of language is criticized in Wittgenstein's appeal to

> make a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way, always serves the same purpose: to convey thoughts – which may be about houses, pains, good and evil, or anything else you please. (#304)

We have already seen how he construes the origin of speech to be at one with the origin of differentiation, and how differentiations are perpetuated through a fundamental regularity of expression that underlies any particular example of continuity or cultural identity. Now is added what might be generally characterized as the power of negation through expression. Because it can reverse the intention or direction of a speech, this power infinitely complicates the situation of speaking men; it carries the potential to diverge from anything real. But, given Wittgenstein's insistence upon the original significance of speech, this notion of "something real" appears at the moment of such a divergence. That is to say, such notions as

expression, custom, and negation are involved with each other to a remarkable degree.

D. NEGATION

An early indication of the difficult status of negation occurs in the search for a simplicity in what language names, a simplicity which would indicate the possibility of expressing a determinate standard of knowledge. In this regard, Wittgenstein considers the supposed ultimacy or indestructability of the color which the word "red" names (cf. the sections immediately preceding #58). The interlocutor claims that "one cannot say 'Red exists', because if there were no red it could not be spoken of at all". Wittgenstein replies by offering this improvement: instead of saying that something like red "exists" (which would seem to confuse it with physical objects), say that the word that expresses it has "meaning" (#58). Thus, we seem to avoid commitment to a "metaphysical" claim that red exists "in its own right" (#58 "*an und für sich*"). This leads to the correlate replacement of "Red does not exist" by "'Red' has no meaning" (#58).

> Only we do not want to say that that expression *says* this, but that *this* is what it would have to be saying *if* it meant anything. But that it contradicts itself in the attempt to say it – just because red exists "in its own right". (#58)

The self-contradiction of trying to state the meaninglessness of "red" seems to demonstrate the presence of some sort of being beyond that of things which are red. Wittgenstein immediately retreats from this position with the claim that the following fundamental confusion renders untenable the entire discussion of "red exists"; "the proposition looks as if it were about the colour, while it is supposed to be saying something about the use of the word 'red'" (#58). He concludes with a statement of fact, apparently introduced to emphasize by contrast the difficulties which have preceded:

In reality, however, we quite readily say that a particular colour exists; and that is as much as to say that something exists that has that colour. And the first expression is no less accurate than the second; particularly where "what has the colour" is not a physical object. (≠58)

What is Wittgenstein's purpose for leading us on this roundabout path? The discussion began in a skepticism of an apparently persuasive account of knowledge, an account which asserts a determinate correlation between independent object and name. This skepticism reveals a confusion stemming from the custom of regarding any object of a statement as an object among others in the world, whereas Wittgenstein would oppose to this customary understanding the moments when speaking includes a reference to speech itself, moments of insight into a complexity or depth not before suspected. The moment of transition from skepticism to insight occurred at the realization of the patent nonsense of "'Red' has no meaning", in which it was seen that the chain of argument culminates in an identity between an alleged metaphysical entity and an alleged negation of meaning. The condition for the negation to be meaningful is some sort of substantiality of "red" itself, the subject of the sentence. One must assume something in order to negate it, and what is at stake in this discussion is our ability to assume something by "red". The complexity or mutual implication of speech and object is seen in the fact that the negation did not separate the word from its meaning as intended, but rather revealed a core of significance beyond any particular usage, illuminating the possibility of our saying both that a particular color, and something having that color, exist. Custom offered a regularity that tempted one to a simple and determinate account of knowledge; Wittgenstein's introduction of a certain negation at the culmination of this account revealed a complexity which proves to be more adequate to show the actual variety of meaningful speech.

The notion of negation reappears after the discussion of privacy and the apparent complication of sensation and expression, in a lengthy series of sections investigating the possibility of an unambiguous and independent object of speech. Wittgenstein calls up several examples, such as the difficulty in understanding the

claim that a deaf mute speaks vocally to himself (cf. #348), the problem in delineating the sort of case where it makes sense to say that it is five o'clock on the surface of the sun (cf. #350), and the complexities involved in our image of "above" and "below" when we think of the people at the antipodes (#351). These examples, where neither correctness nor incorrectness can be unambiguously assigned, lead Wittgenstein to an explicit criticism of the principle of excluded middle. Wittgenstein offers that the principle itself is making a claim, that there is a "visible series which one person sees the whole of and another not". (#352 – The "one person" must be God. Wittgenstein is here discussing the decimal expansion of *pi*, but explicitly finds this analogous to other regions of philosophy.) The claim of the law, that the picture "must either look like this, or like that" (#352), Wittgenstein finds to be itself a picture, whose accord with the reality is precisely the issue. Wittgenstein thus opposes a double confusion; it is a particular picture of reality that leads us to assume that pictures are adequate to reality. Such an assumption takes a certain reality as criterion, with the relegation of all appearances to the level of symptoms (cf. #354), whereas Wittgenstein evidently would find criteria within the appearances. To the objection that appearances or sense impressions can deceive, Wittgenstein replies: "But here one fails to reflect that the fact that the false appearance is precisely one of rain is founded on a definition" (#354). To have something appear as rain, even to have it erroneously so appear, presupposes an articulation of experience around a certain criterion we call rain. Wittgenstein finds such articulation to be unique, as when he facetiously asks which thought is expressed by the sentence "It's raining" (#501). Wittgenstein continues:

> The point here is not that our sense-impressions can lie, but that we understand their language. (And this language like any other is founded on convention.) (#355)

Wittgenstein tries to expose sense impressions as themselves appearing only in an articulation. The appearance of criteria then seem to originate in the process itself, and Wittgenstein claims to

find no separation between a thing, and the process whereby information of that thing actually reaches us (cf. #356). Wittgenstein has again referred questions of what we know, and the place of subjectivity in the process or moment of knowing, to the realm of language, where such notions as convention, articulation, and lying replace direct preoccupation with reality, change, and illusion. The critical step in this turning of thought is his insistence that illusions are themselves facts, and are so configured as to be best understood as related to facts of reality in the way in which lies are related to sincere expression. It is remarkable in Wittgenstein that instead of seeing this compromising of language and reality as implying confusion in our ordinary tasks, it is the basis of the possibility of clear vision. He says that meaningless combinations of words should not be understood as meaning something meaningless, but, rather, we should see such words as "withdrawn from circulation" (#500). In the act of speech, the articulated structure emerges with the expression; such things as words and sense impressions contribute to articulation, but it is only in the achievement of expression that we can find our way around. The philosopher has a concern to see the whole of the situation, and to preserve clarity in its rightful realm; it is precisely the peculiar clarity of a negative proposition which reveals the inseparability of expression and determinations, as well as the power of the speaker to free himself from any particular state of affairs.

It is in the course of further discussion of the status of pictures that explicit discussion of negation and reality reappears. Again, the claim is made that if a picture could unambiguously fix a meaning, it would require a god who could both see the whole of an infinite series and see into human consciousness (cf. #426). It is remarkable, then, that finite human thought is able to "deal with the very object *itself*" (#428). When Wittgenstein then offers a definite statement of the agreement or harmony of thought and reality, he phrases it in terms of the negative:

> ... if I say falsely that something is *red*, then, for all that, it isn't *red*. And when I want to explain the word "red" to someone, in the sentence "That is not red," I do it by pointing to something red. (#429)

Speech may diverge from what is known as reality, but as such cannot be determined without making an appeal, in the very expression, to some "reality" that has the closest connection with human speech. A little later Wittgenstein will say: "The feeling is as if the negation of a proposition had to make it true in a certain sense, in order to negate it" (#447). He has only a "feeling" here because the denial does not contain the assertion literally, but only in "a certain sense". ("The assertion of the negative proposition contains the proposition which is negated, but not the assertion of it" – #447.) That is to say, negation and assertion appear only at the level of accomplished expression, and whatever is called up by a negative sentence is not in that form something positively asserted. Thus, the negative sentence is better suited to reveal the depth of the speaking situation, for it is there that one can more clearly see that speaking evokes or draws upon something which is distinct from the object of the accomplished expression. To miss the fact that there is something underlying expression, and to take assertion and negation as sole and unmediated alternatives, leads to finding plausible such an odd *("komisch")* assertion as:

> A red patch looks different when it is there from when it isn't there – but language abstracts from this difference, for it speaks of a red patch whether it is there or not. (#446)

This "abstraction" does not appear in actual speaking situations, where the red spoken of as not present creates no confusion. The apparent strangeness of the object of a negation leads Wittgenstein to consider explicitly the concept of possibility itself, leading to the observation that for the word "pain" to have meaning for a person, the ability to recognize pain "is not more necessary that that the absence of pain should be recognized" (#448). The meaningful possibilities of "pain" transcend reference to a particular sensation. The mastery of speaking opens one to the presence or absence of certain determinations; the obscurity of the source of this realm is reflected in the difficulty of delineating a general concept of an already consituted "possible". The emphasis in the next section (#449) upon words as a tool of calculation curtails the speculation

about the possible and directs attention back to the primacy of the actual operation of language.

The operation of negation recurs in later sections together with the notion of the primacy of actual speaking situations. Wittgenstein repeats his familiar claim that language brings forth distinctions which would not otherwise occur, as when we speak of a red rose in the dark (cf. #515). He immediately reiterates his doubt of the principle of excluded middle, in terms of the oddness of the alleged possibility of "7777" occurring in the decimal expansion of *pi*, thus questioning whether all the possible distinctions of the language can provide the completeness he seeks. The implication is that expression originates in a way that introduces an order to the situation, an order by which it is possible to distinguish coherence in statements. Chapter II of this work maintains that Wittgenstein finds this order to be nothing that can itself be given a complete determinate expression. He now remarks the difference between understanding a command and carrying it out (cf. #519), and in the next section (#520) appeals to applications in our "life", to indicate again something underlying meaningful instances of speech. Wittgenstein's example of talk about a red rose in the dark shows how speech, as something we can hold to or keep, can begin to encompass the strange movement underlying life. We, as it were, take the rose out into the light for a look at its color and then return it to the dark, all in an instant and without apparent movement. That is, expression binds up several moments of this movement of life, and evidently human speech is the sort of expression offering by far the greatest range of such accomplishments. Wittgenstein several times, including in the opening lines of Part II, contrasts this power of ours to the plight of other animals. What is it which marks human speech as being not arbitrary (cf. #520), at the same time as it can be deceitful (cf. p. 229), and in general, can be used to "set forth what is not the case?" (#520). This aspect of speech, its almost unlimited possibility of negation, gives man the power to distinguish his present moment from the past, in the very act of acknowledging his origins. When we see that it is not only possible, but often desirable,

to have fictitious narratives occupy our minds (cf. #524), we are reminded that the momentum of the speaking situation, or human life, is not to be identified with the ability to align one's understanding with some literal and external course of events. These examples underline the seriousness of the human participation in our awareness; and this participation is glimpsed in the moment which gathers up past moments only to give them a new meaning or direction, or which tells itself in the moment of creating itself out of a process which includes the affirmation or denial of past moments. The reality of negation is the manifestation of this power to preserve and create.

There are further examples of Wittgenstein's use of negation to show that the possibilities for speaking are richer than they might initially appear. He shows how such disparities as feeling, meaning, and truth all merge in the act of expressing a lament (cf. #544), and characteristically he is concerned to avoid reducing the meaning of the expression to any one source. Thus, the next section briefly entertains the notion that the feeling gives "the word 'hope' its meaning" when someone says, "'I *hope* he'll come'" (#545). Wittgenstein counters with this example: "'I do *not* hope for his coming any longer'" (#545), which establishes that the particular feeling has given way to something else. The negative expression achieves a definite significance in that which it denies, at the same moment that it opens into an indeterminate configuration of possible assertions. Thus, we describe its meaning in terms of both the determinate and the indeterminate; when the next section gives examples to remind us that "Words are also deeds" (#546), we may notice the deed of negation can direct one into a situation where there exists the conditions for new determinations. Wittgenstein's occasional reference to a pre-expressive being (cf. #244) evokes a situation where certain conditions of the body come and go, but cannot be held or directed by the subject. Animals (cf. p. 174) can hold and control their condition to an extent, but only verbal expression opens what to us is a full range of possibilities. Our expression allows us to fix an emotion, but if we were limited to a certain number of expressions, our behavior would

become essentially repetitive. The expression of negation allows a condition of directed indeterminacy, or the possibility of overcoming repetition. This important deed finally becomes the object of an explicit examination.

Attempts to immediately characterize negation, however, lead to shallow circularity. Introspection finds something like an inward shake of the head (cf. #548); pictorial representation gives the event with an "X" through it (cf. #548). Verbal definitions are of this sort: "'The sign "not" indicates that you are to take what follows negatively'" (#549). Wittgenstein continues:

> The sign of negation is our occasion for doing something – possibly something very complicated. It is as if the negation-sign occasioned our doing something. But what? What is not said. It is as if it only needed to be hinted at; as if we already know. (#549)

It might be of interest to compare this odd indeterminacy and Augustine's approach to his discussion of time (which Wittgenstein quotes in Section #89) in which something obvious seems to slip away from explicit definition. Unlike Augustine, Wittgenstein expresses these difficulties close to the conclusion of his discussion of the subject, thus emphasizing their persistence. A reminder of the apparent variety of uses of negation (cf. #551) takes him further from accomplishing an explicit definition. A most sustained questioning of the possibility of a univocal significance of "negation" then appears in Wittgenstein's discussion of double negation. At stake is the claim that there is more to the act of negating than a simple turning around of some positive assertion. Wittgenstein delineates the case where two negatives do not yield a positive (cf. #'s 556-557), and finds no specific criterion, outside of customary usage, for using the duplicate negative sometimes as a positive and at other times to indicate a strengthened negation. That is to say, the logician's double negative is one use among several, participating in the same curious aspects of the natural and conventional as other actual uses of language. Finally, the discussion leads into an exposition of the variety of uses of the words "one" (cf. #'s 552-553) and "is" (cf. #'s 558ff). Thus

Wittgenstein's attention to negation ends in indicating that none of the central terms in our language could admit of univocal description. What issues in from the discussion that leads to this end is a sense in which negation reveals a subject who keeps language alive. Because this subject makes an essential contribution to the speaking situation, and can hold himself distinct from any particular situation, it is seen in turn that it is most difficult to define the central terms of his discourse.

E. CONCLUSION

It is of interest that Wittgenstein's concern with negation should end with a demonstration that negative expressions participate in human custom. It may be said that the *Philosophical Investigations* begins with the same custom, for the basis of Wittgenstein's skepticism of a determinate standard of knowledge is an insistence on the conventional aspect of expression. This rejection of an already constituted basis of speech pointed to a human factor in the origins of our experience. Consideration of the possibility of a purely private language tries then to transport one to the moment when speech is unseparated from that about which it speaks; it is this elusive, "deep", moment that Wittgenstein tries to preserve in philosophical writing. It prevents him, for instance, from giving a discursive account of human nature or the faculty of speech, in favor of indicating that man is open to indefinite possibilities of self-definition through imaginative expression. Making a distinction between the recognition and usage of a word is further evidence of the extraordinary nature of language. Wittgenstein's account seems to falter, however, when it tries to bring into obvious presence the origins and possibilities of the actual speech we know. Terms such as "*Lebensform*", "family resemblance", and "*Praxis*" find no articulated development. Finally, an attempt to speak about the act of separation from custom ended in finding negation itself to be characterized by the customary forms in which its expression appears. Thus, custom, which in its undermining of the notion of

experience as essentially constituted seemed to promise insight into the origins and possibilities of that experience, ends by swallowing up any attempt to hold to the extraordinary moments of speech. The conclusion, that Wittgenstein's philosophy rests on no particular content, will be examined in the next chapter.

VI

OPACITY AND REFLEXIVITY

A. RECAPITULATION

In the work we have been considering, Wittgenstein slanders philosophy at almost every mention. He finds the "philosophical" state of mind to be susceptible to the most gross and pervasive misunderstandings, typified by the temptation to search for an ethereal essence to correspond to each word. The "*Philosophical*" which appears in the title of Wittgenstein's work, however, is evidently a different use of the word. It indicates that once certain errors are recognized, or perhaps *as* they are recognized, philosophy can be achieved anew. Even when he characterizes our whole examination as needing turning around, he says that it must be rotated on the axis of our fixed need (#108). Thus, in the thinkers he regards as his predecessors, Wittgenstein finds a common impulse to comprehend, and furthermore finds that redirecting this impulse involves exposing the confusions into which it has fallen. Let us review Wittgenstein's attempt to rejuvenate philosophy through an exposition of the nature of language.

The *Philosophical Investigations* opens by attributing to a quotation from Saint Augustine the roots of a simplistic theory of language, namely that every word is correlated with an essential meaning, and that sentences are combinations of these meanings. Wittgenstein immediately begins a questioning aimed at exposing a multiplicity of language uses in addition to the act of bestowing a name. The very idea of the "whole" of language becomes a problem (cf. #18). Furthermore, the beginning of speech, as seen

in a child's learning, is an activity (essentially repetition) which itself only "resembles" (#7) language, and the borderline of mastery is difficult to fix. Because of these early moves, the form of the *Philosophical Investigations* should not surprise us. In opposing a particular theory, Wittgenstein raises considerations that would make any theory suspect; he commits himself to accounting for *any* meaningful speech, i.e., to a whole which he cannot define.

> For the clarity that we are aiming at is indeed *complete* clarity. But this simply means that the philosophical problems should *completely* disappear ... we now demonstrate a method, by examples; and the series of examples can be broken off. (#133)

His method can then be recognized as one of indirection: finding paradoxes in simplistic theories of the whole; raising particular examples with the implication that they "point beyond" (#208) themselves to an insight which presumably would allow one to put any example in its rightful place; holding more than one view present by introducing an interlocutor; and, as a response to the diversity of the subject matter, often changing his course without warning. Wittgenstein hopes his account to be adequate to all speech precisely in the manner in which it is explicitly partial; once we are brought to see the peculiar particularity of his examples, we will be in a condition to understand rightly any example of meaning. Wittgenstein feels he must *lead* us to this new sort of comprehension; a simple explanation or argument would beg the question; and his paragraphs seem especially strange and tortured until this enlightenment comes.

Throughout the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein reintroduces the reader to particularity through his questioning of the possibility of a determinate standard of knowledge. Logical structures, rules of usage, pictures, and mental processes are each seen by Wittgenstein to be related to instances of meaningful speech only through an interpretation (if at all). He finds that the intelligibility of any such interpretation depends, in turn, upon an appeal to the self-evidence of the particular meanings it was meant

to explain. The central importance of the particular is then underscored by the discovery that any example might be discursively related to any number of determinate criteria, although in the practice of actual usage no such ambiguity (usually) exists (cf. #201). Thus Wittgenstein's skepticism has this complexity: It introduces determinations (pictures, rules, etc.) which are revealed to be only aspects of the speaking situation. The move from determinations to understanding involves coming to view particular speeches as having original significance. By extending the questioning to any determinate standard, contrived or discovered, in nature or in the self, Wittgenstein comprehends all speech in the primacy of actual usage. Once one sees individual speeches as the original locus of meaning, then the investigation is, in a sense, reversed; instead of searching for a "meaning of meanings" one looks for sources or possibilities in things that are themselves not yet meanings. In this function the objects of skepticism can provide a beginning. The consideration of mental processes, for instance, found the relation of thinking to meaning to indicate that no particular speech could ever exhaust what might be said. Another example is the duck-rabbit picture, which directed our attention to the element of interpretation involved in any seeing; it revealed the lines on the page to be inadequate to account for the origin of the pictures of both the duck and the rabbit. The greatest part of Wittgenstein's investigation into the possibilities of speech, however, goes beyond what have here been called the skeptical themes.

With the consideration of a private language, Wittgenstein develops the implication of a genuine variety of originally significant speeches. The notion of purely private expression is introduced by wondering if it is even thinkable; and, indeed, this notion is to serve a drastic purpose. Wittgenstein finds the question of the relationship of language and its object to be the same as the question of the origin of speaking. By asserting that in an infant the expression of pain replaces a situation of unbroken conjunction of certain movements and the condition of the body, Wittgenstein reveals his insistence that the original moments of expression issue in the determinations that form their content. He is grieved that

this originality is obscured in our normal thinking, for if we lose sight of the origin and possibilities of speech, its deep aspect will elude us. The hyperbolic, supposed "beetle in a box" and "E" sensation were designed to carry us back through a process of realization that all significance, even saying that one "has something", vanishes just as their objects become indistinguishable from nothing. As we complete this propaedeutic to a turning of thought, we come to see the contribution of various sources in the original moments of expression, suggesting an explanation of how the sameness of a word could provide the criterion of identity among several instances of a sensation, how we have agreement in judgments and not merely in definitions, why there is no single determinate standard of meaning, and how speech, with its meaning, stops nowhere short of the thing itself.

Wittgenstein's audacious attempt to bring us back to the moment of the constitution of our understanding seems to open for us an expanse of speculation. One can almost imagine the world as pure, undifferentiated movement and words as instances of absolute separation or distinctiveness. At the original moments of expression these two states are complicated in a way that pervades all that we know. Human beings, who learn to speak by imitating the expressions of their parents, come to consciousness already united. Their very being is achieved through the public process of mastering teachable expressions; the condition of brotherhood is thus prior to one's being able to quarrel or to take himself as a final criterion. The study of human speech, which is at the center of this great complication of man and his world, gives the philosopher access to comprehension of the whole.

Had Wittgenstein chosen to develop in this speculative manner his insight into the original significance of language, we may surmise that he would have found it necessary to address the following problem: How can the many elaborate accomplishments, and the differences, which occur in human civilization long after man has forgotten his togetherness in origin, be treated in an account that takes as its touchstone an insight into the very beginning of speech? We must immediately point out, however, that Wittgenstein did

not take this speculative path, and therefore momentarily postpone consideration of this question. Let us first review the path that Wittgenstein does follow.

Instead of a speculative description of the original act of expression, Wittgenstein adopts the more indirect method of attempting to reveal how the extraordinary moments manifest themselves in our experience. One result is the impossibility of delineating the nature of the person who uses language, who is seen originally to appear himself in speaking situations. Conceiving man to be thus defining himself, Wittgenstein interests himself in the faculty of this speaking anew, the imagination. Here he finds a oneness of factors, which, after expression is completed, can be seen only in a state of separation. Thus Wittgenstein links all imaginative speech with the original speech of a child, as considered in the discussion of privacy, indicating human participation in the beginning of language.

The extraordinary beginning may be glimpsed in speech itself. The *Philosophical Investigations* separates the recognition of a word from the actual use of the word. He finds that the recognition, or what we "grasp in a flash", must give way to "spatial and temporal" usages, if we are to be able to keep the meaning present. Nevertheless, the former must remain as an independent moment, for it is by reference to recognition as we begin to speak that we (ordinarily) avoid misusing the word. The extraordinary moment of recognition is like the dawning of an aspect, which issues in a new particular and allows us to glimpse the "internal relations" among things. What becomes more prominent as Wittgenstein continues is the enormousness of the problem of explicating this momentarily-glimpsed continuity among particular situations. Wittgenstein offers several peculiar terms, such as "family resemblances", "physiognomies", and "forms of life" or "*Praxis*" designed to evoke a wholeness of the speaking situation; but just as description of particular examples leaves them absolutely unlike, i.e. not able to definitively characterize the whole, each of these general terms cannot sustain in itself the richness of the particular variety of speaking. The suggestion arises that a return to ordinary speech,

where there appears no separation between the moment of recognizing a word and that of actually beginning to use it, may reveal the continuity of the different meanings.

Wittgenstein characterizes ordinary human custom as that aspect of expression which allows one to enter into an indefinite variety of situations without upsetting one's confidence and regularity. It is a notion very similar to that of the mastery of a language, and Wittgenstein also finds linguistic regularity dependent upon the incorporation of speaking into other, not explicitly verbal, aspects of life. This discussion develops into another futile attempt to describe the whole, however, and falls back into "ordinary usage" or "custom" to try to name the remarkable continuity. It remains true that more enlightenment comes from the mere suggestiveness of such terms as "family resemblances" and "forms of life", no matter how short-winded their contribution to the account. Explicitly considering custom, then, only emphasizes the importance of being able to offer certain uncustomary particulars which begin to give the notion of the whole, or coherence among speeches, some content. But this coining of singular terms is evidently not a method which promises completion. Thus the task becomes to directly comprehend this abstracting itself; attention turns to the speaker's ability to transcend custom, which is explicated as the act of negation. Attempts to describe negation end in shallow circularity, but the many examples in which negation has a prominent place lead to a more fruitful result. An early section (#58) uses negative expression to reveal that "red" has a being beyond any particular usage. In general, focusing upon negation serves to emphasize the ability of the speaker to disengage himself from any particular past expression, in order to speak anew, at the same time as the disengagement or negation carries a reference to some positive past accomplishment. Thus, the *Philosophical Investigations* exposes many of the aspects of the original power of coherence, such as human custom, negation, and the imagination; in doing so it points up the "deep aspect" involved in any original speech, an aspect that is quite unlike, and usually obscured by, the accomplished speeches. The result is a giving of importance to the pre-

expressive moment, such as to make the source of meaningful speech ultimately opaque, and ultimately to make opaque the men who define themselves through this indefinite multiplicity of speeches.

B. THE OPACITY OF COMPULSION TO SPEAK

The problem of the opacity of Wittgenstein's account may be recognized in the notion of sincerity or compulsion to speak. The oneness of image and word at the origin of expression of "red" indicates that speech has a beginning, where it finds its fundamental ground; once the original expression occurs, however, a separation takes place between language and its object, allowing the words to be used in an uncomprehending, or even mendacious, manner. Wittgenstein insists that because false and negative uses of a word still have meaning (cf. #58), they make reference to the original use of the word. Wittgenstein nowhere delineates a criterion of sincerity or compulsion by which we might mark the unfalsified moments of speaking; indeed it is his central tenet that these moments ground themselves. Wittgenstein calls upon us to recognize these moments for what they are; until we achieve that sort of understanding all philosophical explanations are futile. What are the consequences of finding this sort of compulsion in only those moments when speech occurs so as to institute differentiations which replace a situation of inexplicable indefiniteness?

An example of Wittgenstein's notion of compulsion is seen in his treatment of the concept of pain. His analysis depends upon cases where the expression is sincere, i.e. upon the actual cases where one could not doubt the reality of someone's being in pain (cf. #303). It is important to note that the compulsion in these cases cannot be identified before the expression actually begins; the compulsion involved in the expression is seen by Wittgenstein as finally synonymous with its originality. This is an apt example for his account, because of the obviousness of the compulsive aspect of its sincere use; in Wittgenstein's thinking this is the same as to say

that it is easy to find unambiguous examples of the actual appearance of pain. The question must here be asked whether the obvious example of pain is fair or adequate to the whole of what Wittgenstein hopes to comprehend. When we remember his early commitment to account for *any* meaningful speech, we realize there must be countless examples where compulsion like that of pain expression is absent. One thinks of the unremarked exchanges of ordinary social intercourse, i.e. of speech grounded, at least in part, in human custom. Because Wittgenstein finds original expression, where word and object arise, to be the source of meaning, customary speech must somehow participate in this originality. Here we may view another focus around which Wittgenstein's later thinking turns. The first focus is the insight into the original significance of speech. The second focus is the insistence that the primordial movement of the original speech results not in some sort of higher process, but in a unique order or grammar. Each grammar, as an original standard of speech, available to one who has mastered the language, can insure meaning by preserving a tacit reference to the moments when significance arose. Indeed, Wittgenstein finds that one slips so easily into customary speech that only a most extraordinary account can unearth the unspoken origins.

The immediate passage from original singular expression to customary order can be seen in the prominence Wittgenstein gives to the word "use" (which is most often a translation of "*Gebrauch*" or "*Verwendung*"). In its more than one hundred occurrences in the *Philosophical Investigations*, "use" sometimes quite strongly suggests singular personal speaking, as when it is said to be "extended in time" (#148), and sometimes is very closely identified with custom (e.g. #198), but most often its meaning is ambiguous in regard to these two definitions. Wittgenstein never comments explicitly upon this ambiguity, but seems to deliberately embody it in the text. Consider the early discussion of the ostensive teaching of words, and the difficulty of teaching the demonstratives themselves in this manner:

> One will point to places and things – but in this case the pointing occurs in the *use* of the words too and not merely in learning the use. ... (#9)

Indeed, precisely because the active and original use of words cannot be held apart from usage considered as customary order, Wittgenstein can connect all meanings to the primordial meaning engendered in a coming to speak. Our forms of language preserve that meaning, although in an obscured manner. What happens is that we take as standards of meaning the ordinary forms, and because these ordinary forms have been transformed from their original as surely and subtly as using becomes usage, the origins of speaking, or what is common among speeches, must remain opaque, accessible only by such odd terms as "form of life" or "family resemblances" or by an appeal to the indefinite, pre-expressive moment. It then becomes the job of the philosopher to keep these original speeches in order, i.e. to insist upon their genuine variety in spite of external similarities. Because the person or speaker finds his being only in expression, and there is literally nothing to choose among the genuine, open-ended multiplicity of speeches, it becomes plausible to speak of human life as participation in a succession of games, where one can do nothing but surrender himself to one contingency after another.

What seems to be missing from this account? Let us consider what has here been called the second focus of Wittgenstein's thinking, the notion that the original movement of speech immediately becomes an order. There is little recognition that expression once begun often generates its own compulsion to continue. Because one important origin of this continuation is the particular expressions that have preceded, the compulsion here is of a different sort than that of original speech. In a word, this continuing compulsion has an origin in what we can recognize as human, and thus the speaker can often find it very important to persist in a particular process, or to oppose such persistence in another. Examples of processes of expression where this continuing compulsion is present, where one expression compels another and the result is something unlike any particular speech, are art, love, or politics. In an escalating political conflict, one response provokes

another until all the options are new ones. In painting, a particular stroke is determined by the progress of the work up to that point, and in turn will contribute to the subsequent strokes. In these cases, the persons involved must persist in their efforts to sustain and unify the process, until a certain completeness or obvious stopping point is reached. The standard of this completeness is something introduced by the process itself, hence we can say that works of art or historical epochs are unique. Because this standard emerges in the process itself, and has a basis, at least in part, in the recognizable particulars that have preceded, it offers a compulsion different in kind from the totally opaque compulsion by which the individual words in our language were first uttered. The processes of continuing compulsion, which comprehend several particulars, receive scant development in Wittgenstein's writings.

In the end we can never say why words are what they are, or why a given condition of bodies is what it is, and it is from just such unexpressed words and unremarked movements that Wittgenstein views the arising of speech. This is as much as to say that speech replaces a situation about which it cannot speak. Once expression is completed we can study the empirical relationship among facts of speech or nature, but the source, or any comprehension of the whole, remains opaque. Because Wittgenstein views the accomplished usage or grammar in immediate relation to such a source he can ultimately only say that each particular is unique, a basis, to be sure, for an uncountable number of connections or resemblances with other particulars, but in the end never defined by the others, in the end having its reference to itself. The lack of a notion of continuing compulsion minimizes the human origin of speech, and flattens history into a succession of essentially equal instances of expression. But if Wittgenstein sees man as articulating only from an indefinable source, and not from his accomplished speech, if man's speeches have no essential relationship to each other, then we could not account for the *Philosophical Investigations*. That is to say, after Wittgenstein rejects essential relations among human appearances, or the possibility of activities that make manifest man's ultimate accomplishments, he reintroduces such a notion in

philosophy itself. So man does not simply surrender himself to one game after another; he maintains an impulse to see himself in some more substantial or comprehensive manner.

C. WITTGENSTEIN'S PHILOSOPHY AS A SINGULAR ACCOMPLISHMENT

After discounting the possibility of accumulating compulsion in other areas, Wittgenstein finds in man a desire toward establishment of himself in a place that transcends any particular speech, and finds it in philosophy alone. By now we are familiar with his contention that this philosophical compulsion often goes astray by thinking that the account of the whole will be like a particular account, differing only in that its determinations will somehow be comprehensive. We have seen Wittgenstein's attempts to make evident the absolute variety of speeches we may expect from an absolutely indefinable source.

What in Wittgenstein's later writings is conspicuously different from that of many of his followers is a style whose difficulty comes not from a seeming blindness to its own implications or a blind partiality, but from a deliberate use of words in such a way that their impossibility of being defined becomes manifest. Presumably, this sort of account can satisfy our restless desire to establish our existence in a more substantial way, by revealing that man can comprehend his plight in the moment of using his accomplished language to speak anew, thus delimiting the accomplishment. In these cases there is reference to man's history as well as his possibilities; it is a taking of old words and showing what happens to them when someone struggles to keep them adequate to the whole. This sort of deliberate novelty has been called Wittgenstein's "reflexive" use of language.[1] Let us examine a few of its more evident appearances in the *Philosophical Investigations*.

[1] The most extensive development of the "reflexivity" of language in the *Philosophical Investigations* is in Robert A. Goff's *The Language of Method in Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations* (Ph. D. dissertation, Drew University, 1967).

An example is the term "nature". In his preface, Wittgenstein tells of his original intention to write in a "natural order without breaks" (p. ix), reflecting the assumption that language could be articulated into a structurally related whole which would be adequate to its object. He finds, however, that this procedure opposed the "natural inclinations" (p. ix) of his thoughts to resist such ordering; this resistance stemmed from "the very nature of the investigation" (p. ix). Thus, in less than ten lines, "nature" ceases to be conceived as an independent structure, attaching instead, and with a different significance, to the individual thoughts which were to enter that structure, and finally is applied to the very undertaking which was to discover that structure but failed. The implication is that the skeptical conclusions of the philosopher are to be taken as seriously as the alleged independent structure once was, and that from the multiplicity of various examples which the skepticism adduces comes a new nature, this time with a reference to the fact that such words as "nature" can no longer be given a univocal meaning. Indeed, throughout the *Philosophical Investigations*, "nature" exhibits these newly revealed possibilities for meaning. Linguistic activities are spoken of as part of our natural history (cf. #'s 25, 415), and the laws of nature are mentioned in close conjunction with the rules of a game (#'s 54, 372). In one use of the term the translation must be corrected to see the significance: Wittgenstein speaks not of the "uniformity of nature", but rather: "The nature of the belief in the uniformity of what happens..." (#472). By finding our belief at least as natural as its object, he can question whether the source of uniformity is a structure that is independent of men coming to speak. He later tries to show that attempts to describe the "nature of negation" (p. 147n) lead to a revelation of something about "*our* nature" (p. 147n). Toward the very end of the work, in a discussion of the relation between facts of nature and the formation of our concepts, the account has reached the point where "fictitious natural history" (p. 230) would serve as well as any fact. This leads directly to a characterizing of our concepts as having the same sort of relation to arbitrariness and necessity as does, say, a style of painting

(p. 230), which is to make final reference to the original and open-ended multiplicity of all expression. Against the charge that Wittgenstein simply uses "nature" ambiguously, one may reply that his particular uses of it made perfectly good sense. The ambiguity, or contradictions, came out only in reflection. We recall that Wittgenstein urges that one not resolve such a contradiction by a mathematical standard, but rather see its "status in civil life" (#125), where our meaning often turns out to be different from what we meant, or intended, to say. This transformation of meaning reveals the power of directed possibility embodied in a term that can have such different uses and still be recognized as the same word.

Another important example of this use of language appears with the word "use" itself. We have already seen how the ambiguity of this word, in relation to its active and orderly connotations, is central to Wittgenstein's understanding of language. In his now famous and allegedly explicit definition of "meaning", we can see reflexivity at work if we substitute a more literal translation of the sentence, and also translate "*Benützung*" as "use":

> One can for a *large* class of cases of the use of the word "meaning" – though not for *all* cases of its use – explain the word thus: The meaning of a word is its use in the language. (#43)

The sentence is introduced by "One can...", reminding us that explanations are not entirely impersonal, that they must be actually expressed by someone at some time. Here is already a reference to the use of language, in this case the immediate activity of the philosopher at his desk. The word "use" is then used twice, with the suggestion of a regularity that allows one to discern classes of its use, to prepare us for the statement that the use of any word is autonomous, i.e. that its meaning is singular and identified with that use and nothing more. But this raises the question of completeness, for surely the definitional use of the words must be exempted from this singularity; Wittgenstein refers to this incompleteness through the (perhaps somewhat clumsy) mention of a "large class" in the preparation for the definition. It is the

multiplicity of meanings of "use", called forth in this extraordinary definitional use of the word, which in the end signifies the richness of the concept and makes plausible the identification of it with meaning as such. The reflexivity Wittgenstein introduces into the account allows him to present ordinary words in such a way as to make them appear to indicate the ultimate possibilities of words.

Indeed, one may ask if the whole of the *Philosophical Investigations* exhibits this "reflexive" character, in that it uses our accomplished language to indicate the process and possibilities of the accomplishing that language performs. It is unquestionable that Wittgenstein is aware of the ability of language to turn upon itself: "'This sentence makes sense.' — 'What sense?'" "'This set of words is a sentence.' — 'What sentence?'" (#502). Given his insistence that only external facts, and no hidden essence, could be adduced about language (cf. #120), owing to the fact that our investigation uses the very language it studies; and given his hope to put at ease all philosophical problems, so that nothing new might surprise him (cf. #133), we are led to see his aim of using language to elucidate the use of language. By using old words in a new way he can embody the original moment of speech as it becomes a new order. The reference his speeches thus have to the corpus of ordinary speech from which they come indicates his concern for comprehension of the whole of speech. Because this reference consists in the way speech is actually used in the account, our glimpse of the whole occurs in the active moments of our comprehending his examples, where he passes beyond attempts at direct speech about a philosophical object.

The method of the *Philosophical Investigations* is to draw our attention to the particular originality of speech, and to use the possibilities of originality to demonstrate how any meaning could contribute to a moment which at once illuminates several moments of speaking as it presents itself as unique. Thus coherence is, in the end, embodied rather than explained. We have suggested that Wittgenstein finds this embodied coherence in philosophy alone, that only in philosophy does one speech lead to another to form something that can comprehend diverse particulars which other-

wise would not be considered parts of anything. As a result, what emerges from Wittgenstein's illumination is a flat multiplicity of speaking customs, or grammars, whose origins are as mysterious as the forces that brought the first man to consciousness. Because the reflective comprehension of the philosopher begins in this multiplicity, and ends only by showing that this multiplicity can be mastered, Wittgenstein's thinking continues to carry the opacity of the original source of speech. We have suggested that this is both its strength and its limitation.

The method of the present work has been to suppress introduction of the reflexive use of language until it became obvious what it was that the reflection worked upon and which difficulties it hoped to resolve. Had this account incorporated reflexivity from the start, it would probably have seemed at least as peculiar as the *Philosophical Investigations* without having the suggestive original profundity that that work conveys even to an uncomprehending reader. The present work shows a different sort of indirection; it begins with some of the accomplishments of the *Philosophical Investigations*, e.g. its skepticism and its insight into the original significance of speech, and leads up to the point where its accomplishments (such as the unity and diversity of a family resemblance, or the notion of unseparateness of word and object in the pre-expressive moment) require a return to Wittgenstein's own expression, where the "contradictions" are comprehended by Wittgenstein's own use of language. Thus, like Wittgenstein's writing, this work cannot make everything present at once; there must remain a reference to the indefiniteness which is transformed by the speech that comes from it. Indeed, if it can lure a reader back for a fresh look at Wittgenstein's writing, it has served its purpose.

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